

ATMA to set up seven farm schools in Tirupur

R Vimal Kumar

Financial assistance to be provided by the Centre

The schools would adopt 'learning by doing' methodology ATMA will supply study materials to the farmers

Tirupur: The Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), a society of various stakeholders of agriculture in the district, will set up seven farm schools this fiscal to enhance the yield of maize and paddy in the district.

“We have identified Tirupur, Palladam, Avinashi, Pongalur, Udumalpet, Madathukulam and Pethappampatti blocks for the introduction of this concept using financial assistance from the Central Government,” ATMA project director and Joint Director of Agriculture S. Muthusamy told The Hindu.

The schools would adopt 'learning by doing' methodology to propagate advanced crop technologies to augment productivity and increase the profit margin of the farmers.

Under the scheme, a demonstration plot on a maximum of 2.5 acre would be set up in each of the select blocks to explain farmers the nuances of field preparation, seed germination and post-harvest management methods.

“The techniques will be disseminated through practical sessions to a total of 26 farmers from a block, who in turn, can share the knowledge with other farmers in the nearby areas so that latest

crop cultivation methodologies spread faster,” Mr Muthusamy said. The ATMA also plans to supply kits containing learning materials to the farmers so as to help them keep abreast with the scientific details of various techniques explained to them at the field level.

The beneficiary farmers would also be taken out on exposure visits to progressive fields outside the district to help them learn ploughing and harvest techniques followed in those regions.

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Farmers' meeting today

Special Correspondent

Coimbatore: Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham has convened a meeting on August 16 to decide on moving the court to direct the government to drop the move to acquire agriculture lands for four bypass road projects. It has also called for a demonstration on August 18 pressing for the same.

Sangham president M.R. Sivasamy, in a release, said that the survey numbers of lands that are proposed to be acquired for Neelambur, Chavadi bypass roads were published in newspapers. The farmers had already staged a demonstration opposing these acquisitions and highway projects. Last year, because of the unified struggle by farmers the move to acquire lands for Hosur SIPCOT was stopped.

Hence, the farmers would come together to fight these proposed acquisitions. Mr. Sivasamy added that considering the setback to agriculture and food production and the economic loss that would be caused to the farmers because of the acquisition, the Kerala Government rejected the proposals for 200-ft-wide bypass roads. Hence, the Centre and the State should once for all abandon all the 200-ft bypass road projects.

The meeting would be held at the Peelamedu Shanthimedu Lakshmi Mahal at 3 p.m.

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Free training in goat farming on August 17

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: The Veterinary University Training and Research Centre here will offer a free intensive training programme in goat farming on August 17 and 18.

According to a release, the programme will benefit farmers and entrepreneurs involved in livestock farming and poor and landless labourers.

Goat farming management has changed because of shrinkage of pasture lands, ban on grazing in forest areas and shortage of labour for range rearing of goats. In the intensive system of goat rearing, it is essential to adopt scientific technologies to improve weight gain, breeding, and prevent diseases in goats.

Details

Those interested can contact the centre at Kalappati Pirivu, Saravanampatti P.O.; or call 0422-2669965, for details and registration.

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Watershed development training programme from today

Special Correspondent

Udhagamandalam: A six-day capacity building programme on 'Preparation of detailed project report for planning a watershed development scheme as per the common guidelines formulated by the Government of India' will be organised by the Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute (CSWCRTI) at the Hotel Gem Park here from August 16.

Participation

Coordinator and Senior Scientist, CSWCRTI, S.Manivannan said in a press note here on Saturday that about 30 junior and middle level officers from the Tamil Nadu Water Development Agency representing 20 districts will participate in the National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) sponsored programme. It will be inaugurated by NRAA technical expert A.K.Sikka in the presence of the Nilgiris Collector Archana Patnaik.

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Bhavanisagar Reservoir opened to irrigate over one lakh acres

The dam will be kept opened till December 15



Relief to farmers:Water gushing out from the Bhavanisagar Dam in Erode on Sunday. —

ERODE: The high level sluices of the Bhavanisagar Reservoir were opened on the evening of Independence Day to discharge a massive sheet of water for the irrigation of over one lakh acres covered under the Lower Bhavani Project (LBP).

Collector R. Sudalaikannan switched on the electronic button that signalled the opening of the sluices of the dam, and showered flower petals. The dam would be kept open till December 15 for the irrigation of 1,03,500 acres coming under the LBP ayacut.

The water level in the dam stood at 78.44 feet and the storage was 15 tmcft on Sunday. Initially, a total of 500 cusecs of water was let into the LBP canal and its extension channels.

The discharge would be increased gradually to touch the level of 2,300 cusecs by evening of August 16.

It was decided to maintain the discharge at 2300 cusecs till December 15, Mr. R. Sudalaikannan told reporters.

Stating that the water storage in the reservoir was satisfactory, the Collector said that the dam would get more inflow during the monsoon, which would help satisfy the water requirements of the farmers in the LBP ayacut.

Mr. Sudalaikannan appealed to the farmers to utilise the water judiciously and follow water conservation practices.

He also said that the proposal to add another 23,000 acres under the LBP ayacut was under the active consideration of the State Government.

“We are very positive that the proposal will soon be taken up for implementation,” the Collector said. MLAs R.M. Palanisamy and O. Subramaniam, Superintending Engineer, Water Resources Organisation, Public Works Department Sambathkumar and senior officials from various departments were present.

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Efforts needed to raise farm output to ensure food security:PM

Concerned over large population still suffering from poverty and hunger, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday said more efforts were required to achieve higher productivity and growth in the farm sector that would ensure food security to the people of this country.

"I am happy that the growth rate of our agriculture has increased substantially in the last few years. But we are still far from achieving our goal. We need to work harder so that we can increase the agricultural growth rate to 4 per cent per annum," Singh said while addressing the nation on the 64th Independence Day.

The agriculture sector posted a growth rate of only 0.2 per cent in 2009-10 because of severe drought in almost half of the country resulting in a fall in foodgrains output by 16 million tonnes at 218 million tonnes.

The Prime Minister stressed on the need to enhance crop productivity for increasing farm production and to ensure food security to the people.

"Our Government wants a food safety net in which no citizen of ours would go hungry. This requires enhanced agricultural production which is possible only by increasing productivity," Singh said.

The UPA government is in the process of enacting a legislation -- the National Food Security Act -- under which a fixed quantity of foodgrains would be provided every month to families below poverty line (BPL) at Rs 3 per kg.

Pointing out that the country has not witnessed any big technological breakthrough in agriculture after the Green Revolution, the Prime Minister said: "We need technology which would address the needs of dry land agriculture."

The Prime Minister announced that an institute is being set up in India after the name of renowned scientist Norman Borlaug. The Borlaug Institute of South Asia would facilitate availability of new and improved seeds and new technology to Indian farmers and also to the other countries of South Asia.

"In the history of Indian agriculture, Norman Borlaug commands a special place. About 40 to 50 years back he developed new and more productive seeds of wheat. Under the leadership of Indira Gandhiji, India achieved the Green Revolution by adopting these seeds," he said.

Singh also wanted that the Indian agriculture should be able to deal with new challenges like climate change, falling levels of ground water and deteriorating quality of soil.

To boost farm production, Singh said the UPA government, since it came to power in 2004, has launched new schemes and increased public investment in agriculture sector. It also raised the support price to farmers substantially.

"We have always taken care to provide remunerative prices to farmers so that they are encouraged to increase production. Support prices have been increased every year in the last six years," he said. The MSP for wheat was enhanced to Rs 1,100 per quintal last year from Rs 630 per quintal in 2003-04. In paddy, this increase was from Rs 550 per quintal to Rs 1,000 per quintal.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/587063.aspx>

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Aug 16

Max Min

34.3° | 27.2°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 89%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:56

Sunset: 18:30

Barometer: 1005.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, Aug 17

Max Min

34° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Aug 18



30° | 26°

Rainy

Thursday

Aug 19



30° | 27°

Rainy

Friday

Aug 20



31° | 26°

Rainy

Saturday

Aug 21



31° | 27°

Rainy

Sunday

Aug 22



31° | 27°

Rainy

PM skips timeline for inflation

Aug 16 2010

New Delhi, Aug. 15: With the optimism of a strong economy, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, on Sunday assured the nation that the government is working to control the double-digit inflation. He also underlined that lack of infrastructure in the country is impacting the economic growth and the need to speed up investment in the sector.

“I would certainly like to say that we are making every possible effort to tackle this problem (high inflation). I am also confident that we will succeed in these efforts,” Dr Singh said in his address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort to mark India’s 63rd Independence Day.

Dr Singh said that government was aware of the difficulties faced by the people due to high prices.

“I know that in the last few months high inflation has caused you difficulties. It is the poor who are the worst affected by rising prices, especially when the prices of commodities of everyday use like food grains, pulses, vegetables increase. It is for this reason that we have endeavored to minimize the burden of increased prices on the poor,” said Dr Singh.

He said that the government has raised the minimum support price for the farmers, which has also contributed to high food prices.

Inflation has been in double digits in the last five months making it biggest challenge for the government to tackle.

He defended the recent hike in the prices of the petroleum products saying that a huge subsidy burden would have impacted government’s programmes for education, health and employment of the poor. “It is obvious that any person or institution cannot spend more than his income over

a long period of time, even if it is the government. It is our responsibility that we manage our economy with prudence so that our development is not affected adversely in the future because of high debt," he said.

About the hurdles to the economic growth, the Prime Minister said that there is a large deficit in our infrastructure which affects our economic development. "There is a shortfall in the supply of electricity to industries. Our roads, ports and airports are not of world standards. We have been trying to increase electricity production and improve our roads, ports and airports," said Dr Singh, adding that the government wants increased participation of private sector in this sector.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/business/pm-skips-timeline-inflation-318>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Is Indian rice high in pesticide residue levels?

16 Aug 2010, 0131 hrs IST, Prabha Jagannathan, ET Bureau

NEW DELHI: A Hamburg-based lab, Eurofins, has alleged high levels of pesticide residue in Indian rice, basmati and non basmati. This is likely to start a long-drawn legal battle and for the time being jeopardise around \$300m in basmati exports alone to Europe.

The first batch of legal correspondence from the grain traders, a precedent to formal legal action, will be exchanged with the Hamburg-based private testing firm, Eurofins and Dr Speck Laboratories before September.

"Funding for the legal proceedings is likely to be the least of problems," an industry official said as the \$30m Basmati Development Fund (BDF) can fund the legal defence.

IPR lawyers K&S Partners have been hired in India by the national platform of rice exporters, the All India Rice Exporters Association (AIREA), for what now threatens to be a high stakes

battle.

Eurofins and Dr Speck Laboratories will, industry honchos said, likely be charged on two levels, corporate and personal. “Some sort of a corporate case will be filed in Brussels and a personal liability case will be filed in Hamburg against the directors of Eurofins,” said an AIREA official.

“They have been unable to satisfy us that they had requisite accreditation under Sanco 10684 and ISO 17025 norms,” he added.

The first refers to method (of testing for pesticide residue) validation and the second with the obligations that testing lab is expected to fulfil for conducting the tests in question.

Towards June end, the European lab had issued reports to buyers suggesting that Indian rice has elevated levels (0.03%) of carbedenzum and isoprothiolane (both plant protection products and PPP), after the European Commission fixed an arbitrary Maximum Residue Level (MRL) of 0.01 ppm.

Last month, rice exporters hoped to resolve the vexed issue out of court through a personal meeting with the head of Eurofins Werner Nader here in Delhi.

The bigger question, though, is the issue of why the EC reduced pesticide levels in the first place and the data and scientific evidence that prompted it to reduce the MRL for the plant protection products (ppp) or pesticides, something that rice exporters from India failed miserably to address.

A government official maintained that the two issues, of the Eurofins test results and that of the EC reducing pesticide residue levels for imported rice, should not be clubbed together.

“That latter is a larger issue that could be discussed separately between the two governments at an appropriate stage,” a government official said.

Interestingly, wherever it has growing interest, the EC has relaxed the MRL for the same pesticides such as in the case of wheat where high levels of carbedenzum residue beyond

prescribed levels have been accepted.

That the EC was planning to bring down the Maximum Residue Level (MRL) for pesticide (carbedenzum and isoprothiolane MRL were brought down to 0.01 ppm) was apparent as far back as five years ago. After the formal reduction of MRL around a year ago, the development was brought to the notice of India's rice exporters to Europe.

FMC intervenes to check fall in potato prices

15 Aug 2010, 1154 hrs IST,PTI

NEW DELHI: With a sharp fall in potato prices over the past one month, commodity market regulator FMC has asked the top two exchanges, MCX and NCDEX, to discourage traders from selling potatoes by raising the deposit money.

Following the Forward Market Commission's (FMC) direction, MCX and NCDEX have started charging 20-21 per cent of the value of the commodity from sellers as deposit money with effect from August 13. Deposit money was 5-6 per cent of the commodity value earlier.

The move is aimed to check sliding prices in the futures market and help farmers achieve higher realisation for the coming Kharif crops, analysts said.

"Higher deposit money not only curbs speculation in the futures market but also limits potato prices from a further fall," Hyderabad-based commodity brokerage firm Karvy Comtrade Analyst Veeresh Hiremath said.

Potato prices have plunged 30 per cent to Rs 320-350 per quintal in the futures trading at both MCX and NCDEX in last one month, according to the data available with the exchanges.

A trader has to deposit some percentage of the commodity value with the exchange for trading in the futures.

Potato prices were heading for a crash owing to higher domestic production, he said, adding that prices have plummeted to almost Rs 300 a quintal from a high of Rs 500 a quintal in the last couple of weeks.

A similar trend was seen in spot prices as well. Spot prices have fallen by over 28 per cent to Rs 500 a quintal in the last week, from Rs 700 a quintal from the previous week.

According to research body National Horticulture and Research Foundation Director R P Gupta, prices are falling because supply is expected to be 10 per cent higher at 30 million tonnes in 2010-11 compared to last year.

However, Gupta said prices may firm up with demand increasing during the festival season.

Business Standard

Monday, Aug 16, 2010

Sugar, wheat, rice worth \$2.9 bn ruined in Pak floods

Bloomberg / Karachi/ Mumbai August 15, 2010, 0:28 IST

Pakistan's deadliest floods in its history damaged more than a million acres of sugar cane, cotton and rice fields and caused 250 billion rupees (\$2.9 billion) of agricultural losses, a farmers' group said.

Floodwaters ravaged 700,000 acres of planted cotton, and 200,000 acres each of rice and cane, Mohammed Ibrahim Moghul, chairman of Agri Forum Pakistan, said by phone. Rains also destroyed 500,000 metric tons of wheat, 300,000 acres of animal fodder and 100,000 head of livestock, he said.

Wheat prices gained in Chicago after five days of declines and sugar rose in New York and London on speculation the losses may force the world's sixth most-populous country to import the staples. Pakistani officials appealed for urgent deliveries of food, shelters and medicine for

14 million people displaced by the catastrophe that's killed at least 1,600 people and is now in its third week.

"Dozens of districts have been totally flooded, which means crops have been damaged, strategic food stocks have been damaged and the soil destroyed," Maria Kuusisto, an analyst at consultant Eurasia Group, said from London. "These floods have caused severe damage to agriculture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Punjab and south in Sindh. These are the agricultural hubs."

Flood surges triggered by unprecedented monsoon rains have swept south along the 3,200-kilometer (2,000-mile) long Indus River, devastating low-lying areas of Punjab and Sindh provinces, the densely populated economic and agricultural heartland of Pakistan.

'Buy now'

"If the cane fields are destroyed, there's no time to replant and grow cane for the coming season," said Sergey Gudoshnikov, an economist at the International Sugar Organization in London. "If Pakistan believes the sugar market is going to continue to go up, they may buy now."

Pakistan's cotton production will be less than forecast, a producers' group said yesterday and shipments of rice from the nation, the third-largest supplier, may slump after crops and stockpiles in areas that represent 90 percent of the country's output were damaged, Samarendu Mohanty, an economist from the International Rice Research Institute, said in an interview.

"A lot of stored grains have also been damaged," curbing seed supply for next year's crop," he said.

Punjab, which was among the provinces hit by flooding, accounted for nearly 60 percent of the nation's rice harvest, and Sindh 30 percent, Mohanty said. The country was to ship 3.8 million tons this year, more than 10 percent of the estimated global shipments of 30.4 million tons, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, which made the forecast in July, before the flooding.

"We might see higher grain trade across the globe" as Pakistan steps up purchases, said Amol Tilak, a senior research analyst at Kotak Commodity Services Ltd. in Mumbai.

December-delivery wheat rose 1.5 percent to \$7.36 a bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade at 4:43 p.m. in Mumbai, taking the contract's gains to 53 percent since July 1. Refined sugar for October delivery rose 1.2 percent to \$538.70 a ton at 12:16 p.m. on NYSE Liffe in London.

THE HINDU Business Line

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Acreege of kharif pulses up on good monsoon, price hopes

Kharif sowing			
	(in lakh hectares)		
	Normal*	2010	2009
Rice	395.170	274.060	251.240
Coarse cereals	219.944	193.609	174.193
(a) Maize	68.654	70.574	67.558
(b) Bajra	91.523	81.204	67.308
(c) Jowar	35.984	27.801	27.414
Pulses	111.692	103.205	85.876
(a) Arhar	35.804	40.418	30.389
(b) Urad	24.611	21.036	19.322
(c) Moong	27.342	24.358	21.645
Oilseeds	173.100	158.152	152.837
(a) Groundnut	53.809	47.743	36.927
(b) Soyabean	83.999	90.722	93.770
(c) Sunflower	8.153	2.141	4.170
(d) Sesamum	15.147	11.834	12.920
(e) Castor	8.130	4.793	4.110
(f) Niger	3.863	0.919	0.940
Sugarcane	45.460	47.680	41.790
Cotton	93.940	104.965	94.960
Jute	8.080	7.555	6.920

*Five-year average from 2004-05 to 2008-09

Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, Aug 15

A combination of good monsoon rains and expectations of remunerative prices among farmers has led to a perceptible increase in area planted under kharif pulses this time.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, farmers have till now sown over 103 lakh hectares (lh) under various kharif pulses, which is one-fifth more than what was covered during this period last year. All the three major pulses grown during kharif – arhar (pigeon pea), urad (black matpe) and moong (green gram) – have registered increased acreages.

This is good news considering that the production of kharif pulses in 2009-10 was a mere 4.30 million tonnes (mt), the lowest since the 4.15 mt of 2002-03, which also happened to be a drought year.

The main reason for the turnaround this time has been the reasonably good rains in the major growing States of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (AP). Maharashtra has so far seen higher coverage for arhar (12.63 lh versus 9.55 lh), urad (4.66 lh versus 3.42 lh) and moong (5.72 lh versus 3.95 lh).

Likewise, AP farmers have brought more area under arhar (5.59 lh versus 2.53 lh) and moong (2.84 lh versus 1.68 lh), while their counterparts in Karnataka have done the same for arhar (7.03 lh versus 4.70 lh), moong (3.66 lh versus 3.63 lh) and urad (1.17 lh versus 1.02 lh).

On the other hand, the relatively dry Madhya Pradesh (MP) has witnessed a drop in coverage of urad (5.74 lh versus 6.13 lh) and moong (1.01 lh versus 1.17 lh), while registering a marginal increase for arhar (4.40 lh versus 4.27 lh).

Cotton area rises

The other crop to have benefited substantially from good rains, particularly in Maharashtra and AP, has been cotton. Here too, farmers have responded to prospects of better

harvest-time prices compared to last time.

With global prices currently ruling at around 91 cents a pound (as against 64 cents at this time last year) and the Centre expected to lift existing curbs on exports before the start of harvesting, farmers are hoping to benefit from both higher prices and increased yields.

Indian farmers have planted a record 104.965 lh area under cotton so far this year, which is more than the 103.29 lh for the whole of 2009-10 (the first time it crossed the 100 lh mark).

Significantly, out of the total 104.965 lh of area planted till now, as much as 92.06 lh or 88 per cent has come under Bt cotton hybrids and varieties. Cotton area has gone up from 33.30 lh (position at this time last year) to 39.48 lh in Maharashtra and from 10.63 lh to 16.49 lh in AP. The progressive area sown is also higher in Karnataka (3.41 lh versus 2.68 lh), while being lower in Gujarat (25.88 lh versus 26.25 lh), MP (6.40 lh versus 6.44 lh), Punjab (5.30 lh versus 5.36 lh), Haryana (4.45 lh versus 5.07 lh) and Rajasthan (2.54 lh versus 4.44 lh).

Oilseeds slip

The higher area planted under pulses and cotton this time has come largely at the expense of oilseeds. Oilseeds area in general is lower this year, with the only real increase taking place in groundnut – that too, mainly courtesy a rebound in AP (13.90 lh versus 5.21 lh). On the whole, the revival of the monsoon from July – except in eastern India – has resulted in increased acreages under most kharif crops, including rice, bajra and maize.

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High volatility pulls down pepper

G.K. Nair Kochi, Aug 15

Pepper futures, like in the previous weeks, witnessed high volatility as a result of the tug-

of-war between the bull and bear operators. "Speculation has to be in the futures trading but it should not take the form of a gambling as it would harm the basic purpose of the trading," trade sources said. "It is sheer manipulation of the market which in turn has allegedly wiped out the small and medium players," market sources told Business Line.

One section of the traders, it is alleged, wanted the prices to fall so that they could cover, they said. In fact, bear operators, who wanted the price to fall for obvious reasons, were using lower quotes from all other origins as a tool to pull the market down. While the bull operators looking for opportunities, push up the market when they see some buying interest and squeeze in the availability of physical pepper. It may not be unknown that there is a tight supply position and the "fundamentals are known to only very few people in the market," they said.

Other countries were offering 500 and 550 GL pepper cheaper. But, the landed material is inferior in quality, they said. There is said to be a squeeze in availability in the global scenario as the supply appears to be slightly below the demand and this may be the reason why prices for Asta grade pepper continued to hover around \$4,000 a tonne. It remains at this level even after Vietnam is reported to have shipped 87,000 tonnes and another 10,000 through cross border trade. While in India physical pepper is not available, as a result primary market dealers were not selling at the current rates as they say "no replacements are available from the growers."

Export

Consequently, what is available at present is with the investors who are holding farm grade pepper and that they were selling at Rs 1-2 below the August contract delivery price. Some exporters were covering it to meet their export commitments. All the contracts on the NCDEX during the week dropped due to bearish sentiments. August, September and October contracts were down by Rs 223, Rs 213 and Rs 203, respectively, to Rs 18,975, Rs 19,190 and Rs 19,143 a quintal.

Total turn over fell by 20,821 tonnes to 99,097 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 1,605 tonnes to 17,182 tonnes. Spot prices were down by Rs 100 during the week and it stood at Rs 18,800 (un-garbled) and Rs 19,300 (MG 1) a quintal at the weekend close.

According to the International Pepper Community (IPC) "in general, the activities of black pepper were comparatively lower during the week and prices decreased at most of the origins."

In India, prices decreased both in spot as well as in f.o.b. According to the Commodity Exchange in India, though trade volume of September contract were higher, future prices decreased by 3 per cent.

In Lampung, although the harvest is almost completed, trading in local market remains not brisk and prices were reportedly stable throughout the week. Compared to previous average price, however, the current week's price was slightly lower. Under this situation, farmers are reluctant to sell their produce at the current levels. F.o.b prices of Lampung were relatively stable, with a slight increase. In Vietnam, prices for local purchases decreased marginally from VND 66,500 a kg (\$3.48) to VND 65,500 (\$3.43) at the end of week and the fob prices were stable.

In Brazil and Sri Lanka, prices of black pepper decreased by around 4 per cent, while in Sarawak, the prices were relatively stable.

In Bangka white pepper prices increased marginally, while in Vietnam the prices decreased by 8 per cent locally and 4 per cent in fob. In Sarawak, white pepper prices were relatively stable.

India exports of whole pepper to the US were of negligible quantity of late. However, India remained a main source for US imports of ground pepper. During January-June 2010, total imports of pepper into the United States were at 33,093 tonnes (24,224 tonnes of black, 2,744 tonnes of white and 6,125 tonnes of ground pepper), an increase of 12 per cent, compared to imports of 29,417 tonnes in the same period of last year. While the whole black and white pepper increased by 5 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, during Jan-June 2010 over the corresponding period of last year, sizable increase (57 per cent) has taken place in the import of ground pepper (from 3,893 tonnes in Jan-June 2009 to 6,125 tonnes in 2010).

Indonesia and Vietnam followed by Brazil were the main sources for whole black and white pepper. These three countries supplied around 90 per cent of whole pepper into the United

States. Ground pepper was mostly imported from India and Vietnam. Prices quoted for black pepper of different origins per tonne in dollar c&f New York were MG 1 asta – 4,450-4,550; Vietnam 500GL – 3,875-3,900 (fob); Vietnam asta - prefer to work firm bids; Lampong 500 GL – 3,675-3,700 (fob); Lampong 550 GL -3,775-3,800 (fob); Lampong asta -3,900 (fob); Sri Lanka 500 GL -3,600-3,625 (fob); Sri Lanka 550 GL – 3,675-3,700 (fob); Brazil B2- 500 GL – 3,900 (fob) Aug/Sep; Brazil B1 560 GL – 4,000 (fob) Aug/Sep; Brazil asta - \$4,100 (fob) Aug/Sep; MLSV asta spot – 4,350-4,400 ex warehouse New York/New Jersey. Vietnam and Muntok white pepper was quoted at \$5,900 a tonne (c&f) each.

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Coonoor tea prices drop Rs 2/kg

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Aug 15

Prices slid Rs 2 a kg at Sale No: 32 at the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions on Friday. Still, teas worth Rs 2.3 crore remained unsold because 27 per cent of the 16.21 lakh kg on offer was withdrawn for want of buyers. About 37 per cent of leaf and 28 per cent of dust remained unsold.

In all, 96 marks of CTC teas from bought-leaf factories fetched Rs 100 and more. “Our Red Dust (RD) topped among all CTC leaf and dust teas fetching Rs 152 a kg. Our Broken Orange Pekoe Fanning topped leaf market fetching Rs 150. Totally, 11 of our grades got Rs 104 and more”, Mr Dinesh Raju, Managing Partner, Darmona Tea Industry, told Business Line. Homedale Estate got Rs 146, Professor Rs 140, Vigneshwar Estate Rs 137, Kannavarai Estate Rs 129, Shanthi Supreme Rs 128 and Garswood Estate clonal Rs 126.

Orthodox teas lower

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Curzon got Rs 163, Thaishola Rs 159, Coonoor Tea Rs 157, Kairbetta Rs 155, Havukal and Katary Rs 147 each, Glendale and

Sutton Rs 142 each. In all, 28 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Orthodox leaf market was generally lower by Rs 1-3 a kg but whole leaf grades were dearer by Rs 2-5. CTC leaf grades eased Rs 1-2, but better liquoring sorts gained Rs 2-3. Primary orthodox dusts gained Rs 2-5 but rest eased Rs 2-3. CTC dust market was irregular. Better mediums eased Rs 2-3,” an auctioneer said.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 32-36 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-122 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 32-36 for plain dusts and Rs 90-129 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Exports

On the export front, Pakistan bought in a wide range of Rs 36-54 a kg and the CIS Rs 33-38.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/08/16/stories/2010081651241400.htm>

Copra prices gain further

Erode, Aug 15

Copra prices increased at the Avalpoondurai regulated market in Erode last week. On Friday, when the auction began, about 10 major oil crushers from various parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala inspected the variety and placed tenders.

The fine variety was sold at Rs 38-40 a kg. This is Rs 1.25-2.25 a kg higher than last week price.

Similarly, the second variety was sold at Rs 29.75-37.65 a kg. This was Rs 1.30 kg higher than last week price.

Heavy competition was witnessed among oil crushers in buying the commodity. Arrivals were 2,604 quintal (5,267 bags) and all were sold. On Monday, 660 quintals of copra were

sold at the same rate.

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Govt will reduce burden of inflation on the poor: PM

Bill for councils for higher education, health soon.

New Delhi, Aug 15

Under attack from the Opposition on issues such as price rise, Naxalism and terrorism, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, on Sunday assured that his Government was trying to reduce the burden of inflation on the poor and also made the offer of talks to Maoists and the agitating Kashmiris.

“I know that in the last few months high inflation has caused you difficulties. It is the poor who are the worst affected by rising prices, especially when the prices of commodities of every day use like food grains, pulses, vegetables increase,” Dr Singh said during his 35-minute speech on the 64th Independence Day.

“It is for this reason that we have endeavoured to minimise the burden of increased prices on the poor,” he said from the ramparts of historic Red Fort amidst tight security and an overcast sky.

Wearing his trademark blue turban, he unfurled the national tricolour for the seventh consecutive Independence Day to become only the third Prime Minister to do so after Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

No timeline

Dr Singh, however, did not give any timeline for curbing inflation, which is in double-digits.

Addressing the nation from a closed enclosure, he said, the Government was “making every possible effort” to tackle inflation.

The Opposition BJP and the Left parties had attacked the Centre over surging food prices

and Parliament was disrupted recently on the issue.

Dr Singh said though the Government had given remunerative prices to farmers to encourage them to increase production, "one effect of providing higher prices to farmers is that food prices in the open market also increase."

Farm push

On the farm sector, he said, "We need to work harder so that we can increase the agricultural growth rate to 4 per cent a year."

He said the Government wants a food safety net in which no citizen would go hungry.

Admitting that a huge deficit in the country's infrastructure is affecting its economic development adversely, he said, "The resources required to create good physical infrastructure are difficult for the Government alone to mobilise. Therefore, we have endeavoured to involve the private sector in our efforts."

Pointing to the success of the building of the Delhi airport's new terminal, he said, "We will continue to make such efforts to improve our physical infrastructure."

Petro price hike defended

Defending the hike in prices of petrol and other petroleum products, Dr Singh said, "If this had not been done, it would not have been possible for our Budget to bear the burden of subsidy and our programmes for education, health and employment of the poor would have been adversely affected."

The Prime Minister said the Government "will soon bring a Bill to Parliament for constitution of two separate councils in higher education and health respectively so that reforms in these two areas can be accelerated", amidst applause from hundreds of schoolchildren who were present. He sought to allay fears of tribals over loss of livelihood saying, "Apart from adequate compensation for land which is acquired from them, we should also ensure that our 'Adivasi' (tribal) brothers and sisters have a stake in the developmental project being undertaken."

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Accelerating agro-meteorological services vital to climate change

Climate change is expected to profoundly affect the global agricultural scenario in the near future.

Studies by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicate that the earth's surface temperature could rise by 2.5-5.9 {+o}C by the end of this century compared to pre-industrial levels. This could trigger severe and more frequent weather disasters while dramatically changing the rainfall pattern and climate zones of countries.

The panel indicates that “rain-dependent agriculture could be cut in half by 2020 as a result of climate change”.

Rainfall patterns in India are already impacted by climate change.

According to a recent United Nations Environment Programme report, the national average monsoon rainfall has shown a “neutral-weak negative trend” while the less important summer rainfall has risen by 20 per cent in the five decades' period between 1950 and 2004.

Further, the spread of rainfall in the individual monsoon months has become erratic and unpredictable by even the most sophisticated climate models.

For instance, while the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted that the country would receive 93 per cent of normal rainfall for 2009 South-West monsoon, the country actually received a deficit rainfall of just 77 per cent, with the sowing month of June receiving a mere 53 per cent of normal rainfall.

Dramatic changes in climate, especially the rainfall pattern, have left farmers across the country struggling with uninformed and risky sowing and harvesting decisions — which in turn have adversely affected considerable economic value creation.

Given that the country's agriculture is largely a gamble with monsoons, there is an urgent need for India to build a more robust and scientific agro-meteorological infrastructure that provides every Indian farmer with access to climatic information.

According to the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), provision of timely and accurate agro-meteorology advisory services to farmers could increase net returns by as much as 10 to 83 per cent for various crops.

Such an infrastructure would not only facilitate farmers to take well-informed farm decisions but would also form the backbone for efficient implementation of weather-based insurance products.

Status of Agro-meteorology

In the mid 70's, the IMD — in collaboration with various state governments and agricultural universities — initiated the Agro-meteorological Advisory Services (AAS) focused on addressing the needs of Indian agriculture. District level advisory services were started in 2008. While IMD provides district agro-meteorological information and advisory on a five-day interval, the services provided are grossly insufficient to meet the mounting challenge of climate change. Some of the key bottlenecks of the current system include:

At a policy level, the focus on development of agro-meteorological services lacks the intensity and drive that is required to handle the massive challenge that climate change is posing to Indian agriculture.

With just about 130 Agro-meteorological Field Units (AMFUs) the agro-meteorological infrastructure in the country is extremely under-developed and needs extensive scale-up.

At the information dissemination level, while provision of district level AAS information is commendable, this needs to be at more micro-level (such as the mandal level) so as to make the information more precise and useful to the farmer. Further, AAS information published electronically by IMD rarely reaches the farmer due to limited access to internet.

Research and development in agro-climatology is found wanting in applied research and farmer interaction.

Private sector participation in institutional capacity building is extremely low.

Recommendations and Way Forward

Though policy makers have initiated action to address the impact of climate change on agriculture, a lot more focus needs to be brought in to address the challenges of 'climate risk' to Indian agriculture. The first step in this direction would be to develop a comprehensive policy and action plan that assesses various scenarios of the possible impact of climate change on agriculture. Some of the other key interventions that require specific attention include:

Building Specialised and Dedicated Institutional Capacity for Agro-meteorology: There is an urgent need to build a dedicated national institution that is focused on developing infrastructure and information on climate risks to agriculture. Information thus generated needs to be efficiently used as adaptive responses to climate change by the farming community and all other actors involved in agriculture.

Building a robust, scientific and intensive agro-meteorological infrastructure network: This network will have the capability to capture weather information up to the mandal or taluk level.

Promote ICT participation for transfer of information to the farmer: While IMD has invited proposals from public and private institutions in media, telecom & IT sectors to take up the task of distributing agro-meteorology advisory to farmers, there is a need to bring in economically viable yet farmer-friendly public-private partnership models to efficiently disseminate climate information to the farmer.

Promote private participation in Agro-meteorology: While there are several private players who are offering niche weather-based services in the sector such as NCMSL (National Collateral Management Services Limited), WRMS (Weather Risk Management Services) and Skymet, lack of scale and economic viability is restricting entry of private players into the sector. The Government needs to develop collaborative partnership models and provide incentives for entry of private players into this sector during the initial phases.

Support transfer of world class technology into India: There are many global technologies

linking agro-meteorology to scientific yield management of crops. For instance, a Dutch firm provides an automated weather station (linked via satellite) in the farm which monitors water usage by plants, evaporation, humidity, wind, rainfall, temperature, etc. to judge the crop condition and give timely advice to the farm owner on decisions related to activities such as sowing, irrigation, fertilizer application, pest control and harvesting time. The company claims that farmers achieve up to 30per cent more crop output while reducing input usage. While use of such technologies in India is limited at individual farmer level, it could be introduced at a community or a village level through proper governmental support. Develop a focused and integrated R&D program for agro-climatology: There is a need for a pan-India detailed study of the crops and climate on a region-wise basis and efficient dissemination of this information to the farmer.

While many institutions such as IMD, NCMRWF, IITM (Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology), the State Agricultural Universities, ICAR (Indian Council of Agriculture Research) and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) are engaged in research on agro-meteorology and weather forecasting, their efforts are rarely co-ordinated towards a common goal. There is a need to build strong cross-institutional interaction and develop coordinated research programmes amongst these institutions so as to leverage the combined strengths and offer robust weather forecast for crops.

To sum up, climate risk to India's agricultural economy is an imminent danger and its impact is expected to worsen rapidly in the near future. At a policy level, there is an urgent need to develop a focused and robust plan for adaptation of Indian agriculture to this impending climate challenge. This would require a significant increase in institutional capacity so as to provide the best possible support to the farmer in order to strengthen his adaptive capacity to the vagaries of climate change and get onto a pathway of climate-resilient development of Indian agriculture. (The writer is Founder/Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of YES Bank)

(Responses are invited from the readers. The responses may be sent to agri-biz@thehindu.co.in)