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Farmer develops improvised drum seeder

G.Srinivasan

To overcome problem in operating the equipment in wet land with heavy clay

breaking fresh ground:The improvised drum seeder being demonstrated in Tiruvarur on Wednesday.

TIRUVARUR: A farmer of Manaparavai in Kodavasal block in Tiruvarur district has developed an improvised drum seeder to overcome the problem faced while operating it in wet lands with clay soil.

A team of scientists from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Needamangalam, while organising a farmer field school meeting, were surprised at the innovation. R.T.Elangovan, the farmer, in the village tried some modifications in the farm implements which have been used in paddy. Majority of farmers in Manaparavai village used to go in for direct sown rice rather than transplanted rice. They have been using drum seeder for direct sowing of rice in wetland. Mr.Elangovan also did the same for some time but was faced problems in operating the drum seeder in wet land condition with heavy clay which is characteristic of Cauvery Delta.

He found that the clay sticking to the corrugated wheels of the drum seeder entered the perforations made in the seed drums adjacent to the wheels. The clay encircles the seeds kept inside the drums and glued together resulting in perforations getting blocked and seeds could not find its way to the field through perforations. To overcome this constraint, he fabricated a modified drum seeder suitable to his farming conditions wherein he converted silver vessels into drums. Six splits of silver vessels are welded into three drums and perforations were made on the two peripheries of the drum in a way that each perforation is perfectly spaced to spill seed on the ground in 20 X10 cm spacing. Provisions are made to split the drum to fill the seeds easily and all the drums are connected together with a rod which is knit together at two ends by bicycle wheels which is concealed with polythene sheets to avoid struck up in the mud while operating in heavy clay condition. He incurred an expenditure of Rs. 2,800. But, he was satisfied at finding a solution and receiving recognition from his fellow farmers.

He fabricated another useful and handy tool to replace the marker recommended under the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique. Given the soil conditions in the Cauvery delta, the pegs in the marker get struck while confronting an obstruction or small stone in the clay. But what Elangovan does is that instead of seedlings, he directly sowed seeds in the impressions. This method can sort out the problem of population maintenance and poor germination. The marker costs him only Rs.300.

T.Senguttuvan, Professor and Head of KVK, Needamangalam, appreciated the efforts of the farmer and suggested him to add more drums that can save time and labour, and the wheel can be maintained as that of regular model to move in clay.

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Monsoon plays spoiler for ragi

M. Balaganessin

— Photo:R. Ashok

despair abounds:Farmers of Rajagiri village salvaging ragi damaged in rain.

PUDUKOTTAI: Ragi growers have borne the brunt of the moderate showers in parts of the district over the past few days. With no rainfall on Wednesday, the ragi growers started salvaging the crop by drying them on the Tiruchi – Viralimalai Highway, shortly after harvesting it.

Farmers complain that the harvest this season was far below the normal yield, because of monsoon failure. The problem of fall in yield became worse following showers in the past few days.

S. Kandasamy, a farmer of Rajagiri village, said that ragi growers in Seravur, Mettupatti, Karuthakalipatti, Pulavanpatti, Koothankudi, Kolakkaranpatti, Kal Adaikkumpatti besides Rajagiri were the worst-hit following showers last week. The farmers had raised the crop in about 100 acres.

K. Subburaya Gounder, a progressive farmer, said that against the average per acre yield of 10 bags, each of 100 kg, he could harvest only 5 bags this season. The showers has resulted in flowering of a part of the produce, forcing us to salvage it on the Highway.

The demand for ragi has been on the rise especially from companies manufacturing nutrient products and the growing demand has been a solace for the farmers to market the crop immediately. The price at Viralimalai, the nearest wholesale purchase centre, was Rs.1,000 a quintal, he says. The yield would have been higher had the villages received rainfall last month, farmers say. According to official sources, 1,511 hectares had been brought under ragi cultivation this year. The harvest was in progress at various villages.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK ,**Leveraging the full potential of IT for rural development**

The information portals disseminate information and act as guidance hubs

New exposure: Scientists interacting with farmers through the portal.

Technological advancements are shrinking distances and removing barriers to communication and knowledge sharing. Information gathering and dissemination today is easy and convenient.

No wonder that agriculture too has begun to reap the benefits of e-technologies in recent years.

“Having understood the immense potential that e-technology can play in dissemination of agricultural technologies and facilitating adoption of innovations, Indian Institute of Spice

Research, Kozhikode initiated various internet and technology based facilities to reach out to the farming community effectively," says Dr. V.A. Parthasarathy, Director of the Institute.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, through its VSAT hub and help of Education and Research Network (ERNET) under the department of Information Technology initiated a project for linking around 200 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) in the country through e-connectivity and the Institute's KVK is one among them.

Information hub

The facility acts as an information hub for storing and disseminating information on agriculture and also providing online and offline guidance to the farmers.

The Malayalam version of the official webpage of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) functioning under the Institute is a proactive step towards making information dissemination more easy and bridging the gap between the developers and users of agricultural technologies.

Farmer friendly

"KVK has been maintaining an information portal in English for quite a long time. Realizing the need for an information repository in the local language, we decided to upload a Malayalam version as part of our efforts to become more farmer-friendly," says Mr. P.C. Manoj, programme coordinator-in-charge, KVK, Peruvannamuzhi.

The portal, www.spices.res.in/kvk/malayalam helps the visitors to know more about the services provided by KVK. It also updates them on regular training programmes being organised by the Kendra.

Besides, farmers from remote areas can also register their names through the portal for attending these training sessions.

It also provides information on appropriate seedlings and farming methods for different farm areas, information on latest technologies that can be adopted, etc.

"Creating awareness and exposure to new technologies in regional languages is a pre-requisite for adoption of innovations.

“And we feel that communicating in Malayalam is more appropriate to reach local farmers. We are in the process of strengthening the database so that farmers will soon be able to avail more information,” adds Mr. Manoj.

Success stories

Pages containing success stories of farmers and rate and availability of planting materials being sold at the KVK are other attractions of the portal.

“We are also planning to post market prediction information from Agricultural Market Intelligence Centre (AMIC) of Kerala Agricultural University which will help the farmers to know the price forecast of various crops well in advance. Information on various developmental schemes for farmers by the government departments will also be available soon,” says Mr. Manoj.

The official portals of IISR and KVK help the growers across the country to know various cultivation practices of spices and other agricultural crops. The Malayalam adaptation of KVK website launched recently provides agro information in the local language.

Various programmes

Besides, the portal updates the farmers with various training programmes being arranged by the Kendra and farmers can also register their names online to attend these training programmes.

The official website of the institute, www.spices.res.in is another means for reaching out to farmers.

An exclusive ‘Farmers' Corner' arranged in the website gives the farmers a gist of almost all spice crops.

Besides, the site also displays cost and availability of planting materials and cultivation tips to be followed under adverse weather conditions.

Download

Farmers can also download PDF versions of booklets in various local languages published by the institute on various cultivation practices recommended for different spices.

For more details contact Dr. T. John Zachariah, email: zacjohntj@gmail.com, Principal Scientist, IISR, Marikunnu, Kozhikode-673012, Kerala, Ph; 0495-2731410, Fax: 2731187, mobile: 9446071410.

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Training on sweet sorghum enterprise

The NutriPlus Knowledge Center, a research platform within the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)'s Agri Science Park supported by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, is offering an entrepreneur development workshop on establishing and managing a commercial Sweet Sorghum Syrup enterprise for Food Applications from September 27 to October 1, 2010 at ICRISAT in Patancheru, near Hyderabad.

This will be conducted in collaboration with ICRISAT's Global Theme on Crop Improvement.

Multipurpose crop

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 fertilizer and the manufacture of paper.

ICRISAT Director General William D. Dar says:

“Sweet sorghum could help developing countries to save valuable foreign exchange on importing fuel, which could be ploughed back into its own rural economies.

Following this, the NutriPlus Knowledge Center has already developed a number of value-added food products from sweet sorghum juice and these are ready for commercialisation by prospective entrepreneurs. The proposed workshop is being organized to 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.

Topics

The workshop will deal with harvesting of sweet sorghum and processing of juice to syrup, setting up processing units in micro/ small and medium levels, including potential sources of funding, technology involved, quality control & business perspective.

There is no fee involved, but the number of participants is restricted to 25 and will be based on selection.

Interested participants may register by sending their detailed biodata to a.poshadri@cgiar.org (Phone: 04030713784, Mobile: 09492828965) along with a self-written statement on the topic, “Why I want to be a food product entrepreneur” on or before 26 August.

The minimum qualification required is graduation in any discipline. Maximum age limit is 35 years. ICRISAT encourages women entrepreneurs to come forward to participate in the training course.

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FARM QUERY

Pest repellants

Is it true that arali (Tamil name) seeds (N eerium indicum) are good pest repellants?

<P>**Pon Radhakrishnan** Tamil Nadu

Yes, the seeds of Neerium indicum plants are good insect and pest repellents. You can powder the seeds and mix about 30 gm of the seeds in 10-12 litres of water along with some khadi soap solution and leave it overnight. The mixture can be sprayed the next day. This acts as an effective control against a wide variety of pests and infestations.

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Making out a case for holistic river water management

G. Kishan Reddy

We must increase our water storage to regulate the vast amount of run-off.

(in cubic metre)

Water storage created per person

Country	
United States	5961
Australia	4717
Brazil	3388
China	2486
India	200

Water, water, everywhere,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink.

(The Rime of the Ancient Mariner)

On August 9 this year, officials heaved a sigh of relief after 19.84 lakh cusecs of water was released into the Bay of Bengal, from the Dowlaisweram barrage near Rajahmundry. With this, the flooding caused by a swollen Godavari was no longer seen as a threat.

But there is the larger picture. This volume of water was the equivalent of more than 170 tmc ft of water. It would be easier to understand what this means when you compare it with what the reservoirs of large dams in India hold. For instance, the reservoir that feeds the Nagarjunasagar dam in Andhra Pradesh is considered to be one of the largest man-made lakes in the world, with a capacity of around 410 tmc ft. The Mettur dam reservoir in Tamil Nadu has a peak storage capacity of 150 tmc ft. The recent dispute between Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh over the Bhabhli Project was over two tmc ft of water. In this context, the volume of water that was allowed to flow out was large.

Integrated flood management

Today, a retroactive approach to flood control is no longer the option. In its report, “Dams and Development”, the World Commission on Dams (WCD) has suggested an integrated approach to flood management, and this was as early as 2000. The three-pronged strategy was through structural and non-structural means, isolating the threat of floods through structural, technological and policy alternatives; and increasing people's capacity to cope with floods.

An integrated flood management approach must look at river basins as a whole and not as individual silos at a State-level. Therefore, it is distressing to note that the latest annual report of the Ministry of Water Resources (published at its website) sanctions 281 projects (worth Rs. 2,425.50 crore) but is silent on even a single project for flood management in the Krishna or Godavari basins. In hindsight, the floods of 2009, caused by the Krishna, which devastated parts of Karnataka and the Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh, and now what happened in August, show the retroactive approach of “flood control” rather than a proactive one of “flood management” being in place.

Integrated Water Resource Management in river basins

The hurdle to an integrated water management strategy is the lack of legislation. Article 246 of the Constitution establishes the federal structure of our Government in enacting legislation. The responsibilities of the Centre are declared through a Union list. In this list, the entry 56 states: the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys is a core responsibility of the union. As 90 per cent of our rivers flow through States, it is important that there is legislation to protect the rights of all stakeholders.

(in per cent)

Water usage predictions in 2025 and 2050

Water usage by sector	2000	2025	2050
Irrigation	89	81	71
Domestic	5	8	11
Industrial	6	11	18

The United Nations has been trying to ratify the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses to protect the rights of all stakeholders for rivers with international boundaries. It is important that the legislation enacted in India is based on similar general principles — equitable and reasonable utilisation and participation by all actors, obligation not to cause significant harm, a general obligation to cooperate, regular exchange of data and information and a notification concerning planned measures with possible adverse effects. The WCD report also warns about the risks in legislation that treat water as a finite commodity and which tries to allocate it on a proportional basis. In times of water scarcity, this approach does not give the flexibility needed to meet multiple claims along a river course. In such circumstances, it is helpful to extend sharing agreements to include the benefits, much like the 1968 Columbia Treaty between Canada and the United States.

The other area that requires attention is to move the responsibilities of managing water. There must also be a team of people — termed as the Basin Authority — that involves all stakeholders in the river-basin including governments. This is to manage water, plan future use and leverage benefits to the entire river basin. The use of Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM), as in the Murray-Darling River basin in Australia, can be sensibly applied in India only if certain prerequisites are met. These include establishing a system of licensing and registering groundwater structures, a principle of developing a "user pays, polluter pays" method at the operational level, a rationalisation of electricity pricing and supply policies for agriculture and the creation of legal frameworks to facilitate institutional reform in irrigation systems, urban and rural water supply and sanitation systems.

Other alternatives

Other arid and semi-arid regions of the world have invested heavily in storage creation; Australia, Brazil, China and the U.S. have a per capita storage capacity that is 10-30 times that of India's capacity. In India, it is a mere 200 cubic metre/person, a figure on the decline because of a growing population.

As a country, we must increase our storage to regulate the vast amount of run-off. Some of this storage, especially that created in open basins, such as the Brahmaputra, the Ganga, the Mahanadi and the Godavari, may also need to be transferred to closed basins. For many years, policy makers have been suggesting the National River Linking Project (NRLP) to help sustain India's demand for water. The NRLP plans to transfer surplus waters of the four river basins mentioned, to water scarce basins in the southern and the western parts.

For all the rhetoric for and against the NRLP, it may become necessary that we plan inter-basin water transfers to meet future needs. However, we need to ensure that there is focus on policies that concern artificial groundwater recharge, a pragmatic approach to rain water-harvesting techniques that do not compromise on downstream flows, improvement in crop productivity and agriculture diversification along with looking at alternate sources for fresh water that include the setting up of desalination plants along our coastline.

Long-term Plan: Year 2050

According to the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the total demand for water in India will have increased by 22 per cent by 2025, and a further eight per cent by 2050 due to population increase and lifestyle choices. It will be fuelled by industrial and domestic use even though agriculture use for irrigation is set to fall.

The challenge of increased industrial usage means that industry discharges need to be treated and reused. Policy making and planning around water resources management is complex and multi-disciplinary in nature. This work cannot be done in isolation and co-operation must ensue between disciplines.

Flood control plan in India

State	No. of flood management projects	Estimated cost (Rs. Crore)
Arunachal Pradesh	9	54.72
Assam	82	708.59
Bihar	30	798.13
Goa	1	8.84
Himachal Pradesh	1	34.67
Jammu & Kashmir	16	171.91
Jharkhand	1	20.12
Manipur	12	39.64
Nagaland	5	13.9
Orissa	69	163.63
Punjab	1	111.39
Sikkim	24	86.21
Tripura	11	26.57
Uttar Pradesh	7	99.04
Uttaranchal	4	28.68
West Bengal	8	59.46
Total	281	2425.5

Source: Ministry of Water Resources (2008-2009)

In spite of a mandate to meet every quarter, the Committee of Environmentalists, Social Scientists and other Experts on Inter-Linking of Rivers last met in March 2010, after seven months.

It is time that the government ensured that a concrete policy evolves that aims at transforming India into a ‘ Sujalam' (richly-watered), ‘ Suphalam' (richly-fruited), ‘ Sasya Shyamalam' (richly-harvested) country.

(G. Kishan Reddy is the president of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Andhra Pradesh and the floor leader of the BJP in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly. The statistical, data and research inputs were provided by Yudofud Public Strategies, www.yudofud.com)

THE ECONOMIC TIMES
Thu, Aug 26, 2010 | Updated 08.23AM IST

26 Aug, 2010, 12.06AM IST, Sreekala G,ET Bureau

Soaring raw material costs make branded spices turn pricey

HYDERABAD: Major manufacturers of branded spices are charging consumers more as the wholesale prices of raw materials have virtually doubled.

“Raw material prices of most spices have gone up considerably. In the case of turmeric, the price rise is more than 100% over the last year. We have, in fact, increased the prices of turmeric powder to about Rs 32 per 100 gm as against Rs 20 a year ago. Turmeric is an ingredient in blended products such as chana masala and is adding to the cost of these products too,” said Rajinder Kumar, executive vice-president & head (marketing), MDH Spices.

MDH has marginally increased the retail price of its 100-gm chilli powder packet by Rs 2 to Rs 22 this year. “Coriander is the only spice which has witnessed a downward trend in prices. We have decreased our packet prices to Rs 16 per 100 gm this year from Rs 19 last year. However, this (lower coriander prices) may not have any positive impact on our profit margins as turmeric prices have hit us really hard,” he said.

Ramdev Food Products director Pradip Patel said the retail price of turmeric powder marketed by the company has gone up to Rs 140 per kg this year. The company has increased chilli prices marginally while its coriander powder is available this year at a price

less than 15-17% compared to last year.
“This is not sufficient to increase our profitability. It is not feasible to increase retail prices further as we need to look at the affordability factor. Already, consumers are shifting from branded powder to loose packets on account of pricing,” he said.

While big brands manage to stay afloat, regional players are finding it hard to keep their businesses alive. “Prices of turmeric powder packets have gone up to Rs 196 per kg compared to Rs 55 two year ago.
As a result, our sales are coming down. Initially, we used to sell 30-40 tonne of turmeric powder a month. Now, it has come down to about 15-20 tonne a month,” said Rajesh Gupta, a director of Heera Masala.

Unlike other manufacturers, Heera Masala has reduced its chilli powder prices this year to Rs 72 per kg as against Rs 86 per kg last year. “Our coriander powder prices have also come down to Rs 56 per kg from Rs 140 a year ago,” he said, adding that the company’s profit margins are down by 40-60% on account of high turmeric prices.

Ravindra Modi of Hyderabad Food Products said competition was forcing him to defer a price increase. His company supplies turmeric and chilli to leading food companies.
“This year, we may not be able to make any profit on turmeric powder sales.

We have a long-term commitment with our customers and we cannot increase prices. If we increase prices significantly, they may even shift to some other suppliers. Chilli prices are remaining stable and we will not suffer any major impact due to it,” he said.

Business Standard

Thursday, Aug 26, 2010

Spices exports increase 12% in April-July

George Joseph / Kochi August 26, 2010, 0:50 IST

Spices exports from the country increased 12 per cent to 193,875 tonnes during April- July of the current financial year, according to the Spices Board. Total exports were 172,510 tonnes, valued at Rs 1,775.39 crore, in the same period of the last financial year.

In rupee terms, the increase was 17 per cent at Rs 2,084.96 crore, and in dollar terms, it was 21 per cent at $454.10 million.

Compared to the total export target of 465,000 tones valued at Rs 5,100 crore ($ 1,125 million) fixed for financial year 2010-11, the current achievement is 42 per cent in terms of quantity and 41 per cent in rupee terms. Garlic gained the most as there was a 1,184 per cent increase in volume and a 1,957 per cent increase in value during the period at 10,975 tonnes, valued at Rs 41.29 crore, as against 855 tonnes valued at Rs 2 crore, in the same period of 2009-10.

Export of fennel registered an increase of 47 per cent in quantity and 80 per cent in value at 4,750 tonnes valued at Rs 39.38 crore, according to the data. For the first time in the current financial year, export of pepper registered an increase of two per cent in volume and eight per cent in value.

The biggest setback was in the export of large cardamom as they declined 82 per cent in volume and 27 per cent in value. Just 80 tonnes valued at Rs 4.30 crore were exported as against 455 tonnes valued at Rs 5.87 crore.

The steep hike in the unit value in the current financial year helped to contain the loss in value to Rs 1.57 crore. The per kg average value was increased to Rs 538 in April - July period of current year as against Rs 129.10 in the same period of last year.

Export of other seed spices like mustard,aniseed, ajwanseed, dill seed and poppy seed declined 45 per cent volume and 37 per cent in value at 4,700 tonnes valued at Rs 18.91 tonnes. These were 8,570 tonnes valued at Rs 29.79 crore in April - July period of 2009-10.

Mint products also had a drop 16 per cent in quantity and 2 per cent in value. Export of curry powder/paste and spice oils and oleoresins increased.

A total of 5,150 tonnes of curry powder and paste valued at Rs 66.54 crore and 2,540 tonnes of spice oils and oleoresins valued Rs 294.28 crore were shipped in April - July period. During the period, export of pepper, chilli, ginger, celery, fennel, garlic, other spices like tamarind and asafoetida showed an increase, both in volume and value, compared to last year.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE

ESTIMATED EXPORT OF SPICES DURING APRIL - JULY

	2009			2010			% Change	
Item	Qty	Value	Rate	Qty	Value	Rate	Qty	Value
Pepper	6,650	10,494.51	157.81	6,750	11,306.00	167.5	2	8
Cardamom(small)	235	1,516.99	644.76	185	2,222.50	1,201.35	-21	47
Cardamom(large)	455	587.41	129.10	80	430.40	538.00	-82	-27
Chilli	62,800	37,820.27	60.22	77,750	48,141.75	61.92	24	27
Ginger	1,325	997.34	75.27	3,025	2,285.00	75.54	128	129
Turmeric	21,790	12,593.81	57.80	18,350	24,789.55	135.09	-16	97
Coriander	17,145	8,976.48	52.36	20,550	7,485.73	36.43	20	-17

Cumin	16,720	18,092.38	108.21	13,500	15,281.63	113.20	-19	-16
Garlic	855	200.77	23.48	10,975	4,129.08	37.62	1184	1957
Nutmeg & Mace	805	2,084.21	258.91	625	2,306.82	369.09	-22	11
Total	172,510	177,538.62		193,875	208,496.15		12	17
(QTY : TONNES ; VALUE : Rs LAKH ; RATE : Rs /KG)								

The export of value added products like curry powder and spice oils and oleoresin also increased.

UP potato farmers may gain from Pak floods

Siddharth Kalhans / Lucknow August 26, 2010, 0:49 IST

India's potato farmers are looking at tapping the Pakistan market for some respite from an output glut and dwindling prices. Pakistan's decision to lift the ban on import of potatoes from India has pleased farmers here.

There was an oversupply of potato from Uttar Pradesh (UP) last year and seven million tonnes of stock is still in the cold storages.

Farmers have been reluctant to withdraw it, as they would not get enough price to pay the storage cost. Prices in the wholesale market have been falling since the past month and arrival of fresh stock from Uttarakhand and Karnataka has added to their woes; there is hardly any demand for old stock.

In such a situation, demand from flood-hit Pakistan is likely to prevent a 2007-like situation, when farmers had to dump their output on the roads. According to potato trader Dhananjay Singh Chauhan, counterparts in the Delhi market are in constant touch with them and as soon as orders from Pakistan start, the first preference will be given to UP. He said potato from UP will be cheaper in terms of freight.

According to the president of the UP Cold Stores Association, Mahendra Swaroop, by this month, 40 per cent of the stored potato should have been withdrawn but it is not happening.

This year, the production in UP was 12 million tonnes and of this, nine million tonnes was put in cold stores.

Both in 2002 and 2007, there was a potato glut in UP and due to low rates, farmers did not withdraw their produce from cold stores. Ultimately, several tonnes were dumped on the streets.

Coffee planters to get better prices for coming crop

Debasis Mohapatra / Bangalore August 26, 2010, 0:45 IST

Indian coffee planters are likely to get 10-15 per cent more for their new crop arrival from December, on the back of a sustained price rally in the international coffee futures market.

“Coffee futures prices are expected to sustain at the present level,” said Ramesh Rajah, president of Coffee Exporters Association of India. As domestic coffee prices take a cue from international futures, planters will reap the benefit, he added.

International coffee futures prices have shot up by 35 per cent since early June on worries over production from nations like Colombia and Vietnam and speculative trading by hedge funds in the market.

The price of arabica coffee rose to $1.852 a pound for December delivery on ICE Futures in New York, a 12-year high. Robusta saw a rise of 2.6 per cent to $1,838 per tonne on the NYSE Liffe Exchange in London, a nine-year high.

However, most Indian coffee growers were not able to benefit from the rally, as around 80 per cent of the export had been completed by the start of the rally in June. “Though arabica planters had received sound margin during the January-March period, most of the robusta planters were not able to benefit much due to subdued price of the variety during this period,” Rajah said.

The recent price rally will benefit both robusta and arabica planters in the near future, he added.

Higher production estimates will also help, given the expected supply shortage from the other countries mentioned earlier.

“Exports from India depend upon availability of coffee stock and production of the crop in that particular crop year. As we expect higher output in the next crop year, export demand should remain robust, with better price for planters,” said Babu Reddy, agricultural economist with the Coffee Board of India.

The Coffee Board says the country is estimated to produce around 289,000 tonnes during this crop year, starting October, of which two-thirds is set to be exported. Most major buyers such as Nestle and Tata are pretty much in the market space, indicating sound demand, another Board official said.

During January-July this year, exports surged 53 per cent to 178,000 tonnes on the back of higher domestic production, as compared to 116,000 tonnes during the same period last year. The realisation was about Rs 1,798.85 crore, a 43 per cent rise over previous year.

Industry analysts also said higher coffee prices would not dampen export growth.

“There is a demand-supply mismatch in this commodity, fuelling price rise. So, buyers have to enter into contracts at this price level, indicating sustained demand for coffee in near future,” said Chowda Reddy, an analyst with JRG Wealth Management.

Indian robusta, which is priced at a discount to international prices, will drive export growth, he added.

Sugar firms seek govt nod to export whites

Reuters / New Delhi August 26, 2010, 0:33 IST

Indian mills want government permission to export white sugar to help meet obligations made when importing duty-free raws made almost five years ago, government officials and millers said on Wednesday.

Millers say they are obliged to export 967,000 tonnes of sugar by March under a policy from 2004-05, when India allowed the duty-free import of raws on condition that an equal amount of white sugar be exported.

India, the world's top consumer and the biggest producer after Brazil, allows exports of sugar only after government approval of each contract.

"Almost all mills with an obligation to export white sugar have applied to us. It is true that they have to export by March 2011, we have not allowed any of them," a government official, who is directly involved in the process but not authorised to talk to the media said.

Farm Minister Sharad Pawar said this month his government would allow exports only after reviewing the progress of cane planting in August. Recently, the government allowed exports of 200,000 tonnes of the sweetener that was imported by millers but could not be shifted out of the port due to a shortage of railway wagons.

Aided by prospects of a sharp rise in output, India is trying to emerge as an exporter after importing large quantities in 2009 and early this year. Large-scale imports by India helped New York-traded raw sugar futures hit a 29-year high in February.

Output is seen at 25.5 million tonnes next year, 35.6 per cent higher than 18.8 million tonnes in the previous year, trade and industry officials say.

Millers are keen to export white sugar due to shortage of the commodity in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the West Asia.

"We have also applied for permission to export sugar," said Sanjay Tapriya, the finance director of Simbhaoli Sugars, a leading producer.

Simbhaoli's export obligation totals 47,000 tonnes.

PTI adds: After allowing export of imported refined sugar stuck at Kandla port, the Food Ministry is now mulling to permit shipments from other ports since mills have not been able to sell the sweetener due to fall in prices.

The ministry had recently permitted export of 2,00,000 tonnes of refined sugar from Kandla port in Gujarat provided they import an equal quantity of raw sugar, process and sell it in the domestic market within four months of the issue of an export release order.

According to sources, the Food Ministry is looking into the proposals of sugar traders, whose consignments of sugar have been stuck at ports in Mumbai and Chennai.

Cotton output in India to be 26 mn bales: USDA

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi August 26, 2010, 0:44 IST

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has revised upwards the cotton production estimates for India in 2010-11 crop year by one million bales to 26 million bales, on account of higher area and expectation of better yield.

“India’s 2010-11 cotton production is forecast at 26 million bales, weighing 480 pounds each, up 4 per cent from last month, and up by 2.5 million or 11 per cent from last year,” USDA said in a report.

Last month, the Department had estimated India’s cotton output for the current crop year at 25 million bales. Cotton crop year runs from July to June.

“The 2010 monsoon rainfall has progressed well over the cotton regions. During the month of July, cumulative rainfall has been very favorable compared to the last year, promoting good crop growth and development,” the report said.

USDA said during the current year, not only there would be an increase in cultivation, productivity would also go up. Given that most of the cotton growing areas have received good rains and the planting is progressing in a timely fashion, the 2010-11 yields are expected to be better than last year, it added.

“The yield is forecast at 529 kgs per hectare, slightly up from last month and up 6 per cent from the last year, and up 3 per cent from the five-year average,” the USDA report said.

Cotton planting in the major producing areas is nearly complete, USDA said while adding that the planting is reported to be higher this year in major cotton growing states such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat

AP cotton output likely to increase over 30%

D Gopi / Chennai/ Guntur August 26, 2010, 0:18 IST

With more farmers taking up cotton cultivation in the state, production is likely to increase by over 30 per cent this year in Andhra Pradesh.

The total production in the state last season was 5.8 million bales (each bale contains over 170 kg of cotton) from 1.3 million hectares. This is likely to go up to 7- 8 million bales this year and the area too is expected to go up to 1.7 million hectares.

Andhra Pradesh Cotton Association president G Punnaiah Chowdary said the increase in demand in both domestic and international markets, and attractive prices led farmers to shift to cotton cultivation from commercial crops like chillies, maize and pulses.

Last year, cotton was sold at Rs 3,500 a quintal in the state. This year, the price went up to Rs 4,000 a quintal by the third week of August and is expected to touch Rs 5,000 mark by the end of the season in September, Punnaiah said.

Besides, the crop suffered heavy damage in Pakistan and China due to floods. As a result, the two countries are banking completely on India for imports.

In Guntur, the cotton centre of AP, the crop was ready in as much as 170,000 hectares by the end of June and is likely to cross 200,000 hectare by August. Last year, it was cultivated in over 150,000 hectares.

However, Punnaiah said it was difficult to assess the total yield in Guntur as farmers from other districts, including the Telangana region, bring their crop here for pressing and ginning. “Last year, though the crop was cultivated in 165,000 hectares in the district, more than 2 million bales of cotton was pressed here, which indicates that the product was mostly brought from outside the district,” he said.

The cultivation has spread to the neighbouring Prakasam and Krishna districts, in the coastal area, besides Adilabad, Khammam, Warangal and Karimnagar districts, as farmers are finding it more profitable, when compared with the other commercial crops.Moreover, the government's decision to revive and upgrade ginning, spinning and weaving mills across the country helped in bringing more areas under cotton cultivation in the country.Maharashtra, which saw just 288,000 hectares under cotton last year, increased it to 1.3 million hectares this year. The crop was heavily damaged in the state last year due to floods.On the other hand, Punjab raised the crop in 559,000 hectares this year as against 536,000 hectares while Gujarat brought 708,000 hectares under cultivation from 618,000 hectares last year.In 2009-10, the crop was cultivated in over 10.1 million hectares in the country producing 29.2 million bales.

hindustantimes
Thu,26 Aug 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Cloudy	**Thursday, Aug 26** Max Min 29.6º | 23.7º
Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 5:57
Humidity: 94%	Sunset: 18:25
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1002.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

Rainy	**Friday, Aug 27** Max Min 31º | 24º

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Aug 28	**Aug 29**	**Aug 30**	**Aug 31**	**Sep 1**

THE HINDU Business Line

Business Daily from THE HINDU group of publications

Thursday, August 26, 2010

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Spices export rises 12% in volume, 17% in value

Realisation from small cardamom, turmeric doubles in April-July.

42 per cent of the quantity target has been met, while 41 per cent of Rs 5,100-crore goal has been fulfilled.

C. J. Punnathara

Kochi, Aug 25

There was all round increase in spices export from the country in terms of value and volume as well as in foreign exchange earnings during April-July.

Prices of most spices increased compared with the same period a year ago. The unit value realisation of small cardamom almost doubled, while large cardamom prices increased over three-fold. The price of turmeric also more than doubled.

Shipments

During April-July, spices exports increased 12 per cent in volume to 1,93,875 tonnes (1,72,510 tonnes), while the value realisation was up 17 per cent to Rs 2,084.96 crore (Rs 1,775.39 crore). Spices exports fetched $454.10 million ($374.68 million) in foreign exchange, registering a growth of 21 per cent over last year.

Exports of pepper, chilli, ginger, celery, fennel, garlic and other spices such as tamarind and asafoetida increased in volume.

The export of value-added products such as curry powder, spice oils and oleoresins, also increased.

However, in the case of small cardamom, turmeric, fenugreek, nutmeg and nut-mace, the increase has only been in value terms.

Although export volumes of these spices declined, a sharp increase in global prices for several of these commodities have ensured that the total value realisation increased. Export of coriander increased in volume, while the value realisation fell as the prices dropped in the international markets.

Few spices such as cumin, mint products and some seed spices decreased in volume and value. But the trend has been positive for most of the spices.

Chilli, Mint

Chilli was the biggest item of export with volume growing to 77,750 tonnes realising Rs 481.41 crore. This was followed by mint and mint products exports that fetched Rs 388.01 crore, although volumes remained thin at 5,500 tonnes. Spice oils and oleoresins came next fetching Rs 294.28 crore on an export of 2,540 tonnes. Export realisation from turmeric has also grown rapidly over last year to Rs 247.89 crore on an export volume of 18,350 tonnes.

Compared with the export target of 4,65,000 tonnes valued at Rs 5,100 crore ($1125 million) for the current fiscal, the achievement of 1,93,875 tonnes valued at Rs 2084.96 crore ($ 454.10 million) during April-July 2010 is 42 per cent of the quantity, 41 per cent of the rupee value and 40 per cent of the dollar earnings target. If the trend is sustained, the country is likely to surpass the targets set for the year, sources in the trade said.

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Sluggish offtake cools down edible oils

Mumbai, Aug. 25

Edible oil prices continued to decline on weak world market cues and sluggish demand at the local level.

The regular arrival of imported oils at Mumbai port weighed on the market sentiment arresting fresh buying. Most of the edible oils were down by Rs 4-6 for 10 kg on Wednesday.

Malaysia's BMD CPO futures slipped on profit-taking on dismal export data. The CPO futures declined sharply by 29/30 ringgits (MYR) on a sharp fall in the export of palm oil during August 1–25.

Malaysia'sexports down

A decline in Malaysia's palm oil exports has put sustained pressure on the overall market sentiment this month.

Market sources said the arrival of vessels carrying imported edible oils to Mumbai ports has now been regularised, and importers have started offering ready delivery quotations, easing the supply position.

A vessel carrying 8,000 tonnes of crude palm oil and 20,000 tonnes of degummed soyabean oil has been emptied and one more steamer carrying 12,000 tonnes of crude palm oil and palmolein arrived at the port on Wednesday. Importers have started giving deliveries against their outstanding positions as well as ready.

Trade volumes were thin. In palmolein, 100-120 tonnes of resale trade was finalised in the range of Rs 459/456. In soyabean refined oil, 70-80 tonnes were traded at the Rs 470/465 level. Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 463 and soya refined at Rs 478 as ready delivery. Ruchi was quoting soya and Allana was quoting palmolein for September delivery. Mewa was offering palmolein at Rs 462. Resale is cheaper than importers' rates, indicating a lack of demand, sources said.

Malaysia's Septembercrude palm oil futures ended 30 MYR lower at 2640. Indore NBOT soya oil Septemberfuture was at Rs 483.60 (Rs 493.70).

Spot rates were: groundnut oil Rs 845 (Rs 850), soya refined oil Rs 477 (Rs 483), sunflower expeller refined Rs 525 (Rs 530), sunflower refined Rs 575 (Rs 575), rapeseed refined oil Rs 573 (Rs 575), rapeseed expeller ref. Rs 543 (Rs 545), cotton refined Rs 493 (Rs 497) and palmolein at Rs 460 (Rs 466) for 10 kg.

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Unseasonal rain drives up coconut oil

C.J. Punnathara

Kochi, Aug. 25

Coconut oil prices continued to rule firm even after the peak Onam demand due to unseasonal rain that has been lashing Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The rains have affected conversion of coconut into copra and arrivals have trickled down drastically in major Tamil Nadu and Kerala markets, Mr Prakash B. Rao, President of the Cochin Oil Merchants Association, said.

There are hardly any arrivals in the Kerala market due to the rain and NAFED remains the only source for copra. The market in Tamil Nadu is no different with rain hampering arrivals and prices inching ahead of the Kerala market, sources in the trade said.

While coconut oil prices remained at Rs 5,850–5,900 a quintal in the Kerala market, they were nominally higher at Rs 5,900–5,950 in Tamil Nadu. Copra prices in Kerala hovered around Rs 3,850–3,900 a quintal.

With high prices continuing into the post-Onam season, demand has waned considerably. Consumption demand in Kerala has virtually dried up after Onam, Mr Rao pointed out.

Industries which use coconut oil as a raw material for manufacturing cosmetic oils, shampoos and soaps are now waiting for the prices to fall and stabilise before they re-enter the market. The industrial demand has dried up both in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The coconut oil industry sources said that demand during the Onam season was quite high but they had expected the prices to fall in the post-festival season. But the rain has affected arrivals and thereby the prices that are expected to remain firm until rains cease and arrivals improve.

The price of palm oil was Rs 4,300 and palm kernel oil Rs 5,800 a quintal. The post-Onam season usually witnesses the consumption demand shift from coconut oil to palm oil and palm kernel oil.

This can happen even now if the price differences between the two oils aggravate further. Low arrivals of palm oil and palm kernel oil have been keeping their prices also high. While the lower arrivals have been confronting lower demand, trade sources pointed out that the rain would be the deciding factor affecting prices in the coming weeks.

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Cloves, vanilla prices may gain on Madagascar's woes

FAO warns of locusts attacking the crops.

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Aug 25

If the reported threat to cloves and vanilla crops in Madagascar by a plague of locusts becomes a reality, prices of these commodities are likely to rise.

Warning

According to a warning issued by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO): “Madagascar is at risk of a significant plague of crop-eating locusts.”

An unknown number of immature swarms of Malagasy Migratory Locust

(Locusta migratoria capito) have gathered and moved out of the country's south-western corner, where they are usually confined to, and have begun to spread east and north, as far as Maintirano, it said.

The FAO has called for a major control campaign, spanning at least a few months.

The campaign will have to commence before the start of Madagascar's upcoming rainy season, which begins in mid-October, to stop the locust numbers from growing and to prevent them from reaching plague-like proportions, FAO said.

If that happens, the clove prices in India may shoot up as the country is a net importer of cloves.

At the same time, the prices of natural vanilla could increase benefiting Indian vanilla growers, market sources said.

Clove prices

Clove prices in India have been on the upward swing lately, due to squeezed availability and rising demand, due to ensuing festival season.

Cloves of different origins are currently sold in the Indian markets at the following rates: Colombo Rs 330-340, Zanzibar Rs 400-410, Indian Rs 370.

If the crop in Madagascar is damaged, “cloves prices will shoot up,” dealers told Business Line.

According to the Public Ledger, international clove and vanilla dealers are likely to be monitoring the developments in Madagascar over the coming weeks, following the FAO warning.

Madagascar is now in its dry and cool season, that is unsuitable for locust breeding. However, the wet and hot weather of the rainy season — which lasts until spring — will favour rapid reproduction.

Given suitable conditions, locusts can produce a new generation roughly every two months, and up to four in a year.

UN mission

The UN agency fielded an assessment mission to the island to assess the situation last week.

The mission confirmed, in close coordination with the national authorities, the seriousness of the situation and the need to initiate aerial surveillance of the movement of the locusts by early September.

Nearly $15 million is urgently required to mount a major campaign on ground and air, over an estimated half a million hectares, according to FAO.

It has already activated the necessary mechanisms to mobilise the required resources and equipment, it said. Locusts do not always move in swarms — in south-western Madagascar, locusts exist on their own too.

However, if the population density crosses the tipping point, the locust undergoes a behavioural, ecological and physiological transformation. It transforms into eating machines, the FAO report said.

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Sugar declines on weak buying

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Aug. 25

Spot sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market declined Rs 10-15 a quintal further on Wednesday, on lower retail and upcountry demand. In line with the cash market, naka and tender delivery rates also fell Rs 15-20.

A wholesaler in Vashi market said that purchasing by neighbouring States also was very thin. Only traders inGujarat are buying.

Maharashtra mills have already sold most of this month's free sale quota. Less than 10 per cent of the quota has yet to be sold. Uttar Pradesh mills are yet to sell most of the quota and this may lead to extension of deadline for fulfilling the quota.

Most players are now awaiting the announcement of the September free sale quota. Weak month-end demand will continue to weigh on sentiment. The market may stablise at current levels and with the support of fresh demand for festivals, range-bound price movement may be witnessed in the coming days, he said.

Mills continue to offer tenders, but the response from traders/stockists is not satisfactory. On Tuesday, local buying was very limited.

Total arrivals at Vashi market on Wednesday were at 28-30 truckloads (10 tonnes each) and lifting was 23-25 truckloads.

Mills were offering tenders at the rate of Rs 2,450-2,570 for S-grade and Rs 2,480-2,520 for M-grade (including excise) a quintal.

According to Sugar merchants Association, spot rates for S-grade ranged between Rs 2,555 and Rs 2,600 against Rs 2,560-2,610, for M-grade Rs 2,575 and Rs 2,640 against Rs 2,585-2,650.Naka delivery rate: S–grade ruled at Rs 2,525-2,540 (Rs 2,540-2,560) and M-grade at Rs 2,560-2,580 (Rs 2,565-2,600).

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Pepper declines in correction

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Aug. 25

Pepper futures, which have witnessed an uptrend in recent days, declined on Wednesday in correction, market sources said.

According to them, there was simultaneous liquidation and buying back of sales, which also aided the drop in prices.

Meanwhile, reports of Indonesia offering much below Indian parity also influenced the market.

On the spot, there was not much activity because of the closed holiday in Kerala on account of Sree Narayana Guru Jayanthi.

Some small quantity was, however, traded at Rs 205 a kg in the terminal market, they told Business Line.

The September contract dropped by Rs 271 on the NCDEX to close at Rs 21,180 a quintal. October and November fell by Rs 310 and Rs 339 respectively to close at Rs 21,339 and Rs 21,552 a quintal.

The total turnover increased by 3,050 tonnes to 28,166 tonnes. Total open interest went up by 979 tonnes to 19,211 tonnes.September open interest increased by 686 tonnes to 14,653 tonnes. October and November moved up by 335 tonnes and 39 tonnes respectively.

Spot prices, keeping in tandem with the futures market trend, declined by Rs 100 to close at Rs 20,100 (ungarbled) and Rs 20,600 (MG 1) a quintal. Indian parity in the international market was around $4,700 a tonne and remained above the Indonesian offer which was around $150 a tonne below the Indian parity. At the same time, India does not have material to offer, trade sources said.

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Speculative buying lifts castor

Rajkot, Aug. 25

Despite lower demand, castor price increased Rs 25-35 a quintal on speculative buying. However, traders expect prices will soon come down.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX), September contract fell Rs 25 to Rs 3,645.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, castor seed September futures increased Rs 16 to Rs 3,697 with an open interest of 2,200 lots while the October contract increased Rs 11.50 to Rs 3,685 a 100 kg.

Spot castor price declined Rs 25 to Rs 3,540 a quintal. About 2,500-3,000 bags of 50 kg castor arrived in Gujarat. They were sold for Rs 708-715/20 kg. Arrivals at Saurashtra were 400 bags and and the price was Rs 680-703.

The RCX President, Mr Rajubhai Pobaru, said: “After 15-20 days, the new crop will arrive in Andhra Pradesh and after that prices will come down. At present, this price hike is speculative only.”

PTI reports: In Mumbai, castorseeds futures rose on fresh export orders. Castorseed's October contract closed at Rs 3,720, up Rs 32 a tonne.

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Downtrend continues in turmeric

Erode, Aug. 25

Turmeric continues to witness a downward trend. The spot turmeric price fell Rs 200 a quintal on Wednesday.

In the Private Turmeric Merchants Association market, the finger variety was down Rs 200 at Rs 13,600/quintal on Wednesday.

The root variety declined Rs 300 to Rs 13,300.

Within a week, the yellow spice has dropped Rs 800/quintal. Sales, too, are on a downtrend.

“There is no demand for turmeric in the local and upcountry market. So, the bulk buyers are keeping away from participating in the auction. Added to this, futures too have fallen by Rs 300-500 a quintal,” said Mr R.V. Ravishankar, President of the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

In the Regulated Market also, the price of turmeric shows a declining trend.

The finger variety was sold at Rs 13,500-13600 and the root variety, Rs 13,400. This is also Rs 150-200 a quintal less than Tuesday.

Turmeric merchants expect that the downtrend will continue for another 10 days.

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Lack of demand floors wheat

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Aug. 25

Slack demand in the market pulled wheat prices down by Rs 20 a quintal and the market witnessed levels of Rs 1,180 against the last weekend's Rs 1,200. On Wednesday, dara variety ruled between Rs 1,180 and Rs 1,190 a quintal.

Desi wheat varieties of Madhya Pradesh ruled firm and maintained the last weekend levels. Tohfa variety ruled around Rs 2,200 a quintal; Lok-1 ruled around Rs 1,810-1820 and kitchen queen new marka was at Rs 2100-2,110, Parley-G variety was quoted at Rs 2,120 and the Nano was at Rs 2,050 a quintal. Around 20 quintals desi wheat variety were traded.

Mr Subhash Chand, a wheat trader, said unfavorable weather and heavy rainfall affected business on Tuesday and water logging brought the market to a standstill. There was low buying in the market and arrivals from Uttar Pradesh also dropped. He further said local traders offloaded some of their stocks after noticing the low arrivals.

According to the traders, flour millers and small Aata chakki owners were not procuring stocks due to rains. In the last week of every month, the demand for flour softens.

Flour and Chokar's market ruled firm. Flour was quoted at Rs 1,180 (90 kg a bag) while the chokar, used for the livestock feed, quoted at Rs 460 (49 kg a bag) against the Rs 400 same season last year.

Around 200 quintal stock of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh, here in the market. With the arrivals from UP, around 300 quintals were offloaded by local traders.

On the other hand, only 1,000 bags (60 kg each) of Govinda paddy arrived in the market. The early variety paddy ruled at Rs 1,010 a quintal.

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Ginger ails

Fungal attack:A farm worker sprays pesticides on a ginger crop farm near Kollangode in Kerala's Palakkad district. There is a general tendency to sell dry rather than green ginger that retails for Rs 180 a kg in the local market. One kg of dry ginger is obtained by drying 3 kg of green ginger. A fungal disease affecting the rhizomes of raw ginger is causing problems to the farmers. Most of the ginger crop, especially in the low-lying areas, is under the threat of the disease.

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Farm insurance scheme launched for Karnataka's coconut growers

Nagesh Prabhu

Bangalore, Aug. 25

The Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC), a Central Government undertaking, has launched a new farm insurance scheme for coconut growers in 18 districts of the State from this year (2010-11).

The scheme will implemented in Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, Chitradurga, Shimoga, Tumkur, Davanagere, Mysore, Chikmagalur, Dakshina Kannada, Hassan, Mandya, Chamarajanagar, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, and Dharwad, Ramangara, Chickballapur and Kolar, officials of AIC, Regional Office, Bangalore, said on Wednesday.

Following the successful implementation of a pilot scheme in Tiptur in Tumkur district last year, AIC, in collaboration with Coconut Development Board (CDB) and the State Government, has launched the scheme this year in 18 coconut-growing districts. AIC covered 27,000 trees under the pilot project in Tiptur, which is famous for its copra.

Under the scheme, a grower and the Horticulture Department of the State, contribute 25 per cent each of the total premium, while the CDB contributes the remaining 50 per cent. A sum insured for a tree aged between 4 and 15 years is Rs 600 and Rs 1,150 for a tree aged between 16 and 60 years.

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Higher volume on offer at Coonoor tea auctions

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Aug 25

A volume of 14.17 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 34 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers. It is marginally higher by 14, 000 kg than last week's offer and 57,000 kg more than the offer this time last year. Of the 14.17 lakh kg on offer, 10.13 lakh kg belongs to leaf grades and 4.04 lakh kg belongs to dust grades. 13.48 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.69 lakh kg, the orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.28 lakh kg belongs to orthodox, while 9.85 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.41 lakh kg belongs to orthodox, while 3.63 lakh kg, CTC. Nilgiris output

In the 14.17 lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 10.33 lakh kg. As much as 3.84 lakh kg comprises teas remaining unsold in previous auctions. The offer is more because of an overall increase in production in the Nilgiris.

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Greenpeace flayed for campaign against palm oil

Mumbai, Aug 25

An independent audit has severely castigated Greenpeace for its unbecoming campaign against palm oil as being fabricated or exaggerated. The environmental group has been severe in its attack on oil palm plantations, claiming that oil palm plantation companies routinely cut down forests, resort to burning trees and shrink animal habitat.

Undertaken by Control Union Certification and BSI group, the audit found Greenpeace's allegations against the palm oil company PT Smart baseless. The audit also found claims on plantations on peat were also exaggerated; and found plantations were “incidental” rather than systematic, World Growth, a US-based charitable organisation reported. It is believed that major food corporations such as Nestle and Unilever decided to stop buying palm oil based merely on Greenpeace's report which now stands discredited. In case of palm oil, the question simply boils down to poverty alleviation through growth versus environmental impact.

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Move to allow cotton exports hailed

Chennai, Aug 25

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has welcomed the Centre's decision to allow exports of raw cotton and cotton waste from October 1. The long-term interest of the cotton economy in the country was ensuring availability of the abundant cotton supply. The Government's decision to suspend cotton exports will remove ambiguity in the minds of cotton farmers, assure them of remunerative price for their produce and encourage them to produce more cotton. It will also send a positive signal to the global cotton economy and remove doubts in the minds of buyers of Indian cotton worldwide, said Mr Dhiren Seth, President of CAI in a statement.