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Distribute foodgrains at very low or no cost, Supreme Court tells Centre

J. Venkatesan

“Consider increasing quantum of food supply to BPL population”

‘Consider opening fair price shops for all the 30 days in a month' A Bench passed the order, taking on record affidavit filed by Centre

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New Delhi: To deal with the problem of foodgrains rotting in godowns, the Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to consider distributing them at “very low cost” or “no cost” as a short term measure.

A Bench of Justices Dalveer Bhandari and Deepak Verma passed this order, taking on record the affidavit filed by the Centre in response to the suggestions made by the court on July 27.

The Bench, after hearing Additional Solicitor General Mohan Parasaran, for the government, and senior counsel Colin Gonsalves, for petitioner People's Union for Civil Liberties, in its order said to deal with the problem of foodgrains, “which is rotting,” the government could consider increasing the quantum of food supply to the population Below Poverty Line (BPL), opening the fair price shops for all the 30 days in a month and distribute foodgrains to the deserving population at a very low cost or no cost.

It referred to the affidavit filed by Union Food Secretary Alka Sirohi and said “a serious endeavour has been made to give a clear answer to all the queries raised by us in our last order. On why the facilities of the Public Distribution System [PDS] be not discontinued for people who are Above Poverty Line [APL], the Centre said that after meeting the total allocation of the population in the Antyodaya Anna Yojana and the BPL categories, the remaining foodgrains are allocated to the States and Union Territories for distribution to APL population."

The Bench said: "That is precisely what the Court had in mind when the previous order was passed."

On computerisation of PDS across the country, the Bench said: "The Union of India, in principle, has agreed to the complete computerisation of the entire PDS, which means computerisation from the godown of the Food Corporation of India to the ultimate beneficiary to ensure greater transparency of the entire PDS. Looking to the urgency of this matter, we request the Union of India to expedite the whole process and submit a comprehensive report to this Court as early as possible and in any event within six weeks from today [Thursday]."

In its order, the Bench pointed out that the Centre had stated that there had been record procurement of wheat and rice in the last three years as a result of which the central pool stocks reached the level of 604.28 lakh tonnes on June 1, 2010.

"Due to high procurement of wheat and rice during the last three years and insufficient covered storage space available in the country to store the procured stock, 178 lakh tonnes of wheat was stored in Covered and Plinth [CAP] storage, as on June 1, 2010. CAP storage involves storage on elevated plinths with polythene covers specially made for this purpose." The court made it clear that the Centre must ensure food security of the country. In view of record procurement which the Centre was not able to properly store and preserve, it would be appropriate that the Centre might take some long term and short term measures to solve the problem. It said: "Permanent solution lies in constructing adequate storage facilities. The Union of India may consider constructing at least one large Food Corporation of India godown in every State and consider the possibility of construction of one godown in every division if not in every district of the State." It wanted the PDS to be strengthened particularly, in tribal and drought-prone areas of the country. On the petitioner's submission that though the Centre was allocating 35-kg of wheat/rice per family, the States were not distributing it in the same proportion, the Bench asked the States to file affidavits in that respect within one week. It directed the matter to be listed for further hearing on August 31 after filing of replies and rejoinders.

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Double digit food inflation matter of concern, says Pranab

BL Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Finance Minister,MOS Finanance ,Namo Narain Meena and Chairman, SBI, Mr. O. P. Bhatt (L) at a meeting with Chief Executives of Public Sector Banks in New Delhi on Saturday. Photo: Kamal Narang

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Saturday expressed concern over rising prices as the food inflation, after a gap of two weeks, entered the double digits driven mainly by higher prices of essential items.

“Of course it (food inflating) is a concern,” he told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with chiefs of PSU banks.

High food inflation, Mr. Mukherjee added, was also on account of “base effect”, which is the statistical impact of the level of prices in the corresponding period last year on the current inflation rate. With low base even the small rise in inflation appears large.

After remaining in single digit for two weeks, food inflation again shot up to double digits at 11.4 per cent for the week ended July 31.

Experts, however, felt that food prices would calm after the impact of monsoon became visible with the advent of kharif (summer) crop in the market.

Food inflation had surpassed 20 per cent mark towards the end of 2009.

Overall inflation, which also include variation in prices of manufactured goods, was 10.55 per cent in June.

The figures for July, which will be made public on Monday, many economists feel, would be higher.

Inflation, which was in the negative in June-August 2009, soared to 11.23 per cent in May 2010.

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Prices of some food items rising: Pawar

Sandeep Joshi

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Sharad Pawar on Friday said retail prices of some food items like pulses, edible oil, milk and vegetables have been rising in the last six months.

“There are few items (essential commodities) where there is no improvement in prices…retail prices of pulses such as urad dal and moong dal, edible oils like groundnut oil and vanaspati, milk and potato have shown a marginal increase in last six months,” Mr. Pawar said at the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour. The Minister, however, said the government has taken steps to contain food inflation. Prices of urad and moong dal have increased by Rs.3 a kg from Rs.70 and Rs.80 respectively six months back. Similarly, groundnut oil prices are still ruling firm at Rs.115 a kg and milk at Rs.24 a kg. But sugar prices have come down to Rs.30 per kg now.

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Mechanised harvester to save pulses growers' time

Special Correspondent

Besides separating grains, it can do away with manual process

testing time:The combined pulses harvester being taken up for a demo at the National Pulses Research Centre in Vamban village.

PUDUKOTTAI: With a view to equipping pulses growers with modern agricultural practices, the National Pulses Research Centre in Vamban village near here and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra have jointly introduced a combined mechanised harvester.

The harvester can be operated both on flat and levelled fields to separate grains.

By avoiding the conventional manual threshing process, the dependence on manual labour normally required for harvesting the crop can be obviated.

Imported machine

Costing Rs. 15 lakh, the imported machinery saves both time and expenditure .

Normally, about 20 labourers harvest an acre of land for a few hours, manually separating the grains. But, with the machinery, harvesting can be completed within an hour.

Speaking after inaugurating a demo of the machinery at the green gram fields at Vamban village on Thursday, T. Jeyaraj, Director, Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute, Aduthurai, appealed to the pulses growers to take maximum advantage of the combined harvester.

Cost efficient

S.Geetha, Professor and Head, National Pulses Research Centre, said the cost of harvest would be reduced to a great extent.With the harvester in place, the necessity for labour-intensive process does not arise.

The harvester would be made available to farmers on a nominal rental tariff that would be fixed shortly.K.Chinnaiyan, Programme Co-ordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, said the pulses growers would be benefitted in a big way.Senior professors D.Packiaraj, H. Vijaraghavan were among those who spoke.A large number of pulses growers and scientists were present.

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45 farmers' clubs to be formed

Watershed programmes to be taken up

Amalgamation:Collector P. Muthuveeran addressing at the inauguration of federation of farmers' clubs at Chinnamanur.

THENI: A total 45 farmers' clubs would be established in the district this year under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to improve production of agriculture produces and to propagate latest technologies among farming communities, said Collector P. Muthuveeran. He was inaugurating federation of farmers' clubs at Chinnamanur near here on Wednesday.

The NABARD had formed 10 clubs so far and the rest would be set up in the months to come.

A total of 90 clubs have been functioning in the district till date. Chinnamanur alone has 35 clubs. Now, best performing 15 clubs in Chinnamanur have joined together and formed a federation to expand their activities. The Collector said that farmers clubs, comprising 10 to 15 members could be formed in each village and they should act as a bridge between banks and farmers. The NABARD would organise training programmes to farmers.

The club would be linked to a nearest bank at the village.

Three best performing farmers' clubs in the district had been selected for awards this year, he announced.

Briefing various development activities of the NABARD, Mr. Muthuveeran said that the NABARD had sanctioned Rs.4.65 crore for taking up various development works in the district.

Additional buildings would be constructed for higher secondary schools in Cumbum, Murukodai and Highwavys at an estimated cost of Rs.2.23 crore, a bridge at Devadhanapatti at a cost of Rs.1.12 crore and three rural roads at Rs.1.29 crore.

Watershed programmes would be taken up at an estimated cost of Rs.1.50 crore, he added.

Later, he distributed welfare aid to farmers and financial assistance to self-help groups.

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Plan to increase milk production in Tirupur district

R Vimal Kumar

Veterinary camps to be organised

Tirupur: To increase milk production in the district, the Department of Animal Husbandry plans to conduct 171 rural veterinary camps, 100 infertility camps, 60 farmers' meet/training on cattle management and raise fodder on 1,500 acre during this fiscal at a total outlay of Rs. 16 lakh.

“The project cost will be met from the funds earmarked under the World Bank-funded Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water-bodies Restoration and Management (IAMWARM) project and Kalnadai Padhukappu Thittam (KPT),” Joint Director of Animal Husbandry V. Thangavel told The Hindu.

Artificial insemination

Under the rural veterinary camps, the department would upgrade the local stock of cattle and buffaloes by artificial insemination using the exotic and crossbreeding varieties showing genetically superior milk production traits free of cost.

“We will use the frozen semen straws obtained from bull varieties like Jersey, Holstein Friesian and Murrah for artificial insemination,” Dr. Thangavel said.

Besides this, free medicines for de-worming would be distributed and pregnancy diagnostic tests carried out at the rural veterinary camps.

Fodder cultivation

With nutrition playing an important role towards good health of cattle, the department would bring about 617 ha under fodder cultivation this financial year.

“For this, we will distribute fodder slips of CO-3, and seeds of Kolukkattai grass and African Tall Maize varieties,” Dr. Thangavel said.

The Kolukattai grass would come up on 150 ha, African Tall Maize on 450 ha and CO-3 on 17 ha.

Assistance

The beneficiary farmers would also get technical assistance from the agricultural officials on ploughing and de-weeding to maintain the fodder farms. “Nutritive feeding alone can bring about a significant increase in milk production,” Dr. Thangavel said.

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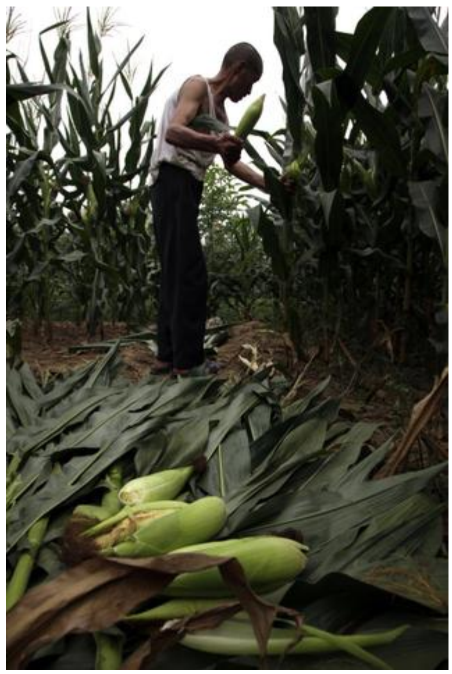
Chinese farmers using nuclear technology to boost crop yield



AP A farmer pulls off a corn at a corn field on the outskirts of Beijing. China is conducting experiments to apply nuclear technology to improve the yield of agricultural produce.

China is conducting experiments to apply nuclear technology to improve the yield of agricultural produce encouraging farmers to cultivate various varieties of irradiated seeds, which involves exposing them to low doses of gamma rays.

Some of the Chinese farmers have sown the seeds irradiated by Heilongjiang Academy of Agricultural Sciences (HAAS) and are monitoring the growth of the crop.

“I just want to try it. I hope nuclear technology can help me to raise either the output or quality of crops," Li Weiguo says a farmer in Shuqing Village near Shuangcheng City, who had sown the irradiated seeds soybean and corn this summer, expecting new varieties with higher yields.

It is the first time the 33-year-old farmer in China's Heilongjiang Province has had seeds irradiated with the help of agricultural experts.

The irradiation process involves exposing seeds to low doses of gamma rays from cobalt-60, a radioisotope of cobalt, which causes changes in the seed's genetic makeup, said Xu Dechun, vice director of the institute.

It usually took experts about five years to screen out seeds for new varieties with stable genetic characteristics, Xu told Xinhua newsagency.

Compared with the widely used cross-breeding method, which largely depended on opportunity and usually took about eight years to get a stable variety, seed irradiation intervention was far more effective in bringing out the desired characteristics of a certain crop, he said.

Xu's team has developed 28 new soybean breeds, almost 20 wheat varieties and a dozen corn varieties.

More than seven million hectares of farmland in Heilongjiang have grown such crops, which raised yields by more than 50 million kilogrammes.

China is the world's largest grain producer and consumer. The central and local governments have been supporting the application of nuclear technologies in agricultural development.

Huge investments have been made in research programmes across the country and almost every province has established atomic energy institutes, Liang Qu, director of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture, said at the third Global Forum of Leaders for Agricultural Science and Technology.

The FAO and IAEA had continuously promoted the application of nuclear technologies in agriculture since 1950, he said. So far, more than 3,000 new varieties have entered mass production worldwide for commercial purposes. In addition to developing new varieties, irradiation is also used to retard spoilage and increase the shelf life of food.

In China’s eastern province of Shandong, exposing garlic to low doses of gamma rays from cobalt-60 could postpone sprouting, which allowed garlic to be preserved in normal temperatures for longer, Xu said.

So far, China has approved the application of the technique for more than 30 types of food, including meet, dried vegetables, shrimp and fruits.

Many countries like the United States and Japan had recognised food irradiation, as the method did not make the food radioactive, and did not change the food any more than canning or freezing, he said.

The US Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of irradiation for fruit, vegetables, pork, poultry, red meat and spices. Food irradiation kills bacteria, insects and parasites that can cause food-borne diseases, such as salmonella, trichinosis and cholera.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, food-borne illnesses affect more than 76 million Americans and kill more than 5,000 each year. The World Health Organisation believed the technology was absolutely safe to people and food after a 10-year survey, Liang said and no problems concerning radiation-induced mutation had been found.

Unlike genetically-modified crops, which could introduce new genetic codes from other plants or species into their genetic makeup to create new characteristics, nuclear radiation-induced mutation simply accelerated the process of spontaneous genetic changes, he said.

In agriculture, radiation could help kill insect pests, develop more disease-resistant crops, improve the nutritional value of some crops or their baking or melting qualities or reduce their cooking time, said Trevor Nicholls, chief executive officer of CAB International Head Office in the United Kingdom.

Chinese specialists were still researching many of the functions of irradiation, Xu said. His staff previously launched an irradiation program to kill the sperm of a certain pest insect in a move to curb insect disease.

“The project failed and we are planning to resume the research and experiments once the authorities approve it,” he said. He said the future research would focus on combining seed irradiation with trans-gene technology, cross-breeding and chemical breeding means to develop disease-resistant and natural disaster tolerant varieties.

It has been predicted that the world's population will exceed nine billion by 2050, posing an even greater challenge to food security.

Along with other means, nuclear technology was expected to help ease the gap between food supply and demand by increasing agricultural productivity and food quality, Tang Huajun, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences said.

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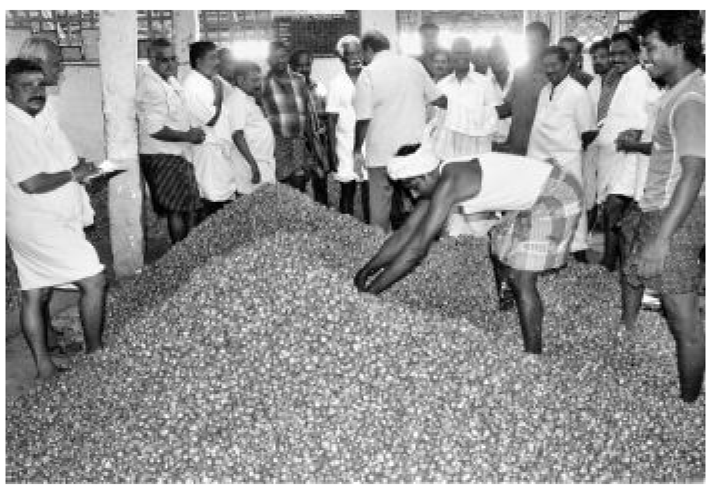
Slump in export lowers onion prices

Arrivals to the Dindigul market touch around 6,000 to 7,000 bags



Mounting concern:Huge arrivals of small onion to the wholesale market in Dindigul on Friday.

DINDIGUL: Sudden fall in exports have pushed the prices of shallots (small onions) to rock bottom, signalling bleak future for onion producers in the months to come. Within a month, Dindigul whole sale market has witnessed a four fold slump in onion prices.

The prices that were hovering between Rs.25 and Rs.35 in the first week of July, came down to Rs.5 and 7 a kg, much lower than the prices prevailed in June. (Prices of onion in June were

Rs.10 and Rs.12.)

The main reason for this pathetic condition was the sharp slump in exports to East Asian countries and considerable increase in arrivals from Karnataka and Gujiliamparai, Eriyode, Kutralam, some of the major onion producing centres in southern Tamil Nadu.

Now, arrivals to the market were around 6,000 to 7,000 bags (each bag contains 80 kg) which was 3,000 to 4,000 bags a day last month.

Earlier, 90 per cent of the arrivals were shipped to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand leaving just 10 per cent for domestic consumption. Now, the situation turned topsy-turvy.

Traders and buyers had been struggling to export 15 per cent of the arrival.

Stagnation of large quantity haunts traders and farmers.

“We cannot sell large volume in domestic market,” said V. Rajendran, an onion trader.

If this trend continued, farmers would face worst situations in the coming months.

The market would be flooded with onions from Andipatti, Cumbum in Theni district, Sengurichi, Gujiliamparai, Vedasandur and Iyyalur in Dindigul district, Udumalpet and Tiruchi in next two months. At present, farmers in Mysore had been dumping at least four to five loads of onions every week to Dindigul market.

In the peak season, the market would receive at least 350 to 400 tonnes of onions in a week, he added.

Wholesale onion trader K. Sundar said that Sri Lanka, a major importer of shallots, had expanded its area of onion cultivation substantially slashing imports from India.

Now, the export to Sri Lanka from Dindigul was almost nil. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand too scaled down its imports, he added.

“We cannot not offer even reasonable prices to farmers because of poor export orders,” said M. Marimuthu, another trader.

July month had brought cheers to farmers in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, particularly in Mysore owing to sudden increase in exports to East Asian countries.

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TNAU device to help climb trees

Coimbatore, Aug. 13

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has unveiled a unique a tree-climbing device.

According to Dr D. Anantha Krishnan, Professor, Department of Farm Power and Machinery, TNAU, the device can be used even by unskilled people. “It requires just 10 minutes to climb and harvest one coconut tree, of about 45 feet height. On an average, around 50 trees can be harvested with this device in a single day. The cost is Rs 4,000,” he said.

University scientists organised a live demonstration on how to use the device effectively.

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Mixed trend in edible oils

Mumbai, Aug 13

Edible oil prices witnessed a mixed trend on Friday. Groundnut and soya ruled steady. Palmolein declined by Rs 2 despite uptrend in Malaysian markets. Bullishness in national and international cotton markets has have pushed up the prices of cotton refined oil by Rs 5 on Friday. Volume of trade in the market was thin.

The sentiment was steady on dull local demand. Cotton market was bullish and it reflected on cotton oil due to lean period and limited availability. Reports of sowing and current present status of produce, coming from main producing areas, are encouraging. From next month, new arrivals will start in southern States and it may affect the sentiment.

Malaysia's September crude palm oil futures ended higher by 50 ringgit (MYR) at 2,780 MYR), October by 45 MYR at 2,718 MYR a tonne. Indore NBOT soya oil futures also ruled firm. August futures declined to Rs 510.50, September to Rs 514.50 and October to Rs 512.

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Imported milk powder, butter oil to be kept as 'buffer'

National Dairy Board to carry them over to next season.

NDDB has contracted import of 30,000 tonnes of SMP and 15,000 tonnes of butter oil/anhydrous milk fat.

New Delhi, Aug 13

Facing political flak for importing skimmed milk powder (SMP) and butter oil amidst a developing domestic glut, the Centre, on Friday, stated that the imported material will be held by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) “as buffer stock” to be “carried over (to) the next lean season”.

CONDITIONS FOR RELEASE

NDDB will supply the imported powder and fat to State Dairy Federations “only if they are not in a position to maintain supplies to consumers by using locally available fresh milk or surplus milk powder,” according to a Union Agriculture Ministry statement here.

The decision to hold the imported material as buffer (and not offload it in the market) has been taken “in view of recent reports coming from some States that the milk availability situation has improved and surplus milk in coming into the organised market due to good monsoon”, the statement added.

IMPORT CONTRACT

NDDB had earlier contracted import of 30,000 tonnes of SMP and 15,000 tonnes of butter oil/anhydrous milk fat, of which 12,000 tonnes and 6,500 tonnes are learnt to have already arrived. With the balance quantities slated to land during the ‘flush' season from next month – when buffaloes, in particular, tend to produce more milk – domestic dairies have expressed fears that the imported material would depress their product realisations.

The fear of imports has already led to ex-factory prices of SMP dropping from Rs 145-150 to Rs 120-125 a kg and that of ghee from Rs 250 to Rs 185 a kg over the last three months. The prevailing domestic rates are below the landed cost of $2,950 a tonne (Rs 138 a kg) and $4,150-4,250 a tonne (Rs 195-200 akg) at which NDDB has reportedly contracted the imports from New Zealand and Ireland.

The Agriculture Ministry statement said that NDDB was permitted to undertake the duty-free imports based on the “serious apprehensions about availability of adequate quantity of milk in the lean/summer months of 2010”. During 2009-10, due to severe drought conditions impacting supply of fodder and feed ingredients, milk production suffered a set back.

Procurement by cooperatives grew by only 3 per cent, as compared to around 10 per cent the previous year, whereas the milk marketing rose by 6 per cent.

The imports were allowed only to ensure no disruption of milk supplies to consumers, the statement added.

Domestic dairies, on their part, contend that the imports, if at all, should have taken place last year. Instead, their arrival precisely at a time when production is rebounding has depressed product prices to levels, where it is uneconomical for dairies to procure and process milk from farmers.

UNREST OVER REPORTS

In fact, there have been reports of milk refusal by dairies triggering farmer unrest incidents in the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar's state, Maharashtra. The opposition BJP-Shiv Sena, in turn, has sought to derive political mileage from the issue.

“NDDB cannot obviously go back on the import contracts, though it might seek to renegotiate the prices. Otherwise, it stands to lose by having imported at above current domestic prices and now being forced to bear the cost of stocking till the next lean season,” sources pointed out.

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Poppy seeds price may rise on supply squeeze

Production declines in Turkey, other origins.

G. K. Nair Kochi, Aug. 13Contrary to expectations, prices of white poppy seeds are expected to increase on short supply due to poor quality of material and likely decline in output in Turkey and other origins.

Unfavourable weather

A squeeze in supply from Turkey is almost certain. Unfavourable weather conditions have adversely affected the quality apart from shrinking the new crop output, trading sources claimed.

Weather in Europe has worsened with heavy rains and floods in many areas where poppy is grown and hence the market has moved up, importers told Business Line.

Heavy rains in regions mainly growing poppy seeds in Turkey, such as Afyon Karahisar, Denzili, Usak, Konya, have affected the quality of the produce by changing the colour of white poppy seeds into yellow, they said.

A Turkish trader was quoted as saying: “White poppy seeds is very speculative item and if demand coming from India, prices increasing very easily.” However, he said, “first coming products qualities were very bad and we haven't made business with first comings as the quality is not good. The colour was yellowish,” he added.

In fact, Turkey has been expecting a bumper crop this year, but all the expectations have been spoilt by the vagaries of the weather and the crop is likely to be lower.

This phenomenon has changed the market trend. The prices have been pushed up to $3,000 a tonne from $2,100 a tonne.

As a result, prices in the Indian domestic market, which solely depends on imported material, is set to move up to Rs 250 – 270 a kg from Rs 210–230 a kg at present, trading sources predicted.

They attributed the rise in price to low inventory, short supply and rising prices at the origin of supply.

Ports closed

“To add fuel to the fire, the Mumbai and Nhavaseva ports are closed for 8-10 days, due to oil spilling, which will hinder clearances, delay in new imports. There will be at least one month delay. Ever since this news spread, the poppy seeds' prices increased to Rs 230 a kg in a single day, and it is expected to move up further,” Bangalore-based dealers said.

Erratic weather conditions prevailing in other origins may lead to a decline in over all poppy seeds output this year, they said.

As the festival season begins, prices of all imported spices are likely to go up in the coming days, they said.

Cloves markets "too are on fire, on short supply and delay in import clearances, cloves will soon jump by Rs 100 a kg as there is no fresh imports for four months," they claimed.

According to latest information today cloves prices are on an upsurge on tight supply with Colombo cloves prices shooting up to $6,800-$7,000. There were no sellers, Bangalore-based dealers told Business Line.

Prices for Madagascar, Comoros and Brazil cloves also moved up to $6,100 a tonne. "Colombo cloves will rise to Rs 340 a kg, while that of Zanzibar and Madagascar will be up at Rs411 a kg. If the current trend prevailed the prices may cross Rs 500 a kg," they said.

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Fresh buying drives up onion

M.R. SubramaniChennai, Aug 13

Onion prices increased this week at Lasalgaon and surrounding markets on renewed demand from other States such as Delhi and Haryana. Export demand also looked up with Gulf buyers trying to build inventories even as the holy month of Ramadan began, while Bangladesh also turned a buyer.

The modal price or the rate at which most of the trades took place increased from Rs 775 a quintal last week to as high as Rs 805, on Thursday, before slipping to Rs 780 on Friday at Lasalgaon, the hub of onion trade in the country.

Arrivals were generally over 100 tonnes, though they dropped to Rs 975 on Friday at Lasalgaon.

"Onion witnessed demand from Delhi, Haryana and neighbouring areas on reports of setback to the Rajasthan crop. Demand from Bangladesh is also back," said Mr Madan Prakash, Director of the Chennai-based Rajathi Group of companies that exports onion.

“We saw demand from the Gulf re-emerge. Stockists there are rebuilding inventories for requirements after Ramadan,” said Mr Rupesh Jaju, a Nasik-based exporter. “Bangladesh buyers also picked up good quantities,” he said.

“Domestic demand is fairly constant but exports are looking, “ he said.

Mr Prakash said, the closure of the Jawarharlal Nehru and Mumbai ports due to oil spillage following the collision of two vessels possibly capped any rise in the price.

“Gulf buyers get onion from Maharashtra only. They don't even prefer Gujarat. South is out of bound since exports have to be necessarily routed through Colombo,” said Mr Prakash.

Prices are expected to continue ruling firm, especially with the festive season ahead. Meanwhile, exports in July slipped over 50 per cent compared with the same period a year ago. Shipments in July were 1.02 lakh tonnes (lt) against 2.05 lt in July last year. Overall exports during April-July are also down at 5.68 lt, valued at Rs 579 crore, against 7.94 lt, valued at Rs 867.79 crore.

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Farmers' body wants States to control seed prices

Hyderabad, Aug. 13

Political parties, farmers and non-governmental organisations have asked the Union Government to let States to have the power to regulate seed prices and royalties. They wanted the Government to introduce relevant clauses in the Bill to make it farmer-friendly.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, Mr M. Kodand Reddy, President of Andhra Pradesh Kisan Congress, said the all-party delegation had not received any positive response from Mr Sharad Pawar, the Union Agriculture Minister, in their meeting last month.

“We met him twice but he had not cleared our doubts related to control on seed pricing and royalties. Also, we received no response to our demand that only State agencies should carry out the trials and certify. We are worried about the future of farmers in case of passage of the Bill in its present farm," he said.

"We will be left with no option but to organise the farmers to oppose clauses that could harm their interests," he said.

Mr Kolli Nageswara Rao, Vice-President of Akhila Bharata Kisan Sabha, felt that the multi-national companies could charge very high prices for seeds if the Government did not take steps to regulate prices.

Ms Kavitha Kuruganti of Kheti Virasat Mission said the argument that prices would come down if things were left to market economy. "The Minister contended that the companies might withhold seed production in the event of uncompetitive pricing regime. Citing this bogey, they were taking powers away from states to control prices," she said.

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Cut in default penalty irks cardamom growers

G. K. NairKochi, Aug. 13

Cardamom growers in Kerala's spices district, Idukki, have resented the sudden decision to cut penalties by the Forward Markets Commission (FMC) on cardamom delivery defaults from 12.5 per cent to 3 per cent.

Expressing their resentment the planters, Mr Joshy Abraham, Mr Santhosh Joseph and Mr Noby Jose, told Business Line that the decision communicated "is highly suspicious as this has been done without consulting the spot market and the participants".

According to them, it would have serious implications for the entire trading system as genuine delivery participants will be severely affected. Further, they said, the modifications have been carried out on running contracts, which means it has impacted participants who are currently involved in the market and entered into contracts on predefined conditions. Currently, the contract itself stands breached, they alleged.

In cardamom trade, 5 to 10 per cent volatility is considered very normal and also the complications and uncertainty in procurement from the auctions adds to the distinct nature of the cardamom market. The “new action simply restricts the physical cardamom participants from participating in the market”.

For instance, if an exporter buys from the futures market and the seller defaults, the exporter who may have committed to an order would receive only a penalty of 1 per cent (1 per cent out of 3 per cent) as compensation, which is highly inadequate.

This “may drive away buyers from the contract and hence a lower price on the futures contracts, which may boil down to the spot market also”.

This decision has larger implications than the futures market, they claimed. Rather than decreasing the penalty on the cardamom delivery defaults, the FMC and the MCX should have regulated the unwanted speculation in the market, they pointed out.

Date:14/08/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/08/14/stories/2010081450541700.htm

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Import-halt rumours perk up pulses

Indore, Aug 13

The price of pulses continued to move up on rumours that imports have come to a halt following last week's collision of two ships near Mumbai.

Utilising the rumours of stoppage in pulse import in the country, stockists pushed up prices.

Moreover, traders hope that the uptrend will continue following increased demand for the forthcoming festive season. A rise in demand for chana and chana dal in Madhya Pradesh for mills in Maharashtra and Rajasthan where the stocks have got exhausted.

The rise in price of pulse seeds has also affected pulse prices.

In the spot market, chana dal perked up by Rs 25 to Rs 2,650-Rs 2,675 a quintal, chana dal (medium) to Rs 2,750-Rs 2,775, up Rs 25, and chana dal (bold) Rs 2,850-Rs 2,875 (no change).

Similarly, masor dal quoted at Rs 3,825-Rs 3,850, up Rs 25; masor bold Rs 4,025-Rs 4,100, up Rs 50; tur dal Rs 5,600-Rs 5,700, up Rs 50; tur dal (markewali) Rs 6,200, up Rs 200; urad dal Rs 5,700-Rs 5,800, up Rs 50; moong dal Rs 6,200-Rs 6,300 (no change); and moong dal (monger) perked up to Rs 7,000, up Rs 200.

Among the pulse seeds, an increase was seen mainly in new moong and masur. New moong perked up Rs 300 to Rs 5,300-Rs 5,600a quintal, while masur quoted at Rs 3,500, up Rs 50.

hindustantimes
Sat,14 Aug 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Cloudy	**Saturday, Aug 14** Max Min 35.1º |26.9º
Rain: Trace	Sunrise: 5:56
Humidity: 89%	Sunset: 18:31
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1004.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

Rainy	**Sunday, Aug 15** Max Min 35º | 26º

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Aug 16	**Aug 17**	**Aug 18**	**Aug 19**	**Aug 20**

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

'Wheat may be best-performing agri commodity in H2'

14 Aug 2010, 0104 hrs IST,Bloomberg

SINGAPORE: Wheat may be the best-performing agricultural commodity in the second half as lower shipments from the Black Sea region create 'ripple effects' that support prices, Barclays Capital said.

Prices may peak as high as $9 a bushel in Chicago, 21% higher than Thursday's close, as importers seek alternative supplies after Russia declared an export ban on expectations that Ukraine and Kazakhstan will curb shipments because of dry weather, Sudakshina Unnikrishnan, a vice-president at Barclays, said.

Sugar, which rose to a 29-year high in February, may be the worst performer as the global market swings to a surplus after two years of deficit, causing prices to tumble, Mr Unnikrishnan said in Singapore.

More expensive wheat may encourage buyers to switch to products like rice and corn, dragging other commodities higher and fuelling "fears of contagion into food prices," HSBC Global Research economists including Karen Ward and Frederic Neumann said in a report. Wheat futures surged to the highest price in almost two years on August 6, a day after Russia declared a ban on grain exports amid the worst drought in at least 50 years and the country's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin proposed that Kazakhstan and Belarus follow suit.

Futures have jumped 75% from this year's low of $4.255 a bushel on June 9 on concern that excessive rains in Canada, drought in Russia and other exporting countries in the former Soviet Union and dry weather in other parts of Europe will curb global supply.

“With wheat being at the start of the food chain, fears of a contagion in food prices are more understandable,” HSBC economists wrote in an August 9 report. “If it starts to affect the price of foodstuffs more broadly, we may be in for more of a problem,” the report said. Wheat is milled into flour used in making bread, pasta and noodles. The grain can also be used interchangeably with corn as a main ingredient in livestock feed. A jump in wheat prices may push prices of pork, beef and chicken and dairy products higher, Chung Yang Ker, an analyst at Phillip Futures, in Singapore, said.

“There’s a lot of ripple effects beyond the very obvious,” Unnikrishnan said in Singapore, referring to the impact of lower shipments on the global supply and demand balance. Importers may rush to stockpile the grain if they believe prices will keep rising, she said.

Higher prices may also encourage farmers to boost planting, pushing prices lower in the first quarter of next year, she said. “We’re going to see a production response and we’re going to see export demand being met,” Unnikrishnan said.

The US, the world’s largest wheat exporter, was forecast to expand its harvest by 2.2% to 61.6 million metric tonnes in the season that began June 1, while stockpiles by May 31 will fall to 25.9 million tonnes from 26.5 million tonnes a year earlier, the Department of Agriculture said.

Global wheat production will drop to a three-year low of 645.7 million tonnes in the 2010-2011 season, compared with last month’s estimate of 661 million tonnes, the USDA said. Global inventory, which was forecast to drop to a two-year low of 174.76 million tonnes, will be 49.9 million tonnes larger than the level in the 2007-2008 season when prices surged to a record, data showed. “If you’re looking at global production, excluding the former Soviet Union countries, those numbers are looking very, very healthy,” Unnikrishnan said.

Those supplies will prevent “big sustained rallies” in prices, she said. While raw sugar will be the worst performer in the second half, it’s unlikely prices will fall back to the 13-cents level seen in

May “because despite the pick-up in production, global inventories are still at very thin levels and import demand is still fairly strong,” Unnikrishnan said

Sugar rises on fresh buying

14 Aug 2010, 1652 hrs IST,PTI

NEW DELHI: Sugar prices rose by Rs 50 per quintal in the wholesale sugar market today on emergence of buying by stockists to meet the festival
demand. Marketmen said fresh buying by stockists to meet the festival demand mainly pushed up wholesale sugar prices.

Sugar ready medium and second grade prices rose by Rs 50 each to Rs 2,750-2,900 and Rs 2,740-2,890 per quintal. Similarly, the mill delivery medium and second grade traded higher by the same margin at Rs 2,630-2,750 and Rs 2,620-2,740 per quintal.

Following are today''s rates in Rs per quintal: Sugar ready M-30 2,750-2,900 and S-30 2,740-2,890. Mill delivery M-30 2,630-2,750 and S-30 2,620-2740.

Sugar mill gate prices (excluding duty): Kinonni 2,700, Asmoli 2,690, Mawana 2,630, Titabi 2,640, Thanabhavan 2,620, Budhana 2,620 and Dorala 2,625.

Business Standard

Monday, Aug 16, 2010

Sesame oil rises on fresh millers buying

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 16:23 IST

In restricted activity, sesame oil prices rose by Rs 50 per quintal on the wholesale oils and oilseed market today on fresh buying by vanaspati millers.

Elsewhere, prices moved in a tight range on alternate bouts of trading and settled around previous levels.

Marketmen said fresh buying by vanaspati millers led to a rise in sesame oil prices.

In the edible section, sesame mill delivery oil gained Rs 50 to Rs 5,950 per quintal.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Oilseeds: mustard seed 2,500-2,600 and groundnut seed Rs 2,100-2,850
Vanaspati ghee (15 litres tin) 750-860

Edible oils: Groundnut mill delivery (Gujarat) 8,600, groundnut Solvent refined (per tin) 1,475-1,485, Mustard Expeller (Dadri) 5,350, Mustard Pakki ghani (per tin) 715-870, Mustard kachi ghani (per tin) 870-970, Sunflower 6,300

Sesame mill delivery 5,950, soybean Refined mill delivery (Indore) 5,150 Soyabean degum (Delhi) 4,750, Crude Palm Oil (Ex-kandla) 4,150, Cottonseed mill delivery (Haryana) 4,650, Palmolein (RBD) 4,850, Rice bran (phy) 3,750 and Coconut (per tin) 1,050-1,080

Non-edible oils: Linseed 4,200, Mahuwa 4,050, Castor 7,750-7,850, Neem 3,800-3,900, Rice bran 3,300-3,400 and palm fatty 3,225-3,300

Oilcakes: groundnut de-husk 800-850, sesame 950-1,150, Mustard (new) 1,025-1,050, Mustard 1,200-1,210 and Cottonseed 1,075-1,175

Sugar rises on fresh buying

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 16:08 IST

Sugar prices rose by Rs 50 per quintal in the wholesale sugar market today on emergence of buying by stockists to meet the festival demand.

Marketmen said fresh buying by stockists to meet the festival demand mainly pushed up wholesale sugar prices.

Sugar ready medium and second grade prices rose by Rs 50 each to Rs 2,750-2,900 and Rs 2,740-2,890 per quintal.

Similarly, the mill delivery medium and second grade traded higher by the same margin at Rs 2,630-2,750 and Rs 2,620-2,740 per quintal.

Following are today's rates in Rs per quintal

Sugar ready M-30 2,750-2,900 and S-30 2,740-2,890
Mill delivery M-30 2,630-2,750 and S-30 2,620-2740

Sugar mill gate prices (excluding duty):
Kinonni 2,700, Asmoli 2,690, Mawana 2,630, Titabi 2,640, Thanabhavan 2,620, Budhana 2,620 and Dorala 2,625

Refined palmolein recovers on fresh buying support

Press Trust of India / Mumbai August 14, 2010, 15:19 IST

Refined palmolein recovered marginally in an otherwise subdued oils and oilseeds market here today due to fresh buying support coupled with higher Malaysian advices.

Castorseeds futures also declined on poor export enquiries.

Meanwhile, other edible and non-edible oils maintained a stable trend in the absence of necessary buying activity.

In the edible segment, refined palmolein moved up by Rs 2 per 10 kg to Rs 494, from yesterday's closing level of Rs 492, while groundnutoil held steady at Rs 870 per 10 kgs.

In the futures segment, castorseed's October contract resumed steady at Rs 3,694 and moved in a range of Rs 3,700 and Rs 3,680 before ending at Rs 3,686, as against Rs 3,694, showing a further fall of Rs 8 per tonne.

However, castorseeds bold, castoroil commercial and linseed oil remained unaltered at Rs 3,725, Rs 775 and Rs 570, respectively.

Edible oils up on festive buying, firming global cues

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 13:53 IST

Edible oils remained higher for the sixth straight week under review on sustained buying by stockists and vanaspati mills for the ongoing festival season amid reports of a firming trend in global markets.

A few non-edible oils also rose further on increased demand from the consuming industries against restricted arrivals from producing regions.

Trading sentiment bolstered on reports the palm oil rose for a fifth straight week in Malaysia, the best winning streak this year, on concern that heavy rainfall in Asia may hurt output and as gains in rival soyabean oil lifted demand for the most-consumed vegetable oil.

The report came in at a time when the domestic markets were passing through a bullish trend on buying by retail customers and vanaspati mills to meet the festive demand for ongoing Teej and the incoming Rakshabandhan festival.

The paucity of stocks factor was supported on reports of the government importing edible oils.

The state-run trading firm PEC has floated a global tender to import 12,000 tonnes of edible oil and MMTC invited bids for importing 18,500 tonne refined, beached and deodorized (RBD) palmolein oil to meet the domestic demand.

In Delhi, groundnut oil (Gujarat) remained in demand and added another Rs 100 to Rs 8,600 per quintal, while groundnut solvent refined gained Rs 25 to Rs 1,475-1,485 per tin.

Mustard expeller oil (Dadri) rose by Rs 50 to Rs 5,350 per quintal and its pakki and kachi ghani oils traded marginally higher by Rs 5 each to Rs 715-870 and Rs 870-970 per tin on local demand.

Sooji rises on pick up in demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 16:32 IST

In an otherwise steady wholesale grains market, sooji prices rose Rs 10 per 50 kg on rising festive demand.

Traders said rising demand in view of festive season, which pushed up wholesale sooji prices.

Sooji traded higher by Rs 10 to Rs 890-910 per 50 kg.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Wheat MP (deshi) 1,700-1,800, wheat dara (for mills) 1,220-1,225 chakki atta (delivery) 1,225-1,230, atta Rajdhani (10 kg) 175, Shakti bhog (10 kg) 175, Roller flour mill 650-670 (50 kg), Maida 770-800 (50 kilos) and Sooji 890-910 (50 kg)

Basmati rice (Lal Quila) 9,300, Shri Lal Mahal 9,300, Super basmati rice 9,000, Basmati common 5,500-5,600, rice Pusa-(1121) 4,400-4,900, Permal raw 1,875-1,925, Permal wand 1,950-2,100, Sela 2,175-2,225 and Rice IR-8- 1,700-1,725

Bajra 980-990, Jowar yellow 1,400-1,500, white 2,450-2,500, Maize 1,050-1,060, Barley (UP) 1,090-1,110 and Rajasthan 1,080-1,090

Masoor rises on thin trade

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 16:30 IST

Masoor prices traded higher by Rs 100 per quintal on lacklustre trade in the wholesale pulses market today.

Prices generally moved in a tight range on limited deals and settled around previous levels.

Traders said pick up in retailers demand, against slow down in arrivals from producing belts mainly led to a rise in wholesale masoor prices.

Masoor small and bold rose by Rs 100 each to Rs 3,200- 3,400 and Rs 3,400-3,650, while its dal local and best quality traded higher by the same margin at Rs 3,900-4,000 and Rs 4,200-4,500 per quintal.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Urad 5,000-5,550, Urad chilka (local) 5,600-6,000, best 6,500-6,800, Dhoya 6,550-6,650, Moong 5,300-5,700, Dal moong chilka local 6,200-6,600, Moong Dhoya local 6,400-6,600 and best quality 6,800-7,000

Masoor small 3,200-3,400, bold 3,400-3,650, Dal Masoor local 3,900-4,000, best quality 4,200-4,500, Malka local 4,000-4,050, best 4,150-4,250, Moth 5,250-5,550, Arhar 4,000-4,100, dal arhar dara 5,000-5,400

Gram 2,250-2,275, gram dal (local) 2,500-2,525, best quality 2,625-2,725, besan (35 kg) Shakti bhog 1,050, Rajdhani 1,050, Rajmah chitra Pune 3,400-4,000, China 3,500-4,000, red 3,400-3,500

kabli gram small 4,300-5,500, dabra 2,700-2,800, imported 4,500-4,900, lobia 3,700-3,800, peas white 1,950- 2,050 and green 2,150-2,350

Gur shakkar moves up on paucity of stocks

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 16:19 IST

In restricted activity, gur shakkar prices shot up by Rs 100 per quintal in the wholesale jaggery market today on paucity of stocks and negligible arrivals from producing regions against increased demand.

However, gur in Muzzafarnagar and Muradnagar, held steady on lack of worthwhile buying activity.

Marketmen said increased demand in view of festive season against shortage of stocks mainly led to a rise in gur shakkar prices.

At Delhi, gur shakkar prices jumped up by Rs 100 to Rs 3,200-3,300 per quintal.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Chakku Rs 2,900-2,950, Pedi Rs 3,000-3,100 and Dhayya N.T., shakkar Rs 3,200-3,300

In Muzaffarnagar: Raskat Rs 1,950-2,000, chakku Rs 2,550-2,700 and Khurpa N.T

In Muradnagar: Pedi 2,850-2,900 and Dhaya N.A

Menthol prices up on buying support

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 15:47 IST

Menthol prices rose by Rs 5 per kg in the national capital today on buying support from pharmaceutical units.

Tight stocks position followed by fall in supplies from the producing belts also influenced the prices.

Menthol bold crystal, menthol flake and mentha oil prices rose by Rs 5 each to Rs 880, Rs 840 and Rs 785 per kg, respectively.

Marketmen said fresh buying support from pharma and other consuming industries, helped rise in the prices.

Following are today's quotations:

Ammonium chloride (50 kg), Rs 1,500-2,400, acetic acid (1 kg) Rs 36-38, ammonia bicarb (25 kg) Rs 450-500, boric acid technical (50 kg) Rs 3,600-4,100, borex granular (50 kg) Rs 2,000-2,500

Caustic soda flake (50 kg) Rs 950-1000, citric acid (50 kg) (China) Rs 2,600-3,000, citric acid deshi (50 kg) Rs 2,550 -2,950, camphor slab (1 kg) Rs 320, camphor powder (1 kg) Rs 310 glycerine (1 kg) Rs 100-110, hexamine (1 kg) Rs 80, hydrogen peroxide (1 kg) Rs 33-35, mercury (34.5 kg) Rs 64,000 menthol bold crystal (per kg) Rs 880, menthol flake (1kg) Rs 840 and mentha oil (1 kg) Rs 785

Chilli, turmeric decline on fall in demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 15:13 IST

Red chilli and turmeric prices fell up to Rs 200 per quintal in the national capital today owing to fall in demand at existing higher levels.

Adequate stocks followed by increased arrivals from the producing belts also weighed on the prices.

Red chilli and turmeric prices fell up to Rs 200 to settle at Rs 4,800-8,800 and Rs 15,600-18,800 per quintal, respectively.

Marketmen said fall in demand at higher levels mainly led to a fall in chilli and turmeric prices.

Weakening trend in futures market also put pressure in the prices, they added.

Following are today's quotations (per quintal):

Ajwain 14,000-19,000, black pepper common 20,400-20,600, betelnut (kg) 85-105, cardamom brown-Jhundiwali (kg) 750-760 and cardamom brown-Kanchicut (kg) 840-930

Cardamom small (kg): Chitridar 1,225-1,370, cardamom (colour robin) 1,370-1,380, cardamom bold 1,400-1,475, cardamom extra (bold) 1,580-1,600 and cloves (kg) 325-400

Chirounji (new) (kg) Rs 410-450 Dry mango(raipur) Rs 6,000-8,500 Dhania Rs 3,400-8,500 Dry ginger Rs 22,000-25,500 Kalaunji Rs 10,000-11,800 Mace-Red (kg) Rs 1150-1300 Mace-Yellow (kg) Rs 1550-1650 Methiseed Rs 3,200-4,200 Makhana (per kg) Rs 120-160

Nutmeg Rs 530-570 Poppyseed (KG Turkey) Rs 195 Poppyseed (KG MP-RAJ) Rs 195-245 Poppyseed (KG Kashmiri) Rs 175 Red chillies Rs 4,800-8,800 Soya bari pariwar (20 kg) Rs 350-400 Saffron (kg) Irani Rs 1,20,000-1,30,000 Saffron (kg) Kashmiri Rs 1,55,000-1,70,000

Soanf-bold Rs 9,500-15,000 Turmeric Rs 15,600-18,800 Tamarind Rs 2,250-2,600 Tamarind without seed Rs 3,800-5,500 Tea (kg) Rs 65-175 Watermelon kernel (Kg) Rs 230 Jeera common Rs 13,900-14,200 Jeera best Rs 15,000-15,500

Kishmish rises on buying support

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 14, 2010, 15:10 IST

Kishmish prices rose by Rs 200 per 40 kg in the national capital today on buying support from retailers and stockists, driven by the current festive season demand.

Tight supplies from growing regions also supported the uptrend. Kishmish Indian yellow and green prices surged by Rs 200 each to conclude at Rs 4,100-4,400 and Rs 5,500-7,000 per 40 kg bag, respectively.

Marketmen said increased buying by retailers and stockists due to festive season, against tight supplies from the growing regions mainly pushed up the kishmish prices on the wholesale dry fruits market here.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per 40 kg:

Almond (California) new Rs 10,700 Almond (gurbandi-new) Rs 4,600-4,700 almond (girdhi) Rs 2,300-2,400 and Abjosh Afghani Rs 8,000-17,000 Almond kernel in per kg (California) Rs 370-375,almond kernel (gurbandi-new) (kg) Rs 300-375

Chilgoza raw-new (1 kg) Rs 500 Chilgoza (roasted) (1 kg) Rs 825-875 Cashew kernel 1 kg (no 180) Rs 530-535 Cashew kernel (no 210) Rs 480-485 Cashew kernel (no 240) Rs 430-445 Cashew kernel (no 320) Rs 400-405 Cashew kernel broken 2 pieces Rs 330-335

Cashew kernel broken 4 pieces Rs 260-300 Cashew kernel broken 8 pieces Rs 230-270 Copra (qtl) Rs 5,700-5,800 Coconut powder (25 kg) Rs 1,750-1,850 Dry dates red (qtl) Rs 2,900-7,000

Fig Rs 6,000-14,000 Kishmish Kandhari local Rs 7,000-7,500 Kishmish Kandhari special Rs 12,000-20,000

Kishmish Indian yellow Rs 4,100-4,400 Kishmish Indian green Rs 5,500-7,000 Pistachio Irani Rs 770-920 Pistachio Hairati Rs 1,150-1,200 Pistachio Peshawari Rs 1,450-1,500 Pistachio Dodi (roasted) 520-600 Walnut Rs 120-180 Walnut kernel (1kg) Rs 320-570

Copra price on upward trend

Press Trust of India / Erode August 14, 2010, 13:11 IST

Copra prices are registering an upward trend in the Avalpoondurai Regulated Market in Erode district, trade sources said.

The fine variety was sold at Rs 38 to Rs 40 per kilogram in the auction on Friday.This is Rs 1.25 to Rs 2.25 per kilogram higher than the price last week.

Similarly, the second variety was sold at Rs 29.75 to Rs 37.65 per kilogram. This is also Rs 1.30 per kilogram higher than last week's price.

Heavy competition is seen in the buying of the commodity by the oil crushers.

Some 2604 quintal (5267 bags) was received for sale and the quantity was sold, compared to 660 quintal received on Monday, sources added.