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## TNAU to purchase sugarcane harvester

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*It will help to overcome labour shortage and reduce the cost of cultivation*

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COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has placed an order for purchase of a sugarcane harvester under the National Agricultural Development Programme.

### Urgent need

According to a release from the university's Vice-Chancellor, P. Murugesu Boopathi, there is an urgent need for introducing sugarcane harvesters to overcome the problem of labour shortage and to reduce the cost of cultivation of sugarcane.

The university will purchase a whole-cane harvester suitable for 1.2 m spacing for demonstration purposes.

The harvester will cut both erect and lodged sugarcane by properly lifting them and de-topping the green top.

The cutting height will be adjusted.

The cut cane will be conveyed into the machine and de-trashed and delivered at a convenient height for collection.

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## **Second Cauvery water scheme to be implemented**

CHENNAI: The second Cauvery Combined Drinking Water Scheme will be implemented at a cost of Rs.47.74 crore and will benefit Kankeyam town panchayat (now elevated as municipality), Vellakoil Municipality and 174 rural habitations, Deputy Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Monday.

Responding to Congress member Vidiyal S. Sekar, Mr. Stalin said tenders had been called. "The project will be completed in 18 months."

He said each resident of Vellakoil Municipality area would get 135 litres of water per day. The figure would be 70 litres per head in Kankeyam and 40 litres in rural areas.

Mr. Sekar wanted the government to take steps to supply 135 litres of water per head in Kankeyam.

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## On a natural mission

Kavitha Srinivasa

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Organic farming has got a big boost with the state budget allotting Rs 100 crore for the sector and the Karnataka State Organic Farming Mission gearing up to make use of the opportunity that this provides. "Around 52,000 farmers have registered with us. We intend to increase the number to around 72,000 this year," said the chairman of the Karnataka State Organic Farming Mission, AS Anand.

The Mission runs a radio programme across nine radio stations, through which organic farmers from Karnataka interact with the others and urge them to adapt organic farming methods. This technique has yielded success, as each taluk has witnessed an increase of 200 farmers this year, from the existing 300 of last year.

The Mission has also been helped in its efforts with the Corporation Bank allotting Rs 2 crore to facilitate farmers to set up 10 air conditioned outlets in Bangalore. Seven air conditioned vehicles will transport the farm produce to the outlets. Similar outlets are proposed in every district of the state. The number of stores selling organic farming products has also risen.

There is also an attempt this year to bring organic produce under one umbrella and showcase it to the public.

Vana Bhoomi, the environmental community programme from Navachetana Trust, a non-profit, public charitable trust, created a platform for selling organic products to draw consumers directly to the point of purchase in an informal atmosphere. Called Namma Santhe, the first sale was held in March, while the second one will be held on April 11.

"The Santhe is a natural market, it includes organic products to promote local produce, educate people about the same and its impact on the environment, besides promoting a feeling of shared community experiences," explains Aliyeh Rizvi, who oversees the trust's art and culture programmes.

About 30 stalls offering fruit and vegetables, plants, spices, powders, rice, honey, natural soaps and balms, among other things, are planned for the second Santhe.

Next year, the Organic Farming Mission proposed to grow rice using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). "This requires less water and gives more yield with less seed and fewer plants per unit area," says HR Jayaram, a farmer and promoter of the store Era Organic.

With so many activities planned for the sector, organic farming is set to grow.

## Migratory birds poisoned to death

**Express News Service**

**First Published : 05 Apr 2010 02:25:00 AM IST**

RAMANATHAPURAM: Over a hundred migratory birds were found dead on the Sakkarakottai tank near Ramanathapuram town on Saturday. This is suspected to be the handiwork of anti-social elements.

This drought prone district has abundant stretches of babul and other trees on water bodies, which attract migratory birds from other countries during winter season.

Therefore, these birds, including black ibis and pelicans, come to roost at the three sanctuaries at Keelaselvanur-Melaselvanur and Chithrankudi. Government allots funds for the maintenance of these winged visitors.

Some of the birds also seek shelter in other tanks for roosting and breeding. A flock of such birds have also been roosting in Sakkarakottai tank and some anti- social elements had poisoned them.

These elements had dipped small fish in poison and left them on the banks of the tank. Having consumed the fish, the birds fall dead. The poachers then collect the dead birds and sell them.

Some of them make a meal of the birds.

It may be recalled that the same group had a large number of birds near the collectorate here last month. But no action had been taken to trace the culprits. The wildlife authorities have also failed to take measure to such poaching.

On information that dead birds were found floating in Sakkarakottai tank, wildlife and forest officials rushed to the spot and chased a group which had poisoned the birds.

## Milk price increase inevitable: Milma

**Express News Service**

**First Published : 05 Apr 2010 02:09:00 AM IST**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: An increase in the price of Milma milk is very much on the cards. Milma sources have confirmed that Minister for Food and Civil Supplies C Divakaran is learnt to have softened his stand on the demand for the price increase placed by the Milma.

“Milma cannot go ahead with a working capital. Everybody knows that Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the two states on whom we are depending for milk, have increased their supply price.

There has been a huge cut in the supply of milk from the government dairies of Tamil Nadu and so we need to make up for that gap using milk powder,” top Milma sources said. “We are now spending Rs 15 crore on importing 1000 metric tonnes of milk powder from Ireland. This quantity will last for around 25 days only,” they added. Meanwhile, the three unions of Milma have withdrawn the incentives they have been giving to the farmers on account of financial crisis.

“If the milk price is not increased, the situation will definitely worsen,” they said.

Hike of Rs 3 a litre

Milma had asked for a hike of Rs 3 a litre of milk. Milma officials say even that hike would not be enough to meet the financial needs of Milma.

“Across the country, the average price a litre is between Rs 22 and 25. Most states will be revising the prices in May. We too will have to increase the price since the situation demands it,” an official said.

He added that almost all the private dairies in the state have either hiked the price or have brought down the quantity being supplied a packet.

Tamil Nadu has been supplying 80,000 litres (inclusive of the private dairies). Now the government dairies which have been supplying nearly 45,000 litres have brought it down to 15,000 litres.

From Maharashtra, the state is taking one lakh litres. Milma is taking milk at over Rs 19 a litre from Maharashtra and another Rs 3.50 a litre for transportation.

Milk powder imported from Ireland

In the case of Tamil Nadu, the price a litre is Rs 19 and transportation charges a litre is Rs 1.70.

The state now needs 10.8 lakh litres a day. “The disappointing aspect is that while the domestic procurement now is down to 5.6 lakh litres, while it was 7 lakh litres a day last year same time. The gap is being met using nearly 40 metric tonnes of milk powder daily,” a Milma official said.

The milk powder is being taken from the Irish D a i r y B o a r d through the National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) after the Central Government took off the import duty on the item.

“Such an import has not happened in Milma’s history in the last 10-15 years. Our demand was for 3000 metric tonnes. We hope the next consignment will be provided soon,” a Milma official said.



## **Mars tech to find water on Earth's deserts**

PTI, Apr 5, 2010, 01.14am IST

LONDON: The technology Nasa has used on Mars to find underground ice can be replicated to search hidden water sources in deserts on Earth, scientists at the US space agency have said, claiming this could also help prevent the world from conflicts over war.

The Nasa technology, dubbed Marsis, consisted of a radar sounder with a 40-metre antenna fitted to an orbiter. In 2007, it discovered the desert that covers Mars sat on enough frozen water to submerge the Red Planet.

It was then able to bounce radio waves 3.7km beneath the surface of Mars.

The same technology should be used in the deserts of Middle East and north Africa to search for hidden water, Nasa scientist Essam Heggy said.

The technology could detect water up more than half a mile beneath the dense deserts that cover much of the Middle East and north Africa, Eggy said.

## 93% of wild medicinal plants in endangered list: Study

PTI, Apr 4, 2010, 12.50pm IST

NEW DELHI: Ninety three per cent of wild medicinal plants used for making ayurvedic medicines in the country are endangered and the government is trying to relocate them from their usual habitat to protect them.

The threat to the plants came to the fore in an assessment exercise in different states carried out by the Botanical Survey of India.

The assessments were done for a total of 359 prioritized wild medicinal plant species. Out of this, 335 have been assigned Red List status ranging from critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable to near-threatened.

In addition, a total of 15 such species recorded in trade have been found threatened, officials in the health ministry's Ayush department said.

Some of the rare plants reported to be threatened, have been relocated during the last decade, including *Utleria Salicifolia* and *Hydnocarpus Pentandra* in Western Ghats, *Gymnocladus Assamicus* and *Begonia Tessaricarpa* from Arunachal Pradesh and *Agapetes Smithiana* in Sikkim.

The assessments have involved conducting Conservation Assessment and Management Prioritisation using International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List Categories.

The officials said the medicinal plant resources in the country are threatened by over exploitation to meet the demand of herbal industries.

As per the information received from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, about 95

per cent of such plants are harvested from the wild, primarily from forests.

The National Medicinal Plants Board constituted in November 2000, has been implementing a Central sector scheme for development and cultivation of medicinal plants since 2000-01.

This scheme was revised and renamed as "Central Sector Scheme for Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants" during 2008-09.

States forest departments have been given assistance for protection and propagation of such endangered species, especially used by the herbal industries.

Projects for setting up of 29 Medicinal Plants Conservation Areas (MPCAs) have also been implemented in the states covering mainly the medicinal plants viz Asoka, Guggal and Dashmool varieties.

The scheme is being implemented with an outlay of Rs 321.30 crore during the 11th Plan.

In addition, a new "Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Mission on Medicinal Plants" with a total outlay of Rs 630 crore is being implemented since 2008-09 by National Medicinal Plants Board. A total of 24 states have been covered under the scheme.



Chennai - INDIA

## Today's Weather



Clear

**Tuesday, Apr 6**

Max Min

36.0° | 25.7°

Rain: 00mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 06:03

Humidity: 45% Sunset: 18:21

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

## Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

**Wednesday, Apr 7**

Max Min

37° | 26°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Apr 8



36° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

Apr 9



36° | 25°

Tstorm

Saturday

Apr 10



36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Apr 11



37° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

Apr 12



37° | 27°

Partly Cloudy