

Farmers warned of coconut leaf beetle pest threat

COIMBATORE: Field staff of the Department of Agriculture and scientists of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) have been asked to be vigilant on the possible invasion by coconut leaf beetle pest.

P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU, cautioned them telling that the pest had already entered Thailand, Philippines, Myanmar, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, and Maldives.

He was speaking at an awareness meet on the coconut leaf beetle (*Brontispa longissima*) at the university.

“It is feared that the pest may enter the southern part of India from Maldives through Sri Lanka. There is also a possibility of its entering India via Bangladesh. Hence it is important to sensitise the field staff on the impending threat,” Mr. Boopathi said.

R.J. Rabindra, Director, National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insects, Bangalore, said the beetle was one of the most serious and devastating insect pests of the coconut and other palms. Prolonged attack, particularly to young palms of those which were in poor growing conditions, might result in death of the palms, he added.

Other hosts included oil palm, palmyrah, arecanut palm, royal palm, Alexandria palm, sago palm, California fan palm, besides others.

“The adult beetles are nocturnal in habit and live up to three months. They gnaw long incisions parallel to one another leaving longitudinal white streaks.

As the frond opens, the leaf takes on a characteristic scorched, rugged appearance. Fruit production is significantly reduced. Shipments of ornamental palms from countries having the pest infestation have been the main source of the spread within the Asia-Pacific region," Mr. Rabindra said.

E.I. Jonnathan, Director of Centre for Plant Protection Studies, TNAU, said that since the pest could be noticed anywhere, farmers should immediately report the matter to the nearby Agriculture Office or Research Station of the university.

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Farmers stage demonstration against land acquisition

Coimbatore: Farmers facing the threat of land acquisition for various road projects staged a demonstration in front of Red Cross Society building on Wednesday and presented a petition to the Collector.

The farmers, led by Tamilaga Viavasayigal Sangham President M.R. Sivasamy, demanded that the bypass road projects be given up sparing the agricultural lands and said the existing roads should be widened instead. The demonstrators said that Neelambur project should be dropped and Mettupalayam Road made four-lane.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/08/19/stories/2010081950231500.htm>

Farm Query

Kangeyam cattle breed

Where can I get information on Kangeyam cattle breed and its conservation?

Arul Jothi, Tamil Nadu

You can contact Mr. Karthikeya Sivasenapathy, Managing trustee, Senaapathy Kangeyam Cattle Research Foundation, Kuttappalayam (p.o.), Tirupur District, Tamil Nadu: 638108, 99944-33456, 94423-23456, emails: karthikeyaksm@gmail.com, mail@kangeyambull.com and also browse www.kangayambull.com for more details.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/08/19/stories/2010081950191500.htm>

New technique for casuarina rooted stem cuttings

Casuarina equisetifolia, (Chavukku in Tamil) have been planted worldwide for serving fuel wood, land reclamation, dune stabilization and as shelter belts.

This tree is planted in about 0.5 million hectares in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Orissa.

Economic value

Due to its high economic value farmers are interested in planting this tree as an agro forestry crop in Tamil Nadu and Pondicehrry. *C. equisetifolia* fixes atmospheric nitrogen through bacteria called Frankia in root nodules.

This bacteria fixes atmospheric nitrogen up to 362 kg/ha/year which is an essential nutrient for plant growth. Generally farmers used to collect the root nodules from mature trees of *C. equisetifolia* and then crush and add at the time of planting in new sites.

Often unsuccessful

This practice is often unsuccessful if the crushed root nodule contains dead or inactive Frankia. Further, for pulp and paper production high yielding genetically superior trees of *C. equisetifolia* are selected and multiplied by rooted stem cuttings.

But the rooted stem cuttings are being propagated in an inert material (vermiculite) so that there is no chance for Frankia association.

Therefore after planting of these stocks 150 Kg of Di Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) per acre at the age of 6-12 and 18-24 months is required.

Instead of using crushed root nodules for nitrogen fixation in seedlings and rooted stem cuttings of *C. equisetifolia* an alternate method was developed with funding support of Department of Bio Technology, New Delhi as follows.

The bacteria Frankia was isolated and cultured in an artificial media 5 ml of culture in liquid form was applied in the rooted stem cuttings of *C. equisetifolia* under nursery conditions.

Lower fertilizer need

After 30 days of application the root nodules (nitrogen fixing sites) were observed in the stem cuttings.

This technique fixes the Nitrogen in *C. equisetifolia* at very low cost level which also reduces the use of chemical fertilizer.

The farmers may approach Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore – 641002 to obtain this Frankia culture for application in seedlings and rooted stem cuttings of *C. equisetifolia*.

A. Karthikeyan, S.R. Sathishkumar & K.M. Sakthivel
Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding
Coimbatore
Tamil Nadu

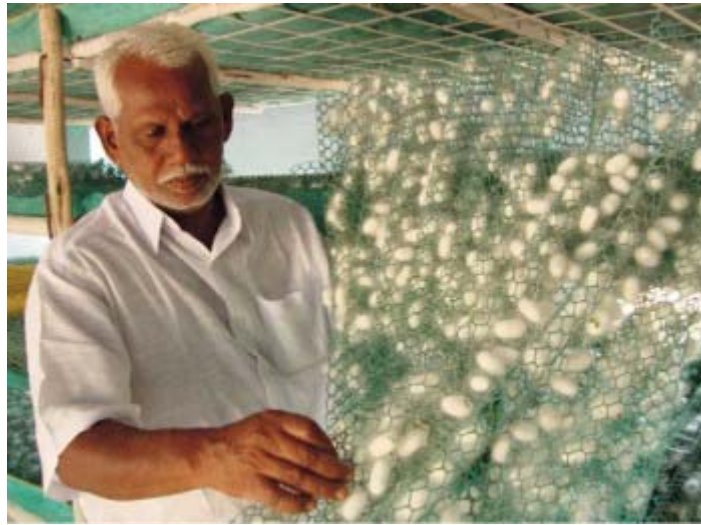
Date: 19/08/2010 **URL:**

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/08/19/stories/2010081950241500.htm>

FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Sericulture, a fall back when other avenues fail

The farmer earns a monthly profit of more than Rs. 40,000



Doubling income: Navaneethan with his international quality silkworm cocoons, ready for harvest.

“Today large numbers of educated rural youth are migrating to cities in search of work, as agriculture has not been remunerative.

“Though there are several reasons for loss and failure in agriculture, proper guidance and right decisions taken at the correct time prevents losses, and at the same time generates thousands of rupees as income, besides providing employment to several others,” says Dr. R. Balakrishna, Head, Regional Sericultural Research Station, Allikkuttai (Post), Salem.

Income generation

Income generation is the only way to retain youth in agriculture and today sericulture promises to offer monthly income on par with salaries drawn from private jobs based on the entrepreneurs' interest and work, according to Mr. N. Sakthivel, Head, Research Extension Centre, Central Silk Board, Srivilliputtur, Tamil Nadu.

Sericulture falls into two sections: one, cultivation and maintenance of mulberry plants, the food plant of silkworm; and two, rearing of silkworms on 4-5 tier rack in a well ventilated rearing shed by feeding them mulberry leaves.

Advanced technologies

Advanced technologies for mulberry cultivation and user friendly, cost-effective silkworm rearing technologies are being introduced by the Central Silk Board for farmers.

These new techniques do not involve drudgery, require low investment, and promise good income.

“After establishing a mulberry garden and rearing shed, one can take up sericulture for years together.

Professionals

Many graduates, post-graduates, even engineers and doctors especially in Erode, Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, and Krishnagiri districts are practicing sericulture on a large scale,” says Mr. Sakthivel.

Says Mr. R. Navaneethan a successful sericulture farmer from Srivilliputtur, Tamil Nadu:

“I am earning a monthly income of more than Rs. 45,000 from this vocation.

After completing my post graduation I got a number of employment opportunities. But family responsibilities required me to maintain my ancestral lands (15 acres) and I undertook cotton trading for nearly 20 years, and faced repeated losses.

The low profit from my lands forced me to cut short even my essential expenditure such as my childrens' educational expenses,” recalls Mr. Navaneethan.

During 2003 the Department of Sericulture, Government of Tamil Nadu encouraged farmers to take up agro based business in villages for generating assured monthly incomes.

“The intensive support from the department,” says Mr. Navaneethan, helped him to establish the required infrastructure easily.

Investment

“I planted a high yielding mulberry variety and constructed a silkworm rearing house for rearing 500 silkworm egg masses at a time. I invested about Rs. 4.5 lakh and claimed some subsidy from the department.

“Initially I reared conventional silkworm breeds but later switched over to international breeds that fetch higher incomes,” he explains.

The farmer adopts advanced technologies such as stem cutting machine for pruning the mulberry garden, drip irrigation, mulching for weed management to cut short labour requirements. He now harvests about 325 kg of cocoons per batch and earns a monthly profit of Rs.47, 500 and an annual net profit of Rs. 5, 70,000.

“Providing recommended inputs to mulberry plants to produce quality leaves, proper disinfection measures, and maintenance of a hygienic and cool rearing environment even in summer are the secret of Mr. Navaneethans' success in the field says,” Mr. Sakthivel.

No retirement

“Many of my friends working in private and government jobs are going to be retire by next year, but I am planning to extend mulberry cultivation by four acres and construct one more rearing house to double my income,” smiles Mr. Navaneethan.

According to him, the adequate monetary benefit and extensive technical support of the research center in Srivilliputtur created enthusiasm to expand his business as large scale industry.

“The Central Silk Board and the State Sericulture Departments are providing extensive support to start sericulture, provide training and extend technical support for those interested in pursuing this line,” says Dr. Balakrishna. For further details contact Mr. Navaneethan, A. Ramalingapuram village, Achanthavilthan (Post), Srivilliputtur, Virudunagar, Tamil Nadu, mobile: 9487402903 and regional sericultural research station at email: rsrssl@gmail.com, Phone: 0427-2296374.

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Accent on benefits of organic tea cultivation

Udhagamandalam: A training programme on organic tea was organized by the United Planters Association of Southern India- Tea Research Foundation (UPASI-TRF) and the Tea Board

under the aegis of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization at Kotagiri recently.

It was for the benefit of the executives and field and factory staff of organic tea estates and small growers of Kotagiri and surroundings.

More than 110 persons representing the corporate sector, small growers, colleges, voluntary organizations and self help groups participated.

Inaugurating the programme, the Executive Director, Tea Board R. Ambalavanan highlighted the side effects of soil, water and land pollution on the environment and the people.

Underscoring the benefits of organic tea cultivation he said that the Tea Board is ready to help small growers in establishing their own organic tea manufacturing units.

The Adviser, UPASI-TRF N. Muralidharan, who presided, said that the biodiversity in tea plantations and their environment should be protected.

Stating that organic tea farming is a form of sustainable agriculture, he said that farmers should realize that sustainable production is better than high production.

Falling prices

The Chairman, Nilgiri Planters Association, Jiten Parikh, hoped that steps would be taken to check the falling prices.

Promotion of organic agriculture will help save the environment. The Director, UPASI-TRF, P. Mohankumar welcomed the gathering. The Assistant Director, UPASI-TRF, B. Radhakrishnan proposed a vote of thanks.

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'Foodgrains left to rot in sun and rain'

Bandicoots eat up over 50 lakh tonnes in FCI godowns, says BJP

BJP delegation, led by party national secretary K. Laxman, visit godowns at Vanagapally

State not releasing foodgrains as it wants middlemen to benefit: Laxman

HYDERABAD: Bandicoots have eaten up over 50 lakh tonnes of foodgrains stored in the godowns of the Food Corporation of India (FCI), according to the revelations of a BJP delegation, led by party national secretary K. Laxman, that visited godowns at Vanagapally in Nalgonda district recently.

Baffling facts

In a press release, the BJP leader said their visit had revealed baffling facts about the FCI's functioning and what he termed 'criminal negligence' towards protecting foodgrains meant for the poor people.

With the godowns having the capacity to store only 40,000 tonnes, while production after a good monsoon was estimated at 11 lakh tonnes, most of the stock was kept in open space and left to rot because they were exposed to sun and rain.

Railway wagons

He said he was surprised to see several lorries yet to be unloaded, while railway wagons too were not arranged to lift the stock from the godowns.

It was also surprising, he said, to note that infested foodgrains were supplied to Tamil Nadu and Kerala as part of the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), that meant families below the poverty line were getting rotten stock.

The BJP leader said the question obviously was why the government was not releasing the foodgrains when people were starving and that too at a time when prices were sky-high.

The answer, he alleged, was clear that it would benefit middlemen and businessmen.

“Why would the FCI procure rice and paddy from millers, ignoring farmers?”

White paper

Mr. Laxman demanded a white paper from the government on the status of foodgrains in the State and wanted immediate release of stock to beneficiaries through the PDS.

Infrastructure

The party underscored the imperative need of creating fool-proof infrastructure, keeping the quantum of foodgrain production in the State.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/08/19/stories/2010081960130300.htm>

Farmers advised to take up cultivation using modern technology



An official of the horticulture department explaining to the Collector V. Arun Roy (second left) about the fruits and vegetables displayed at the exhibition organised on the sidelines of seminar on Modern Agriculture Management at Denkanikottai on Tuesday. T. Ramachandran (right) Thali M.L.A. is in the picture.

KRISHNAGIRI: Farmers have been advised to take up cultivation using modern technologies available with the agricultural department. Collector V. Arun Roy said while inaugurating a seminar on modernisation in agriculture technology organised by the

Agriculture Management Technology Agency (ATMA) at Denkanikottai here on Tuesday.

Subsidy

He said the State Government was extending subsidy for agriculture through Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Agriculture Marketing, Sericulture and Agriculture Engineering Department etc. Through these departments the farmers can avail of latest technologies available for agriculture and reap maximum benefits.

He also noted that a few days ago the Government announced energy saving free pump sets to the small and marginal farmer on free of cost, Mr. Roy added.

As part of the seminar, an exhibition was also inaugurated. Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture Marketing Department, Sericulture, Horticulture and Agriculture Engineering Departments set up stalls detailing of various government schemes. P. Subbaiyan, Additional Director, Horticulture Department, explained various projects. Y. Nagunth, Project Coordinator, ATMA, welcomed the gathering. K. Mohan, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department, proposed a vote of thanks. Over 500 farmers participated in the seminar.

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Research in 36 more GM crops in process: Ramesh



THE HINDU A corncob in the field where the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is conducting trials of Genetically Modified (GM) corn (maize) for the Monsanto in

Coimbatore. File photo: K. Ananthan

Research projects on at least 36 genetically modified crops including rice, okra, brinjal, potato, groundnut and tomato are under process, the government told the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

“There is no ban on genetically modified (GM) agricultural products in the country. However, approval of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) is mandatory prior to production and sale of GM seeds,” Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said in a written reply.

Sugarcane, cabbage, papaya, apple, pea, black gram, chilli, cowpea, watermelon, corn and pomegranate are the other GM food crops that are in the research pipeline, he said.

Mr. Ramesh said that as of date, Bt cotton was the only GM crop in commercial cultivation.

“The Government has recently imposed a moratorium on commercial cultivation of Bt brinjal. No permission has been given to ‘Monsanto India’ to trade in genetically modified seeds and other agriculture inputs.” The application of Mahyco pertaining to commercial cultivation of Bt brinjal is pending consideration of the GEAC in light of several views that have emerged during the public consultations organised by the Ministry, Mr. Ramesh said.

Published: January 30, 2010 18:03 IST | Updated: January 30, 2010 18:10 IST Kolkata, January 30, 2010

Scientists, farmers fast to protest Bt Brinjal



The Hindu Activists protest against the release of Bt. Brinjal for commercial farming in

India, in Hyderabad on Saturday. Photo: P.V. Sivakumar

A group of scientists, academicians and farmers observed a day's protest fast at the Kolkata Book Fair on Saturday against the possible release of genetically modified crop Bt Brinjal for commercial cultivation.

"The volunteers from Green Peace, city-based green body Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCS) and the farmers of an organisation called Seva participated in the fast," Green Peace's sustainable agricultural campaigner R. Jaykrishna told IANS.

He said the fast is being observed at stall no.20 to generate awareness and build up public opinion against the ill effects of Bt Brinjal cultivation.

"Several farmers, who cultivate brinjals, from Kolkata's adjoining North 24 Parganas district participated in the protest. We will also hold a cultural event and a candlelight march across the fair premises this evening to oppose the introduction of Bt Brinjal," Mr. Jaykrishna said.

The central environment ministry is holding public consultations in various Indian cities to decide if it will allow the commercial release. Last October, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee of the government had cleared it.

But a member of the committee, Pushpa Bhargava, has alleged that all necessary tests were not carried out before the decision was taken.

Earlier, hundreds of farmers and scientists protested against the introduction of Bt Brinjal during a public consultation held in January in Kolkata in the presence of central Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh.

Several scientists and green groups also raised the issue of bio-technology and environment friendliness of this new agricultural produce, citing fears over health security.

"We'll not allow Bt Brinjal in the commercial market. We all protest against the decision of introducing this crop," said Alauddin Ahmed, a farmer of Atghara village in North 24 Parganas.

According to an another report a similar protest was held in Hyderabad by activists against Bt Brinjal on Saturday , on the eve of the public consultation to be held in the city.

Published: August 18, 2010 19:50 IST | Updated: August 18, 2010 19:50 IST
PORDENONE, Italy, August 18, 2010

Italian farmer pushes genetically modified crops



The Hindu Genetically Modified (GM) corn require fewer chemicals and produce higher yields and greater profits, says Giorgio Fidenato. Photo: K. Ananthan

Giorgio Fidenato has made a habit of carrying a raw ear of yellow corn and taking a hearty bite whenever a camera is in sight.

It's a provocation. The Italian farmer's corn is genetically modified, grown surreptitiously in fields in the northeast not far from the Austrian and Slovene borders.

“Our biggest goal is to show consumers that it is safe to eat,” said the 49-year-old advocate of what's known as genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

More activist than farmer, Fidenato's cultivation of nearly 5 hectares, or 12 acres, of

genetically modified corn is an act aimed at forcing the legalization of genetically engineered crops in Italy. He waxes on about their benefits that they require fewer chemicals and produce higher yields and greater profits.

Fidenato faces formidable opposition in Italy. His opponents are angry, organized and, in some cases, equally prepared to take the law into their own hands. Unlike Americans, the vast majority of Europeans are staunchly against the marketing of genetically modified foods.

Arrayed against Fidenato are agriculture officials, who put a moratorium on genetically modified seeds in March, the country's main farm lobby, consumer groups, environmentalists and anti-globalization protesters.

“Violating the law to get the debate going is a very dangerous precedent,” said Roberto Burdese, president of Slow Food Italy, one of 20 organizations that have banded together to keep genetically modified food out of the country.

The European Commission announced in July a proposal that would allow the 27 member states to have the final word on whether to allow cultivation of genetically altered food within their own borders. That would likely lead to more bans because countries would no longer be required to back up their rulings with new scientific data.

The announcement was bad news for Fidenato, though by then his corn was knee-high.

The genetically modified corn, produced by St. Louis-based Monsanto, was the only genetically modified seed authorized for commercial cultivation in Europe until March, when a potato seed sold by the German company BASF was approved. Besides the moratorium in Italy, the seed has been banned in at least six countries, including France, Germany and Austria.

Tired of legal battles, Fidenato planted the corn on April 25, Italy's national Liberation day. He posted a video on YouTube showing him planting six seeds, but he didn't disclose that he had in fact planted two fields. That only came out when anonymous letters containing pieces of the plants reached prosecutors in July, raising opponents' suspicions that there could still be others. He won't say where he got the seeds.

Word spread about the crop, and on August 9 about 70 anti-GMO activists wearing chemical protection suits trampled nearly an acre of corn to the ground.

“The pity is they should have waited 10 days, and it would have been ready to make polenta,” Fidenato said, referring to the corn meal that is a dietary mainstay in northern Italy.

The leader of the corn bandits, astrophysicist Luca Tornatore, argued there is enough uncertainty surrounding the health and environmental risks posed by GMOs to make them undesirable.

Tornatore said his group grew frustrated that prosecutors, who have sequestered the fields, had not destroyed the crops despite a 2001 Italian law that forbids their cultivation.

The protesters also would like to destroy the 4 1/2 hectares Fidenato has planted in another town, but “We don’t know where it is,” Tornatore acknowledged.

Fidenato responded that genetically modified corn has been legal in Italy since it was added to the European Union's catalog of authorized crops 12 years ago. And he pointed to a decision by an administrative court in Rome, which ruled that the agriculture ministry cannot decline to authorize the seeds out of caution.

The ruling resulted from a three-year court battle waged by Silvano Dalla Libera, a neighbouring farmer in the northeastern region of Friuli, where Fidenato's fields are located.

The former agriculture minister, Luca Zaia, along with the health and environment ministers, responded to the administrative decision by putting a moratorium on GMOs in March. There was a risk nearby fields could be contaminated, they said.

“To stop me, one poor farmer, three ministries mobilized,” Dalla Libera said with a hint of pride. Fidenato began farming when he was 12 and now has about 70 acres. He became persuaded of the merits of genetically altered crops during a trip to the United States in the 1990s and helped found Futuragra, a group of farmers fighting for GMOs.

By planting the corn, he risks up to three years in jail and a fine.

Fidenato said he's not bothered by the threat of prosecution. Futuragra has been in touch with farmers in Spain, which has the highest concentration of genetically modified corn in Europe, and France, where it has been banned, to press the battle.


"If they don't understand it is an EU right, that we don't need authorization, then I have farmers in the entire Po River valley, from Piedmont to Veneto, who will plant GMO corn," Fidenato said.

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WeatherChennai - INDIA


Today's Weather



Thursday, Aug 19
Max Min
35.5° | 24.0°






Rain: 43.0 mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 5:56
Humidity: 84% Sunset: 18:28
Wind: Normal Barometer: 1004.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Friday, Aug 20
Max Min
36° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Aug 21	Sunday Aug 22	Monday Aug 23	Tuesday Aug 24	Wednesday Aug 25
				
29° 26° Rainy	28° 26° Rainy	29° 26° Rainy	30° 26° Rainy	29° 26° Rainy

Business Standard

Thursday, Aug 19, 2010

Monsanto plans 2 high-yielding corn hybrids by 2011

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai August 19, 2010, 0:41 IST

Monsanto India (MIL), the leading hybrid seed and technology provider, plans to launch two high-yielding hybrid variety of maize, next year.

The premium seeds Dekalb 9108 and Dekalb 9106 will be available during spring and the kharif seasons in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, respectively.

Dekalb is now available in 14 high-yielding hybrid varieties that are suited for different agro climatic conditions — different kinds of soil, water availability, moisture etc.

Dekalb 9108 is best suited for the spring season in Uttar Pradesh, while Dekalb 9106 is unique to the summer heat in Punjab. The seeds will help increase yield provided the farmers follow best farming practices, said Amitabh Jaipuria, managing director of MIL.

MIL's focus continues to be on delivering higher yield for Indian farms through superior seeds and farmer education. It's breeding research efforts are focused on yield enhancement, abiotic stresses (heat and drought), biotic stress (disease resistance) and latest molecular techniques to make breeding faster and efficient.

Crop-breeding research is being conducted over large acres for maize nurseries and over hundreds of acres of farmland for hybrid product testing across different agro-climatic conditions and seasons in India.

With over a million direct contacts, MIL's field force interacts with farmers all year-round and engages in awareness and education programs focusing on agronomic practices and product usage. At present, India's average maize output with conventional seeds is estimated at around

500 kgs per acre. The average output using hybrid seeds works out to one tonne per acre in India as compared to the global average of two tonnes.

Farmers in Bihar, however, have achieved the highest four tonnes per acre of output – with high-yielding hybrid maize seeds combined with good agronomic practices – that is at par with yields in the US.

There is a massive growth in corn output over the last 4-5 years from 12-13 million tonnes to 18-19 million tonnes because of high-yielding maize seeds. Monsanto has played a major role in making these seeds available to farmers in India. “We call it a “yellow revolution” in India,” said Jaipuria.

India had witnessed two “white revolutions” so far. First was the milk revolution around 1970-80 and the second was the cotton revolution between 2002-2006. But, now improved (or high-yielding) hybrid maize seeds are currently transforming maize farming in the country.

Surprisingly, maize is the fastest growing cereal that is set to ensure food security in the country. Increased hybrid cultivation, better farming techniques and superior seed genetics can help meet increasing demand for maize.

The maximum productivity growth can come from seeds that constitute a small part (less than 10 per cent) of the total farm input costs. Most crops, however, contribute the maximum to increased farm productivity. Seed Replacement Rates (SRR) in India are lower than most countries including China and Vietnam. As a result, yields in India are lower than global averages.

Globally, maize with an annual production of over 800 million tonnes is the largest cereal crop. Rice and wheat each stands at 650 million tonnes. Global production of overall foodgrain is estimated at over 2.5 billion tonnes. However, in India, the yellow cereal is in the third place with an output of 18-19 million tonnes, after rice (100 million tonnes) and wheat (75 million tonnes).

Rice output may reach record as rain boosts planting

Bloomberg / August 19, 2010, 0:39 IST

India, the world’s second-biggest rice grower, may have a record harvest this year as increased planting offset drought in the east of the country.



Production may total 100 million tonnes in the year ending June 2011, compared with 89.3 million tonnes a year ago, said Vijay Setia, president of All India Rice Exporters' Association. Output was a record 99.2 million tonnes in the year ended June 30, 2009, according to the farm ministry.

"It will be a bumper crop this year as overall rains have been good and the government has distributed hybrid and good quality seeds," Setia said in a phone interview from Karnal.

A record harvest may prompt the government to lift a two-year-old restriction on exports at a time when global demand is expected to increase as surging wheat prices encourage buyers to switch to rice. Rice exports from Pakistan, the world's third-largest shipper, are expected to slump after a flooding damaged crops in areas accounting for 90 per cent of agricultural output.

Indian farmers had planted 27.4 million hectares of rice (67.7 million acres) as of August 13, compared with 25.1 million hectares a year earlier, the farm ministry said last week.

The condition of the crop in 16 out of the 19 major rice-growing states is "normal," the ministry said. Crop conditions are "poor" in Bihar and "satisfactory" in Kerala and West Bengal, the biggest grower, it said.

"According to preliminary reports we expect a 75 per cent loss in rice production," Ashok Kumar Sinha, the Bihar state government's agriculture production commissioner, said in an interview yesterday.

"A real assessment will be made in a week as the dry spell is still continuing."

Reduced rain

The harvest may not be affected by drought in Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, Farm Minister Sharad Pawar said in New Delhi yesterday.

Rainfall in the June-September monsoon, the main source of irrigation for the country's 235 million farmers, was 4 per cent lower than average as of yesterday, according to the state-owned weather bureau. Rain in Bihar was 29 per cent lower than normal, and 31 per cent deficient in West Bengal.

The crop in West Bengal will be lower than the 14.8 million tonnes last year because of drought in 11 districts, Narendranath Dey, farm minister of the state, said by phone today. Foodgrain production in Jharkhand may be less than last year's 2.2 million tonnes, said Deepak Singh, agriculture director with the Jharkhand government. Rice accounts for 85 per cent to 90 per cent of the grain in the state, he said.

Pakistan floods

Rice futures in Chicago last month lost their premium over wheat for the first time since March 2008 as the worst drought in Russia in at least 50 years, dry conditions in Europe and rains in Canada curbed global wheat supply and pushed prices to the highest in almost two years.

The price climbed to \$16.27 per 100 pounds last December on concern that India may become a net importer for the first time in more than two decades and as the Philippines boosted imports after storm destroyed crops. Rice for November delivery traded at \$11.17 at 5:47 pm Singapore time.

Almost 700,000 hectares of standing crops in Pakistan are either underwater or destroyed by floods, the United Nations' Food & Agriculture Organization said on August 11. Pakistan was expected to export 3.8 million tonnes of rice this year, more than 10 per cent of the estimated global shipments of 30.4 million tons, according to the FAO, which made the forecast in July, before the flooding.

India won't lift a ban on exports as it needs grains for supply to the poor at subsidized rates, Pawar said on August 10. There are "prospects" to export wheat after a recent surge in global prices, Trade Secretary Rahul Khullar told reporters in New Delhi today.

The government banned exports of all grades of rice except the aromatic Basmati variety in April 2008, to increase domestic supplies. The restriction remains in place as a drought in 2009 pared production by 10 percent in the year ended June 30.

The country's rice reserves on July 1 were 24.26 million tonnes, more than double the normal buffer of 9.8 million tonnes, according to data compiled by the state-run Food Corporation of India.

Home demand eats into cashew exports

Mahesh Kulkarni / Bangalore August 19, 2010, 0:37 IST

India, the second largest exporter of cashew kernels in the world, witnessed stagnation in the exports of the commodity during the first quarter of this financial year. The country exported 25,862 tonnes, a marginal growth of 1.6 per cent over the corresponding quarter last financial year. This was largely due to the booming domestic consumption and shortage in the availability of raw nuts this year.



The country's cashew kernel exports have remained almost flat in quantity terms during April-July period, but in value terms, the exports have shown a marginal rise of 2.1 per cent to Rs 713 crore compared to Rs 698 crore in the same period a year ago.

Exporters had to draw down to meet the domestic demand than export commitments. The local consumption is pegged at around 190,000 tonnes annually, while the exports are around 110,000 tonnes, industry sources said.

According to Kochi-based Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI), the unit value realisation from exports was up by four per cent to Rs 276 a kg in the export market during the quarter. This was 26 per cent lower when compared to the domestic prices, which were ruling at Rs 375 a kg.

"The exporters are finding it remunerative to sell their produce in the domestic market for two reasons. Firstly, they are getting higher price realisation and faster turnaround. Secondly, the shortage of raw nuts has made exporters to limit their processing," said Pankaj Sampath, a Mumbai-based exporter.

Historically, the cashewnut is consumed in India for making sweets. But in the last five years, it has been used as main ingredient in confectionary industry, ice creams and also consumed as snack nut, he said.

Currently, India produces around 500,000 tonnes of raw cashew nuts, while it imports 700,000 tonnes for processing into kernels before exporting. After processing, the industry is left with around 300,000 tonnes of kernels, of which 110,000 tonnes are exported. The CEPCI expects around five per cent growth in the exports during the current financial year.

“Recession fears from buyers’ side and lack of parity for Indian exporters were not conducive for driving export during the whole of last year. Another reason could be attributed to aggressiveness on the part of Vietnam in the international market,” G Giridhar Prabhu, a Mangalore-based exporter said. Vietnam accounted for 170,000 tonnes during 2009.

Sampath said in order to increase exports from the country, the industry needs to raise the domestic raw nut production. Presently, there is no scientific and systematic way of growing cashew nuts. It is largely grown as a wild crop in many states. In the next five to seven years, the country needs to grow at least one million tonnes annually to meet the demand for both exports and domestic consumption, he said.

During the first quarter, the processors imported 231,804 tonnes, a drop of five per cent. In value terms, it was 15.5 per cent higher at Rs 208 crore compared to the year ago period. The processors had to shell out 14 per cent higher amount at Rs 41 a kg for import of raw nuts.

For the current year, the domestic crop is short by 10 per cent to 450,000 tonnes. This means the processing industry may have to import more raw nuts this year, added Sampath.

Cardamom prices fall 15% in a week

George Joseph / Kochi August 19, 2010, 0:33 IST

The fresh harvesting season of cardamom started with the prices of the commodity declining sharply. The average prices of the commodity, which was Rs 1,560 a kg last week, declined 15 per cent to Rs 1,325 a kg today. prices had fallen to as low as Rs 1,260 a kg during the week.



The fresh enthusiasm among the growers of Idukki district of Kerala has suddenly vanished as the season began on a strong bearish mode. The farmers were thrilled with the price rise during last two-three months as the average price went up to Rs 1,600 a kg. In July, the best quality cardamom was quoted at Rs 1,770 a kg. But the recent fall in prices has created anguish among the growers.

It is said that the arrival to various auction centers of Idukki increased tremendously as production is expected to increase this time. The average daily arrival was between 45,000-48,000 kg compared to 10,000 kg last month.

Farmers refuted this saying there had not been any significant increase in the arrival compared to last couple of seasons, but the prices have been declining. This is mainly based on reports that production would increase this time.

According to K M Michel, president, Cardamom Growers Association (CGA), there would not be a sharp increase in production and he estimated the production to be 10,000 tonnes. There has been an increase of around 7,000 hectares in the area under cultivation, taking the total area to 40,000 hectares.

So far, the climate at the producing centers has been favourable. This is the main reason behind the fall in prices as production would pick up strongly after Onam festival season in Kerala.

Farmers said that the low weight of cardamom in this season is a concern in some areas. Earlier one kg of dry cardamom could be produced by drying around five kg of green one. But now this ratio has shifted to 1:6.5 owing to loss in weight of the fresh crop.

Normally 20-30 seeds are there in one cardamom shell, but in some areas this is dropped to 15-18 seeds which resulted in the weight loss and there by paving huge loss to growers. Growers are ignorant about this problem and urged the Spices Board to have a scientific study on the issue.

As the season commenced with a pessimistic note, farmers are aggressive on selling as prices are expected to come down further. The harvesting may even extend till February this time.

Sugar stockholding norm for bulk users relaxed

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi August 19, 2010, 0:32 IST

The government has decided to relax stockholding limit on bulk sugar consumers, such as ice-cream and beverage makers, by allowing them to keep the sweetener for 90 days of their usage from the current 15 days.

The decision comes amid a sharp fall in sugar prices — of about 40 per cent — in the last seven months. Sugar prices have fallen to Rs 30 a kg from Rs 48 a kg in mid-January in Delhi mainly due to stockholding limit on bulk consumers.

The Food Ministry has decided to relax the stockholding limit for bulk users and now they can store sugar equivalent to 90 days of their requirement, a senior government official said today.

The notification is likely to be issued soon, the official added. The relaxed norm would be valid for six months.

In August last year, the government had imposed the stockholding limit on bulk consumers, asking them to refrain from stocking sugar for more than 15 days. Later, in February this year, the government had reduced the stockholding limit to 10 days, which was again brought back to 15 days in May. Bulk consumers are those who have an average consumption of more than 10 quintals a month.

The industry had been demanding that the stockholding limit on bulk users be relaxed to discourage them from buying imported sugar, on which there is no such restriction.

With sugar prices under control, the Centre has started reversing measures it had taken to boost domestic supplies and curb rising prices. From May, sugar mills have been permitted to sell their quota on a monthly basis, instead of offloading it every fortnight.

Agriculture and Food Minister Sharad Pawar had earlier said that the Centre would consider the industry's demand of imposing import duty on refined (white) sugar after assessing the likely production in 2010-11 sugar year. The duty-free import of raw and white sugar is valid till December 2010.

Sugar production in India, the world's second largest producer and biggest consumer, is estimated to touch 18.8 million tonnes in 2009-10 season, nearly three million tonnes more than the earlier projection.

In 2010-11, sugar output is expected at 25.5 million tonnes, higher than the annual demand of 23 million tonnes.

The country had imported about 6 million tonnes of sugar since early last year as sugar output in 2008-09 and 2009-10 crop year was lower than the domestic demand.

Rain, pests cause more than a storm in tea industry's cup

Ishita Ayan Dutt & Ashok Divase / Kolkata/ Mumbai August 19, 2010, 0:30 IST



Heavy rain, coupled with pest attacks, pulled down the bottomline of the tea industry in the first quarter.

Financial performance of tea companies – bulk and branded – together showed revenues from tea increased three per cent to Rs 1,417.33 crore while operating profit dropped 38.51 per cent to Rs 151.94 crore. Margins on tea sales declined 40.28 per cent.

“Though the first quarter is not indicative for the industry, financial performance was affected due to crop loss,” Aditya Khaitan, managing director of the world’s largest bulk tea producer, McLeod Russel India, said.

The industry has seen substantial crop loss in North Bengal and Assam. Assam saw a production decline over two successive months—May and June—in 2010. While during May, the region witnessed a three million kg loss in crop against the corresponding period of last year, June has seen the maximum loss in crop in both Assam and West Bengal.

In the first quarter, average of North Bengal and Assam tea prices was at Rs 119.12 a kg, compared to Rs 129.18 a kg. In South India, however, crop was higher than the corresponding period, which translated to a steeper drop in prices. The average price of South Indian tea during April to June stood at Rs 66.36 as against Rs 86.23 a kg. Branded tea company, Tata Global Beverages, faced severe erosion in margins as the bulk tea market made a strong opening beginning of the season.

Even as the first quarter performance looks gloomy, prices are likely to increase in the coming months on crop loss.

Stagnant production in India, shortfall in production in the quality belt of Assam and carry forward shortage should lead to firmer prices in India, said an industry representative.

“The crop situation particularly in Upper Assam (concentrated in the Doom Dooma area) has again been severely affected with nearly all the major tea groups operating in that region namely Apeejay Tea, Assam Co, M K Shah Exports, McLeod Russel and Warren Tea reporting significantly lower production,” the Indian Tea Association (ITA) said.

According to ITA estimates, July showed a further decline of two million kg of crop for the association’s members. “Even though South India was higher, the overall production in India is likely to be lower than last year,” Khaitan said.

TEA TROUBLE					
Company	Margins on tea sales		Growth in %		
			Tea revenue	Total revenue	Net profit
	Jun '09	Jun '10	Jun '10	Jun '10	Jun '10
Tata Global Beverages	16.06	9.24	4.15	7.75	LTP
McLeod Russel	25.81	15.39	1.36	1.36	-39.54
Goodricke Group	18.37	13.62	2.95	3.14	-25.53
Jay Shree Tea	27.18	18.40	-10.98	23.18	-8.20
Warren Tea	21.9	14.52	16.99	16.99	-14.84
Harrisons Malayalam	16.84	-20.91	-17.74	10.90	PTL
Assam Company India	32.54	42.78	3.55	13.78	14.68
Bombay Burmah	19.5	22.18	0.52	16.12	44.57
Asian Tea	3.07	2.62	13.48	13.48	44.00
Rossell Tea	29.92	24.71	14.72	21.19	4.83
Total for industry	17.95	10.72	2.93	8.56	79.95
LTP; Loss to profit PTL; profit to loss *					

With only five months of tea production left with the tail-end of November and December, the industry expects the year to close with a shortfall of 40 million kg, which implies that pipeline shortage at the beginning of next season would be to the tune of 90 million kg.

Cotton price expectations surge with removal of export ban

Kalpesh Damor / Ahmedabad August 19, 2010, 0:00 IST

Exporters begin bookings, even with prices at record high, with no slackening in global demand.



The Government of India's decision to allow cotton exports from October 1, coupled with removal of the Rs 2,500 per tonne export duty on raw produce, is likely to keep prices firm in the short term.

Normally, the price starts declining as kharif crop arrivals accelerate, but this may not happen. Exporters have started booking cotton in the forward market for delivery after two months, as they fear prices may firm up from here, even as these are already at a historic high.

World consumption is estimated to remain higher than the production and Pakistan likely to witness crop loss due to floods. Also, the demand is growing in China, the largest importer of cotton from India. "The government's decision will have a bullish impact on cotton prices, which are likely to remain firm in the short term," said Rakesh Rathi, president, North India Cotton Association.

Agrees a top official of a leading textile company here, "We were expecting prices to come down from the current record levels in December-January, when cotton arrivals in the country pick up. However, now it seems the prices will not ease, as export is being allowed."

Forward prices higher

Despite the fact that Gujarat's benchmark cotton variety, Shankar-6, is scaling an all-time high of Rs 32,000 per candy (a candy is 365 kg), exporters have started booking cotton at higher prices in the forward market.

By market reports, exporters booked cotton for December delivery at Rs 32,000 per candy today. Yesterday, prices for December delivery were quoted at Rs 31,700 to Rs 31,800 per candy.

The removal of restrictions on exports will arrest the fall in prices,” agreed Kishor Shah of the Central Gujarat Cotton Dealers Association.

Cotton production in Pakistan is estimated to take a hit of two million bales (a bale is 170 kg) in 2010-11. Recently, the US Department of Agriculture (Usda), in its estimates for August, had raised projected import needs in China by 850,000 bales. The government there had to auction stocks from its reserves to meeting the growing demand of China’s textile industry.

The notification allowing exports of cotton from October has also come at a time when cotton prices in the international market are ruling firm. Recently, prices touched a 15-year high of 95.6 cents per pound in the international market.

Globally, current production and consumption forecasts hint at a gap of four million bales in 2010/11. This represents the sixth consecutive crop year where production has been lower than consumption, while ending stocks are expected to fall another two million bales by the end of 2010/11. Usda estimates world cotton production to rise by 14.4 per cent at 116.9 million bales (mb) in 2010/11 from 102.1 mb in 2009/10. While, consumption is seen as up to 120.9 mb in 2010/11 from 117.7 mb.

Demand is certainly rising in the domestic market. Cotton Advisory Board (CAB), an industry body, estimated total output at 29.5 mb against overall consumption of 33.3 mb for the cotton year 2009-10. Exports are estimated to rise to 8.3 mb. CAB pegs ending stock for the current cotton year (Oct-Sept) at just above four mb.

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Kerala leads major increase in area under certified coffee

Targets small, big growers shifting to sustainable cropping practices.



The robusta-growing Wayanad region accounts for most of this year's increase in acreage under certified coffee.

A. Srinivas

Bangalore, Aug. 18

Area under 'certified' coffee, that is, coffee certified by certain international agencies to have been produced in environmentally sustainable and labour-friendly conditions is slated to increase by at least 7,000 acres in 2010-11, from the present level of about 50,000 acres .

The robusta-growing Wayanad region in Kerala accounts for most of this year's increase in

acreage under certified coffee.

It is reliably learnt that the ABC Group plans to bring 2,000-2,500 acres under UTZ Certified this year – 1,600 acres in Kerala and 600-700 acres in Karnataka. It has about 6,000 acres under certified coffee plantation.

Target groups

The target group consists of both small and big growers, who are shifting to sustainable cropping practices. “Kerala offers an advantage because big and small growers comply with labour norms,” industry sources said. The Group has reportedly fixed an October deadline for getting these areas certified, a process that takes about nine months.

Mr Vasudeva, Quality Manager, IMO Control, a firm that audits farms on behalf of certification bodies, said: “The time required for the grower to prepare his estate could be three to six months for UTZ and Rainforest Alliance. To get the estate certified as Organic, it will take about three years of conversion period. Certification process could take three months from the date of inspection.”

Officials in ECOM Gill, a Swiss-based export house, said the company was organising 3,000 small growers, each holding one or two acres, into ‘groups’ in the Wayanad region of Kerala. In the process, an additional 5,000 acres is likely to come under certified coffee this year. By forming groups, the cost of certification would come down, even while covering a large area in the process, they said.

The other major export house, forming small and medium growers into groups, is Ned Commodities (Netherlands-based). These export houses have undertaken to bear the cost of certification, an annual procedure, in the first two or three years. The group certificate is generally issued by audit firms — empanelled by UTZ, Rainforest, Fair Trade or Organic – in the name of the export house.

Contract

Industry sources said the growers and export houses enter into a contract of “first preference of sale at a mutually agreed price”.

Mr M.P. Devaiah, General Manager, Allanasons Ltd, said: "The certificate should go to the grower and not to the export house. If the others are willing to offer a higher price than the export house, they should get the certificate as well. Otherwise, there is no point buying that coffee. In the process, the growers' option to sell to other parties is also curbed. I have taken up the issue with the Coffee Exporters' Association."

However, Mr Bose Mandanna, former Vice-Chairman, Coffee Board, and a grower of certified coffee as part of a group scheme, said: "If the certificate is freely transferrable, it may discourage export houses from bearing the costs. Growers cannot pick up the tab."

The Coffee Board officials said that the cost of certification in the case of Rainforest Alliance was \$5 a hectare (\$2 an acre) for small farmers and \$7.5 a hectare (\$3 an acre) in the case of large farmers. In the case of UTZ, the cost of the certificate is a flat Rs 1,000. In both cases, the charges for audit and travel are separate.

The Coffee Board officials said that international auditors could charge about \$800 per man day.

As a result, Indian auditors have entered the field on behalf of UTZ, Rainforest and others, offering their services at lower rates.

An ECOM official said: "To get both Rainforest Alliance and UTZ certification over a 100-acre holding may cost Rs 1-1.5 lakh, depending on auditors' fees."

Ned Commodities is estimated to procure 4,000 tonnes of certified coffee in 2010-11, up from about 3,000 tonnes last year, while ECOM Gill may make available close to 2,000 tonnes.

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Higher arrivals hit soya

Indore, Aug. 18

Prices of both soyabean and soya oil fell in the spot market here on Wednesday for

multiple reasons. Prices of soyabean in the spot market fell Rs 40- 45 to Rs 1,950-1980.

Similarly, soyabean's plant delivery rates were quoted at Rs 2,030-2,060, down Rs 65- 70 from Tuesday. Soyabean DOC prices also plunged by Rs 300 at Rs 15,800-15,900/ tonne.

The reasons for the steep fall in prices of soyabean and Soya DOC included crumbling prices in the futures market, increased arrival of soyabean in the local mandi, and the decline in its demand at plant level.

Soyabean August futures at the NCEDX closed at Rs 2068.50, September futures at Rs 2077.50 and October futures at Rs 2077, a decline of 14 per cent from its prices on Tuesday. Against the arrival of 95,000 to 1 lakh kg bags of soyabean in the State mandis in the past few days, a total of 1.15 lakh bags of soyabean arrived on Wednesday. Arrival of soyabean in Indore mandi on Tuesday was 7,400 bags.

Production estimates

According to the revised estimates, production of soyabean is expected to be at 95 lakh tonnes (lt), up 10 lt from the last month's estimate. Though there is an expectation of some decline in coverage of soyabean, revival of monsoon has bolstered prospects of standing crops, trade sources said.

Production of soyabean DOC in the country this year is expected to be 3.60 lt. This includes demand of 2 lt of soyabean in the domestic market, while export of soya DOC has already touched 1.60 lt.

Like soyabean, soya oil prices also tanked both in the futures and spot markets. Soyabean refined August futures at the NCDEX closed at Rs 499.15, September futures at Rs 497.65 and October futures at Rs 495.15, a decline of 9 per cent from Tuesday. Soya refined September futures at Indore's National Board of Trade closed at Rs 497.70. In the spot market, soya refined oil quoted at Rs 473-476, down Rs 5. Similarly, soya solvent prices also quoted down Rs 9 at Rs 448-452.

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Lemongrass cultivation in North-East soon

Karma Samten Yangzom

Gangtok, Aug. 18

Lemongrass and Java Citronella, found in abundance in the hills, are set to become a major source of income for the the North-East, particularly Sikkim, while contributing to environmental protection as well.

The aromatic oil extracted from the two herbs may fetch handsome dividends to farmers. Besides, they also have immense potential to conserve water and soil.

The College of Agricultural Engineering and Post Harvest Technology at Ranipool is involved in ensuring value-addition to scented and aromatic plants of the North-Eastern States under the National Agricultural Innovation Project. The Rs 4-crore project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research also covers herbs such as patchouli and scented orchids. The Vice-Chancellor of the Central Agriculture University, Imphal, to which the college is affiliated, Dr S.N. Puri, said that the college has tied up with the farmers around the campus for growing lemongrass and Java Citronella in about two acres of their extra land. He said that an oil extractor having a capacity of producing four litres of oil from four quintals of lemon grass or Java Citronella worth around Rs 1,600 in an hour has been installed at the College for the convenience of these farmers.

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Tea volumes dip at Coonoor sale

P.S. Sundar Coonoor, Aug. 18

An analysis of the listing by brokers shows that a volume of 14.02 lakh kg will be offered

for Sale No: 33 at the auctions of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held tomorrow and Friday. It is the lowest volume in the last 11 weeks.

It is as much as 2.19 lakh kg less than last week's offer but 1.02 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 14.02-lakh kg on offer, 10.18 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grade and 3.84 lakh kg belongs to the dust grade.

As much as 13.29 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.73 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.30 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 9.88 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.43 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.41 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 14.02-lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 10.92 lakh kg. As much as 3.10 lakh kg comprises teas remaining unsold in previous auctions.

Some 30 per cent of the offer has been remaining unsold in the recent weeks. Producers are calling for measures to activate demand to promote greater intake.

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Meet on sweet sorghum applications

Hyderabad, Aug. 18

The NutriPlus Knowledge Center of Icrisat's (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) would organise an entrepreneur development workshop on establishing and managing a commercial sweet sorghum syrup enterprise for food applications from September 27 to October 1. "Sweet sorghum is a multipurpose crop for the simultaneous production of grain for food, sugary juice for making syrup, jaggery or ethanol; bagasse and green foliage for fodder, biomass for production of bio-gas, organic fertiliser and manufacture of paper," Dr William D. Dar, Director-General of Icrisat, said here in a press release on Tuesday. "With proper management, smallholder farmers can

increase their incomes by 20 per cent compared to alternative crops in dry areas in India,” he said. The proposed workshop would bring awareness about the potential of sweet sorghum among prospective entrepreneurs and to enable them to start their own business enterprise based on this crop.

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Festival demand lifts cardamom



NewsWire18 Kochi, Aug. 18

Cardamom prices may trade up in the next seven days on festival demand, while turmeric is likely to stay range-bound, dealers said on Wednesday.

Cardamom: Increase in fresh crop supply is likely to keep the uptrend limited, they added.

“Harvesting has already started in major growing areas and arrivals are expected to be in full swing from next week onwards,” said a report by GeojitComtrade, a brokerage firm. Today, in auctions, supply rose to nearly 48 tonnes with an average price of Rs 1,300 a kg.

September cardamom was trading around Rs 1,247 a kg against Rs 1,289.10 a week ago.

Turmeric: Turmeric prices may stay range bound due to subdued demand amid tight supplies, dealers said. September turmeric on NCDEX was trading around Rs 13,572 a 100 kg, down Rs 132 from last week. August turmeric, expiring on Friday, was at Rs 14,966 from Rs 14,204 a week ago. In Nizamabad spot market, turmeric price was around Rs 14,855 (Rs 14,897-14,903). — © NewsWire18 Pvt. Ltd. 2010

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Increased supply crushes castor



Rajkot, Aug. 18

Castor prices dropped on Wednesday on lower demand from exporters. Moreover, local traders have been on profit-taking mode the last two-three days.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange, castor September contract closed at Rs 3,608 (for 100 kg), down Rs 7 from the previous day's close of Rs 3,615.

Spot castor was unchanged at Rs 3,502.50 a quintal. On NCDEX, castorseed August futures declined by Rs 6.50 to Rs 3,620 a quintal.

Arrivals of castor in Gujarat were 2,000-3,000 bags; prices were Rs 700-710 for 20 kg. In

the Saurashtra region, 600 bags arrived and prices were Rs 670-689.

According to a research analyst, prices were lower because of good progress in sowing of the castorseed crop in major growing States.

Fall in industrial demand along with increased supply in physical markets pushed prices down.

According to the Solvent Extractors Association of India, the kharif area under castor reached 301,000 hectares against 218,000 hectares reported in the same period last year.

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Bumper crop hopes hold rice firm



Our Correspondent

Karnal, Aug. 18

Prices of Basmati variety rice rose by Rs 50 a quintal and touched Rs 5,200 on Wednesday.

Non-Basmati ruled firm and maintained the higher levels witnessed at the beginning of this

week.

Pusa-1121 (steam) ruled at Rs 5,000-5,200 a quintal. Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 4,000-4,100; while Pusa-1121 (raw) quoted at Rs 5,000-5,200. Pusa (sela) quoted at Rs 3,100 a quintal and Pusa (raw) ruled at around Rs 3,950.

Basmati sela ruled at Rs 6,000-6050 a quintal, while basmati raw was quoted at Rs 7,100-7,150.

The Sharbati sela variety ruled at around Rs 2,800 and Sharbati steam quoted at Rs 2,900-3,000.

Permal (PR) sela quoted at Rs 2,050-2,150; PR (raw) at Rs 2,100-2,250; and PR (steam) at around Rs 2,350.

Brokens such as Tibar ruled at Rs 3,450-3500 a quintal, Dubar ruled at around Rs 2,800, and Mongra at Rs 2,050.

Mr Amit Kumar, proprietor, Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told Business Line that despite export demand lifting prices, the rice market is under immense pressure with not much movement seen in prices.

The prime reasons for this are, in October the new production is expected to hit the market, traders are expecting a bumper production of Basmati variety this year and with low export demand warehouses are already full, he said.

On the other hand, with low procurement, arrivals of Govinda paddy dropped.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, around 3,500 bags (60 kg each) of Govinda paddy arrived in the market. The early variety paddy ruled at Rs 1,020 a quintal. Rice millers lifted the new arrivals.

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Pepper futures fall in volatile trade

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Aug. 18

Pepper futures, after witnessing high volatility, ended below the previous closing and strong bearish activities. The volatility was so high that August contract on NCDEX went up as high as Rs 20,585 and then fell to as low as Rs 19,850 a quintal. Similarly, September shot up to Rs 20,720 and fell to Rs 20,034 a quintal.

The market corrected itself after rising by Rs 11 a kg in two days. In fact, concerted efforts from all corners were there to pull the market down sharply by those who wanted to cover to meet their export commitments. But August declined by only Rs 5 for a quintal and it showed that August had some grip on the market, market sources told Business Line. There was no selling pressure on the spot. National level Cooperatives were offering at Re 1 below the August contract price while the buyers were demanding Rs 2-3 below depending upon the quality of the material, they said. August contract on NCDEX was down by Rs 5 to Rs 20,090 a quintal.

September and October fell Rs 125 and Rs 161 respectively to Rs 20,230 and Rs 20,430 a quintal. Total turnover increased by 6,478 tonnes to 27,674 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 241 tonnes to 17,576 tonnes. August open interest fell by 608 tonnes to 2,278 tonnes. September and October moved up by 263 tonnes and 62 tonnes respectively to 12,417 tonnes and 1,924 tonnes. Spot prices remained unchanged at previous levels of Rs 19,400 (ungarbled) and Rs 19,900 (MG 1) a quintal. Indian parity in the international market today stood at \$4,550 a tonne (cost and freight) and nearly competitive as the other origins started firming up.

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Bengal plans cultivation of minor crops on 6 lakh hectares

Kolkata, Aug. 18

The West Bengal Government plans to facilitate the cultivation of minor crops such as corn, moong (green gram), masur and sunflower requiring minimum water in about six lakh hectares out of drought-hit 11 lakh hectares where paddy cultivation has been hit hard.

The State Government will distribute seeds free of cost to farmers to encourage them to grow these crops, according to Mr Naren De, State Agriculture Minister. The total cultivable land in the State during the current year is estimated at about 44 lakh hectares.

“Paddy sowing has not been possible in nearly 11 lakh hectares due to shortfall in rains. Of this, we plan to facilitate growing of minor crops in about six lakh hectares while the balance five lakh hectares will go without any crop. We will give seeds of minor crops to the farmers,” Mr De told newsmen on the sidelines of a seminar on potato crop management and processing organised by the West Bengal Cold Storage Association here.

The State Government had on Monday declared 11 out of 18 districts as drought-hit and allocated Rs 50 crore to tackle the situation caused by about 30 per cent deficit in rain. The 11 districts are Purulia, Bankura, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, West Midnapore, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Nadia and Malda.

Burdwan, Birbhum, Nadia and Hooghly are the four high rice productivity districts in the State, and consist of about 27 per cent of the total rice acreage, and 32 per cent of the total production. Districts such as 24 Parganas, Murshidabad, Bankura, Malda, Midnapore, Dinajpur and Howrah fall under the medium productivity areas.

The Kharif paddy production this year could drop by 2.7 million tonnes due to the scanty rainfall, Mr De said. The total area under rice cultivation in the State is about 5.9 million hectares, and the State produces about 16 million tonnes every year in three seasons — Aus, Aman and Boro. However, the total rice production in the State was lower at about 10 million tonnes in 2009-10 due to the poor rains, he added.

Announcing the names of drought-hit districts, Mr Asim Dasgupta, State Finance Minister,

said, "The Chief Minister will write to the Union Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, urging him to send a team here. The Chief Minister will also write to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, urging him to release Rs 1,400 crore due under the NREGS."

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Sugar turns sour on slack offtake



Mumbai, Aug. 18

Spot sugar prices at the Vashi market witnessed bearish mood with decline of Rs 10-15 in the absence of retail demand on Wednesday, whereas naka and mill tender rates showed firm trends on upcountry demand. Mills were not eager to sell at lower levels considering the demand for the upcoming festival.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, the Government declared levy quota for September at 2.20 lakh tonnes (lt), unchanged from August. There are chances of extending the time limit of the August quota if lifting by traders is not enough, and the Government may give some relaxation to bulk consumers. The festival season and the export permission to some mills will be the supporting factors for higher demand and price rise.

On Tuesday evening, mills got good response for their offer. They managed to sell 35,000-40,000 bags (100 kg each) to local traders and upcountry buyers.

Mr Prakash Naiknavare, Managing Director, Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar

Factories Federation, had told Business Line on Monday that the total cane area this time in Maharashtra is 10.22 lakh hectares which, at an average yield of 81 tonnes/hectare, should lead to production of 827.36 lt sugarcane.

Of this, the mills will crush 752.15 lt which, on an average recovery of 11.5 per cent, will result in a sugar output of 86.50 lt for the new season. During the current season, mills in the State as a whole crushed 614.47 lt of cane and produced 71.05 lt sugar.

On Wednesday, the total arrivals at the Vashi market was at 23-25 truckloads (each of 10 tonnes) and lifting was lower at 18-20 truckloads. Mills were offering tenders at Rs 2,470-2,500 for S grade and Rs 2,530-2,570 for M grade (including excise) for 100 kg.

According to the Sugar Merchants Association, on Wednesday spot market rates were: S grade: Rs 2,560-2,600 (Rs 2,570-2,600, M grade: Rs 2,580-2,640 (Rs 2,590-2,660). Naka delivery rate were steady: S-grade Rs 2,530-2,560 and M-grade Rs 2,560-2,625 a quintal.

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Nabard to support rural tourism, IT parks in Kerala

For inclusive growth

Working on strategy to bring private banks, NBFCs into mainstream of development economy

Thiruvananthapuram, Aug. 18

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) plans to promote rural tourism in Kerala in what is a fresh area of financial intervention, says Mr K.C. Shashidhar, Chief General Manager, Nabard-Kerala and Lakshadweep.

He said this while making a presentation to members of the Trivandrum Management

Association (TMA) on 'Role of Nabard in the economic upliftment of Kerala'.

RURAL HOME STAYS

Nabard is especially interested in supporting rural home stays through the banking sector.

It is also tracking natural resource management with a project in Wyanad with an outlay of Rs 9 crore.

In tune with the changing patterns of rural living, Nabard has also started looking at IT parks, anganwadis and rural markets as prospective areas of activity.

The apex agricultural bank has also plans to support corporate social responsibility initiatives.

It is working on a strategy to bring private sector banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) into the mainstream of the State's development economy by prompting them to enter microfinance, Mr Shashidhar said.

JOINT LIABILITY

With a view to promoting more activity-based empowerment and thereby welfare of the rural folk, Mr Shashidhar said that Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) will be given priority for financial assistance.

Nabard has advised banks and NGOs to form at least 15,000 such JLGs during this fiscal in a bid to promote the benefits of microfinance to newer segments.

The bank intends to leverage more on the strengths of information and communication technologies (ICT) for agriculture and farmers' welfare, he said.

Village knowledge centres will be established to facilitate farmer access to several facilities on offer from Governments from time to time.

A credit counselling centre will be set up at a district cooperative bank, which would be the first of its kind in the State.

DEPOSITS SCENARIO

On deposits scenario in the State, he said deposits with commercial banks in the State, including RRBs, crossed Rs 1.5 lakh crore by March 2010.

In the cooperative sector, primary agriculture cooperatives have a deposit base of Rs 21,000 crore; the district cooperative banks Rs 12,000 crore; and the State Cooperative Bank, Rs 7,000 crore.

The State now enjoys a credit-deposit ratio of 70 per cent, with total outstanding loans of Rs 1 lakh crore.

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