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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/01/stories/2010020163760200.htm>

Fund allotted for setting up cold storage units

Staff Reporter

Nagercoil: The Government has allotted Rs. 1.33 crore for setting up of cold storage facilities in different parts of the State for the benefit of farmers who could preserve and later dispose their produce for a better price, said Minister for Agriculture Veerapandi S. Arumugam.

Inaugurating a flower research centre and laying foundation stone for a flower research laboratory at Viswasapuram near Thovalai in Kanyakumari district on Sunday, the Minister said that there were 103 farmers' markets in the State and 50 were established last year. Work on construction of 49 more markets had been completed by spending Rs. 25 lakh for each facility.

Moreover, since Thovalai and nearby areas were known for cultivating flowers, it was been decided to set up a research centre here. With the setting up of such a facility, it would be beneficial for the farmers to cultivate flower plants using modern technologies and sell their produce for a better price.

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Special campaign

PUDUKOTTAI: A three-day special campaign for the current year rabi crop season will be conducted under the extension scheme of Agricultural Technology Management Agency at Ayya Thirumana Maligai in Nizam colony here from Monday to Wednesday (February 1 to 3).

Collector A.Suganthi will inaugurate the campaign on Monday. Senior officials from various departments including agriculture, agricultural engineering, animal husbandry, fisheries and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will address the meet on all the three days.

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Mettur level

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 76.93 feet on Sunday against its full

level of 120 feet.

The inflow was 822 cusecs and the discharge nil.

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“Paddy harvest on 75,000 acres has been stalled”

A.V. Rangunathan

Farmers' association vice-chief blames shortage of manpower

CUDDALORE: Shortage of manpower has stalled paddy harvest on 75,000 acres in the tail-end delta region of Kattumannarkoil and Chidambaram blocks, according to V. Kannan, vice-president of Cauvery Delta Farmers' Association.

He told *The Hindu* that harvest in 50 per cent of the total of 1.5 lakh acres under paddy was affected or was not taking place at all for want of adequate farm hands. The belated harvest would not only reduce the yield but also the quality of grains.

During normal time, the average paddy yield per acre would be 1.25 tonne, but the delayed harvest would cut down the yield prospects by 20 per cent. Therefore, it would lead to an economic stress on farmers. For every acre, at least 20 workers would be required for 10-15 days to harvest the paddy and thrash out the grains. But, it was almost impossible to find so many labourers because youth detest farm jobs, Mr. Kannan said.

They were not inclined to work in fields from morning to evening for meagre wages and opting for jobs in the better-paid construction industry. The average age of farm worker was now 50 years and above and, therefore, productivity expected could not be high. Harvesting machinery too was in short supply, Mr. Kannan said. Even if available, the rent or hire charges were high. A farmer would have to shell out Rs. 1,050 to Rs. 1,900 an hour for hiring a tyre harvester and Rs. 1,400 to Rs. 1,900 an hour for chain harvester.

For lack of alternative solution, even small farmers having less than four acres would have to engage the machinery. Mr. Kannan opined that such a situation would force the farmers to quit farming.

The situation has to be reversed or it would affect food availability and market prices of essential commodities.

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Global warming impact study to be taken up in State

Shastry V. Mallady

“Five M. Phil. candidates will be chosen to conduct the study”

The council will invite proposals during May

The study will come out with suggestions on combating climate change

MADURAI: A ‘global warming impact’ study is to be taken up in Tamil Nadu to come out with suggestions on combating climate change.

The Tamil Nadu State Council for Science and Technology has decided to offer fellowships for the study, the objective of which is to understand the effects of global warming in the fields of agriculture, public health, environment pollution and so on.

This State-specific study was being undertaken since it was felt that there was no adequate database available to know what could be the problems caused by climate change.

“It has to be a time-bound study and should be completed in one year. The council will invite proposals during May and work has to commence in July,” S. Vincent, Member-Secretary, Tamil Nadu State Council for Science and Technology, told *Hindu The* here on Sunday.

According to him, the council will select five M. Phil. candidates for the work and each will be given a fellowship of Rs. 1 lakh for the study.

He said that the study would be helpful in understanding the impact and problems besides suggesting solutions in the context of climate change.

“We want the selected candidates to work on the field by meeting all stakeholders, including scientists, farmers, general public, officials and institutions. They must come out with data,” Dr. Vincent said.

The Member-Secretary said that this was the first step to comprehend an issue that was being debated worldwide. Candidates interested in participating in the study must submit a theme paper and the council would finally choose five best proposals.

“The findings of this exercise will be sent to respective departments for appropriate action. Understanding the impact at grass-roots level is very important than talking about global warming in general terms,” he opined.

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Water level

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 114.20 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 8 cusecs and a discharge of 400 cusecs.

The level in the Vaigai dam was 46.16 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 15 cusecs and a discharge of 260 cusecs.

The combined Periyar credit stood at 1,976 mcft.

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By Gokul Chandrasekar
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Protest against Bt Brinjal on Martyr's Day

CHENNAI: Hundreds of people from the city participated in 'Brinjal Satyagraha' a nationwide fasting campaign against commercialisation of Bt Brinjal in India.

Vandana Shiva, a veteran eco-activist of Chipko movement fame flagged off the protest in Chennai. It was marked by a cycle rally from various parts of Chennai to Labour Statue at Marina Beach from where a group consisting of activists, farmers, students and women went on a silent march till Gandhi statue, sensitising the public on the potential hazards of Genetically Modified Organisms. Women's collective of Tamil Nadu staged a hunger fast outside the State Guest House demanding a permanent ban on GM food crops.

"Six states have imposed a blanket ban on Bt Brinjal excluding TN where there is temporary ban so that the government could wait till there was a clarity on the issue. " There will be no clarity as there is not a single laboratory in India which can test the effects of human consumption of Bt Brinjal", said Sheelu, coordinator of Safe Food Alliance.

SAFETY TESTS A FRAUD: Speaking to Express, Shiva said that safety tests conducted on Bt brinjal were a big fraud. "The tests have not checked the effects of transgenic Bt. which includes genes for antibiotic resistance and genes for viral promoters.

The tests have been done on safe microbial Bt., which has been used as an organic pesticide for decades. Hence the results merely show the safety of the organic spray.

They have not looked into the risks that transgenic Bt. creates. The issue arises mainly because developers of GM crops are engaged in biosafety testing", she said. "According to research

conducted by us, the usage of pesticides have increased after the introduction of Bt Cotton in Vidharba. Bt Brinjal will also now cause an increase in the usage of pesticides”, she added.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

India keeps Copenhagen pledge on emission cuts

Swati Mathur, TNN, 31 January 2010, 04:26am IST

NEW DELHI: India is stepping up pressure on the West to act on climate change. On Saturday, the government formally conveyed to UNFCCC that India will endeavour to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 20-25% by 2020 in comparison to the 2005 level through domestic mitigation actions.

While the 'voluntary' actions will have international ramifications, the decision comes with an important 'conditions apply'. India has also clarified that these actions will be entirely voluntary in nature and will not be legally binding in nature. The mitigation actions will also not apply to the country's agriculture sector.

The decision assumes significance in view of India's traditional position on the issue of climate change. While the Indian government has recognised the Copenhagen Accord as a political 'guiding' document, it has refused to accept it as legally binding. The government has also maintained that the Accord cannot continue while sidetracking the official UN negotiation process on climate change.

Earlier this week, India had also sent a letter to Lykke Friis, Denmark's minister for climate change and energy, maintaining that UN's two-track negotiating process be "urgently activated".

With this letter, India reiterated its stance that the official negotiation process must be carried forward stringently. Dated January 28, it said, "The centrality of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process must be preserved. Therefore, in line with discussions of Conference of Parties (CoP-15), the two-track negotiating process along Ad-hoc Working Group (AWG) on Long-term Cooperative Action and AWG on Kyoto Protocol must be urgently activated in the run up to CoP-16."

India also requested the CoP to convene a meeting of AWG LCA and AWG KP "no later than March 2010" and hold more such meetings before CoP-16 to be held in December this year in Mexico.

With this, according to well-placed sources in the government, the BASIC countries, especially India and China, established their importance in the climate change debate. Environment and forests minister Jairam Ramesh will meet Friis on February 7.

Kanchi farmers to go high-tech

By By Our Correspondent

Feb 01 2010

Jan. 31: Farming operations in Illedu village in Kancheepuram district will soon go high-tech with more than 300 farmers switching over to farm machineries like paddy drum seeder, tropicultor and seed cum fertilizer drill. "This will help them to bring down the cost of production and increase the yield manifold," said S S Rajsekhar, managing trustee, National Agro Foundation, the nodal agency helping and guiding the farming community in Kancheepuram district.

The switch-over to hi tech farming was made possible by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) which released an amount of Rs 1.15 crore to NAF from its farmers technology transfer fund. NAF was honoured on the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of its founder C Subramaniam which was on January 30.

"This is a new experience for us, Till now we had to sow the seeds manually which required a lot of physical effort. Now we can save a lot because the quantity of waste will come down," Murgan, a farmer in Illedu told Deccan Chronicle.

The granting of the FTTF was made by K G Karmakar, MD, NABARD, during a Farmers Meet held at Illedu village on Saturday. "Late C Subramaniam, wanted the farmers to get reasonable returns for their products. It could be made possible only by enabling them to get the best technology. Even now our farmers are faced with lack of quality seeds and modern technology. Our mission is to increase the number of Farmers Clubs in the country from the present 40,000 to 1,00,000 in the next one year," said Mr Karmakar.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/kanchi-farmers-go-high-tech-500>

Ramesh faces green ire on Bt brinjal

By By Our Correspondent

Feb 01 2010

Hyderabad, Jan. 31: The minister of state for environment and forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, on Sunday said the final decision on Bt brinjal will be taken on February 10.

Mr Ramesh faced the ire of farmers during a public consultation organised by the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA).

In all, 18 leaders of farmers' associations were taken into custody and sent to the Kanchanbagh police station for disrupting the meeting.

During the day, hundreds of farmers, retired agriculture professors, representatives of various organisations, supporters of the Left and the BJP barged into the venue raising slogans against the government and Mr Ramesh.

Though the minister tried in vain to pacify the agitators, the farmers alleged that the government was trying to take a decision to pacify multi-national companies.

The AP Rythu Sangham president, Mr K. Rama Krishna, said, "Introduction of Bt Brinjal is detrimental to the interests of farmers as they will be forced to buy the seeds at higher prices. The agitation will continue till the government says no to Bt Brinjal."

"We will also stage a protest in Bengaluru on February 6," he added.

The All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha general secretary, Mr G. Diwakar, said, "We are facing many problems due to the introduction of Bt cotton. Bt brinjal will ruin the fertility of soil and lead to diseases."

Mr Ramesh, however, said, "There is no pressure on me from anyone including the Prime Minister on the issue. The file came to me on October, 2009. But I did not clear it since I wanted to know the opinions of farmers and scientists."

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/hyderabad/ramesh-faces-green-ire-bt-brinjal-meet-560>

hindustantimes

Ramesh heckled over Bt brinjal

Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh was heckled by farmers and others opposing Bt Brinjal at a public meeting on the introduction of the genetically modified (GM) vegetable in the country by a US multinational.

Ramesh was greeted with protests when he arrived at the Central Research Institute for Dryland Farming on the outskirts of this city for the meeting on Sunday.

Scores of protestors, including farmers, activists from the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), affiliated to the CPI-M, and the RSS-backed Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, scientists and members of NGOs gheraoed the minister, raising slogans. They also disrupted the meeting to be addressed by the minister.

The protestors said GM crops such as Bt Brinjal could have adverse effects on humans as they have not been tested properly. They also argued that the introduction of Bt Brinjal would cripple the economy and hamper India's national biodiversity and self-reliance.

"We have heard enough speeches on the issue. We want the Government of India to withdraw the decision," said AIKS leader K Ramakrishna.

The minister's repeated appeals for calm to allow a discussion fell on deaf ears. When the situation was threatening to go out of control, the police intervened and arrested some protestors to restore order.

Ramesh later said he had never faced such an "unbecoming and unwarranted protest" by farmers and political activists. He said a final decision on Bt Brinjal would be taken in the next 10 days after completing the current round of public consultations.

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Food prices to ease next fiscal: Pawar

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Food prices are expected to decline in the next fiscal on the back of higher farm output and the only worry then for the government would be on storage, Food and Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar has said.

He, however, said that the country would remain import dependent when it came to pulses and edible oils for the next 10 years.

On the possibility of prices coming down in the next financial year beginning April one, Pawar told in an interview to CNN-IBN news channel: "100 per cent. In 2011-12 the problem which the government of India will have to worry about (is) what to do and where to store".

Food inflation touched 17.40 per cent for the week ended January 16 on account of high prices of vegetables and pulses.

On controlling prices of pulses, the minister said: "Pulses we have to import, edible oil we have to import even for another 10 years or so. Because day by day, demand is growing, purchasing power of the weaker section is also improving."

India imported a record 8.1 million tonnes of edible oils in 2008-09 season (November-October). The country imports 3-4 million tonnes of pulses every year to meet domestic demand.

The prices of essential food items have risen sharply in last one year, particularly of sugar, pulses and vegetables.

Sugar prices have more than doubled since January 2009 and is ruling at Rs 43 a kg in the national capital. Pulses are ruling high, with arhar being sold at about Rs 85 a kg.

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