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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/15/stories/2010041550770300.htm>

Award for farmers who produce value added products, says Collector

NAMAKKAL: Special awards will be given to farmers who produce value added products, said Collector U Sagayam. He said that farmers who added value addition to their produce would be honoured from each union in the district.

This move was mooted to encourage the farmers to go for value addition, which in turn would benefit them enormously. The details could be had from Joint Director of Agriculture, Namakkal district.

The Collector, who used to stay in villages during his special grievances meetings, also assured the people of various villages that roads would be laid under NABARD scheme. While staying at Kandipalayam, a few villagers told him that they were denied house site pattas.

After inspection he found their cases genuine and ordered the issuance of pattas.

Earlier undertaking inspection at Paramathi block for the government's concrete dwelling units scheme, Mr. Sagayam visited Vadakaraiyathur and Anankur villages and verified the documents and data collected by the field staff.

He said that in Namakkal, 40,000 huts had been enumerated so far under the scheme for which 336 officials committees had been formed with 1,300 field staff.

Works in 15 panchayats had been totally completed.

Under the SSA scheme, the administration conducted two special medical camps for the differently-abled children.

In the first camp, 1,050 children had been identified and in the second 326 were chosen for various welfare measures including 11 implements such as tricycles, hearing aids, folding sticks etc.

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Cardamom plantations are agricultural lands

SARFAESI Act cannot be invoked to attach them: HC

Ruling passed while allowing a batch of writ petitions

Six individuals of Cumbum in Theni district had defaulted in repaying loans

MADURAI: The Madras High Court Bench here has held that cardamom plantations would squarely fall under the definition of agricultural lands and hence banks/other financial institutions could not invoke the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 in respect of such plantations.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Prabha Sridevan and Justice B. Rajendran passed the ruling while allowing a batch of writ petitions.

The judges quashed notices issued by the Union Bank of India on November 3, 2009 for attaching the cardamom plantations belonging to six individuals of Cumbum in Theni district. The individuals had defaulted in repaying loans obtained for planting the crops.

The Bank's counsel contended that the petitioners' lands should be considered as non-agricultural lands unless there was evidence to prove that the lands were cleared and prepared for agricultural purposes.

He also relied upon a 1977 Supreme Court judgement wherein it was held that all forest lands could not be considered to be agricultural lands just because they had the potential of being used for agricultural purposes.

However, petitioner's counsel B. Saravanan pointed out that the bank itself had described the lands as cardamom plantations in the notices issued by it.

Therefore, the fact that the mortgaged property was a cardamom estate was not disputed. He also submitted a report of a study conducted by M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation to show that cardamom cultivation was also an agricultural operation.

Writing the judgement, Ms. Justice Sridevan said: "We find from the literature relating to cardamom cultivation that there are planting and harvesting periods.

The cultivation does not comprise merely of raising the products of the land in the narrower sense of the term like tilling of land, sowing seeds, planting, irrigation and similar work done on the land, but also includes the subsequent operations set out."

Therefore, "we apply the normal principles of interpretation in fiscal statutes according to which if there are two views possible, one favourable to the assessee should be given. In this case, the one favourable to the petitioners, who are the borrowers, should be given," the Bench said and held that the lands were immune from attachment as per Section 31 of the SARFAESI Act.

Nevertheless, the judges made it clear that the bank was entitled to recover the loan amount in a manner known to law.

The invocation of SARFAESI Act alone was barred because it prohibited attachment of agricultural lands.

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Training programme in food processing

MADURAI: The Small Industries Product Promotion Organisation (SIPPO) will conduct a six-week training programme in food processing in five districts, including Madurai. According to a press release, with only 15 per cent of the country's food production being processed, this sector holds much promise. The programme would start on April 19.

Those aged above 18 years and having cleared Standard XII examination could apply.

For further details, contact SIPPO at 52, Travellers' Bungalow Road, Mahaboobpalayam, Madurai 625 016. Phone: 0452 260 2339.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/04/15/stories/2010041551341500.htm>

Fight against yield loss leads to wilt-resistant pepper variety

The grafted vines come to commercial harvest after two years



Long lasting: Ravishankar with the cement bee hives in his pepper plantation.

When the yield improves, so does the farmer's income. But a drop in the yield affects a farmer's livelihood.

“To rise from a loss like a phoenix requires fortitude, sagacity, scientific temperament and an innovative mind,” says Dr. T.N. Prakash Kammardi, Co-ordinator, Honey Bee network and Editor, Hittala Gida (Kannada version of Honey Bee).

Economic loss

Mr. Ravishankar, from Dakshina Kannada district, suffered severe economic loss in pepper due to infestation a decade back. But today, a new pepper variety resistant to wilt infestation owes its success to the same farmer who lost his entire yield.

The farmer had cultivated some local pepper varieties such as Panniyur, Karimunda, and Vayanadu and suffered severe loss due to wilt infestation.

New variety

“Initially I thought that pests caused the damage but later learnt that it was a wilt disease, a common infestation in pepper, which affected my vines. Continuous

search for a superior wilt resistant variety did not fetch a satisfactory result. I decided to develop a new variety by grafting a local spice plant called Hippali (endowed with a smell similar to pepper) and Panniyur variety," he explains.

Mr. Ravishankar selected both plants of the same age and grafted them. He planted 6 -7 grafted plants in the field. All the plants grew well and exhibited resistance to wilt infestation.

Commercial yield

"The new grafted pepper variety is wilt resistant and has high phenolic content. The number of spikes in a vine ranges from 30-40 and the berries, 100-165. The dry yield is 1.5 kg/year/vine. The variety takes eight months to fruit after flowering and yields economically after two years," explains the farmer.

The leaves are dark green in colour compared to Panniyur variety bearing moderately green coloured leaves.

Require shade

He also observed that after grafting, the plants required to be kept under shade to ensure a healthier growth. Flowering in all the plants started during month of June and harvesting done once a year. For better root growth, he encourages the careful use of V-notch method during grafting.

Scientists from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, and Agriculture Research Station, Thirthahalli, visited Ravishankar's farm and found the phenolic content was higher - the reason for its wilt tolerance.

Cement beehives

In addition to pepper, the farmer also makes beehives from cement. In India hive boxes are usually made of teak wood. During monsoon the wooden hives get

damaged quickly.

To overcome this problem and to save trees from being cut the farmer says he developed cement hive boxes.

“Cement hives solve the problem of hornets attacking bee hives. The heavy weight of the cement hive makes it less prone to theft and is better adapted to vagaries of weather such as rain and sun.

Several benefits

“Unlike wood, cement provides protection from termites, bush fires, worms, and pests,” explains Mr. Ravi.

Regarding the cost of the hives he says:

"These cement boxes cost less than wooden boxes and are long lasting. Bees readily occupy the hives." They are easy to handle and cost Rs.250 per box.

For more information contact Mr. Ravishankar, Amadula house, Madyantharu post, Belthangady Taluka, Dakshin Kannada, Karnataka, mobile: 9972715411, phone: 08256-279390 and Dr. Dr. T.N. Prakash Kammardi, email: prakashtnk@yahoo.com, mobile: 9448772202.

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Soil solarisation for soil borne pest problems

Soil borne diseases and pests cause major losses in field and horticultural crops. For some vegetable and fruit crops, soil borne diseases, weeds, and nematodes have been partially controlled by soil-applied pesticides and fumigants.

Use of soil fumigants for pest control is often undesirable due to unfavourable effects on animals or humans, resulting in toxic plant and soil residues, complexity of treatments, and high cost.

In this case soil solarisation plays key role in management of soil borne pests, diseases and weeds

Nonchemical technique

Transparent polyethylene plastic placed on moist soil during the hot summer months increases soil temperatures to lethal levels to many soil borne plant pathogens, weed seeds, and seedlings.

It also improves plant nutrition by increasing the availability of nitrogen and other essential nutrients.

The plastic sheet results in greater transmission of solar energy to the soil which allows the soil to heat to higher temperatures than black plastic.

Polyethylene plastic sheeting of 1 to 4 mils (0.001 to 0.004 inch) thick is the most efficient and economical for soil heating.

Maximum soil heating occurs when the plastic is close to the soil. The soil should be disked, rototilled, or turned over by hand and raked smooth to provide an even surface and to help water penetrate and moisten the soil profile.

Transparent plastic tarps are anchored to the soil by burying the edges in a trench around the treated area. Plastic tarps can be laid by hand for small farms or gardens or by commercial machinery for large farms.

The soil under the plastic is then soaked with water by inserting one or more hose or pipe outlets under one end of the tarp.

If the soaking step is impractical, the soil may be irrigated before laying the plastic, but care should be taken to apply the plastic as soon as possible to avoid water loss.

Damp nature

The soil should not be saturated but must be damp. Killing of pathogens and pests is related to time and temperature exposure.

The longer the soil is heated, the deeper the control. Usually 4 to 6 weeks of treatment in full sun during the summer is best.

MALLIKARJUNKENGANAL A.S.BYADGI & V.I. BENAGI

UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, DHAR

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Melia dubia seedlings

Is there any farmer from whom I can purchase Melia dubia seedlings?

V. Loganathan, Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu

Contact Mrs. Indra Ramanathan, Erode who has so far supplied more than 30,000 Melia Dubia seedlings to farmers. She can be contacted at the address: Mrs. Indra Ramanathan, Ramu gounder garden, Kalli patti, Kannakkanpalayam(Post), Erode district. Mobiles: 93459 81081 and 93666 99999

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Identifying key genetic markers in grapevine



A way to identify genetic markers in the grapevine's genome that can be linked with specific traits, such as fruit quality, environmental adaptation, and disease and pest resistance has been developed.

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Electrical current from plants

The electrons were intercepted just after excitation

The tiny current was produced by photosynthesis

Plants use photosynthesis to convert light energy to chemical energy, which is stored in the bonds of sugars they use for food. The process takes place in chloroplasts, the cellular powerhouses that make sugars and give leaves and algae their green color.

In the chloroplasts, water is split into oxygen, protons and electrons. Sunlight penetrates the chloroplast and zaps the electrons to a high energy level, and a protein promptly grabs them.

Synthesising sugars

The electrons are passed down a series of proteins, which successively capture more and more of the electrons' energy to synthesize sugars until all the electron's energy is spent.

In an experiment, researchers intercepted the electrons just after they had been excited by light and were at their highest energy levels. They placed the gold electrodes in the chloroplasts of algae cells, and siphoned off the electrons to generate a tiny electrical current.

In the electrifying first, Stanford scientists have plugged in to algae cells and harnessed a tiny electric current.

They found it at the very source of energy production – photosynthesis, a plant's method of converting sunlight to chemical energy. It may be a first step toward generating “high efficiency” bioelectricity that doesn't give off carbon dioxide as a byproduct, the researchers say.

“We believe we are the first to extract electrons out of living plant cells,” said WonHyung Ryu, the lead author of the paper published in the March issue of Nano Letters. The Stanford research team developed a unique, ultra-sharp nanoelectrode made of gold, specially designed for probing inside cells.

They gently pushed it through the algal cell membranes, which sealed around it, and the cell stayed alive. From the photosynthesizing cells, the electrode collected electrons that had been energized by light and the researchers generated a tiny electric current.

“We’re still in the scientific stages of the research,” said Ryu. “We were dealing with single cells to prove we can harvest the electrons.”

The result, the researchers say, is electricity production that doesn't release carbon into the atmosphere. The only byproducts of photosynthesis are protons and oxygen.

“This is potentially one of the cleanest energy sources for energy generation,” Ryu said. “But the question is, is it economically feasible?”

Ryu said they were able to draw from each cell just one picoampere, an amount of electricity so tiny that they would need a trillion cells photosynthesizing for one hour just to equal the amount of energy stored in a AA battery.

In addition, the cells die after an hour, according to a Stanford University press release. Ryu said tiny leaks in the membrane around the electrode could be killing the cells, or they may be dying because they're losing out on energy they would normally use for their own life processes.

One of the next steps would be to tweak the design of the electrode to extend the life of the cell, Ryu said. — Our Bureau

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High on water? Can be a low

Apr 15 2010

April 14: Drinking too much water without adequate sodium intake might quench the thirst but it is not enough to battle the scorching heat. Doctors in the city are thus increasingly facing cases of 'water intoxication'.

"We receive many cases of 'water intoxication', with typical symptoms of fatigue and dizziness. While drinking water is important to prevent dehydration during summer, drinking large quantities of plain water flushes out the sodium chloride in the body. Essential electrolytes are also lost," explained Dr Chandramohan, senior gastroenterologist at the Government General Hospital.

As water poisoning can even be fatal in some cases, experts recommend drinking fluids with salt. "The best summer drink is buttermilk, or lime juice with a bit of salt, and tender coconut water contains several essential electrolytes," said Dr Chandramohan.

Beer too doesn't get the nod. While a glass of cold beer may seem like a perfect way to cool off at the end of a hot day, doctors here aren't convinced.

Dr P. Chandra Shekaran, an expert in forensic science and toxicology, said, "The theory that beer has cooling properties is just an excuse that beer guzzlers give to support their drinking habit. Any alcohol initially raises the body temperature, and even though beer contains only 6 to 7 per cent alcohol, it is still not an 'ideal' summer drink." He added, "It may not be as harmful as the other stronger spirits as it is a fermented beverage, but it still puts a strain on the liver and kidneys that are responsible for filtering out the body's toxins."

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/high-water-can-be-low-272>

Won't allow cultivation of Bt brinjal: TN govt

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu government today said it will not allow cultivation of genetically modified brinjal and the earlier assurance given in this regard by Chief Minister M Karunanidhi was "final".

"The chief minister had said the state will not allow Bt Brinjal. And that is the final word. We will not allow (cultivation) of Bt brinjal," Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S Arumugam informed the Assembly.

The Bt brinjal issue had been firmly opposed by civil societies, NGOs and a section of scientists and health experts on the genetically modified vegetable's effects on human health and soil fertility.

Meanwhile, responding to PMK's demand for a separate agriculture budget on the lines of Railways budget, Arumugam said this was not possible. Even Centre did not have a separate budget for agriculture, he said.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

'Genetically modified crops benefit farmers'

REUTERS, Apr 15, 2010, 01.09am IST

WASHINGTON: Genetically engineered crops are profitable for farmers and may help protect people and the environment from an overload of pesticides, a panel of experts has reported.

But there is a risk that weeds are developing resistance to Roundup, a weedkiller that is used to


treat fields planted with certain genetically modified crops, the researchers said on Tuesday. And genetic engineering is not being exploited enough, given its potential benefits, the National Research Council panel concluded.

"We do see good, hard evidence that weed resistance is growing to glyphosate. That needs serious attention," said David Ervin of Portland State University in Oregon, who chaired the panel.

Glyphosate is the main ingredient in Monsanto's widely used Roundup herbicide. The weedkiller is considered safer for people than other pesticides. That means farmers can use more Roundup without fear of damaging their crops. But the practice may have allowed weeds to develop their own natural resistance, the committee found.

Nine weed species in the United States have developed resistance to glyphosate since the introduction of genetically engineered crops, compared with seven in areas where genetically modified crops are not used, the report found. But in general the use of gene-engineered crops is beneficial, the experts found.

Using crops engineered to resist pesticides allows farmers to rely less on tilling the soil, a practice that can reduce soil quality and worsen erosion, the report found.

 Thu, 15 Apr 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, Apr 15

Max Min

36.8° | 28.2°

Rain: 00mm in24hrs Sunrise: 05:57

Humidity: 34% Sunset: 18:22

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Apr 16

Max Min

37° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Apr 17



35° | 28°

Sunny

Sunday

Apr 18



36° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

Apr 19



36° | 28°

Sunny

Tuesday

Apr 20



36° | 27°

Sunny

Wednesday

Apr 21



36° | 28°

Sunny