

Farmers complain of pest attack



Final woes: A farmer showing the damaged paddy crop to Collector A. Suganthi at the farmers' grievance day meeting on Friday.

PUDUKOTTAI: A cross section of farmers of the coastal blocks in the district have sought for compensation for the paddy damaged due to pest attack.

Participating in the monthly farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday, they said that a large number of farmers in the tail-end zones of the district have borne the brunt of sudden pest attack. Since the paddy was nearing harvest stage, no pest control measures could be taken up, they said.

They urged the district administration to impress upon the State government to depute a special team for inspecting the damaged fields before taking up any relief measures.

The District Collector, A. Suganthi, said she would look into their grievance. The Collector advised the farmers not to hurl allegations against officials. Replying to an allegation by a few of them that the disbursement of wages under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) was erratic, the Collector asked the farmers not to hurl allegations against all the officials in general. If at all there was any irregularity in the implementation of the scheme, the farmers were free to bring it to the notice of the exclusive complaint and monitoring cell for the NREGS. Although a special team was keeping a strict vigil in the district, it has not received serious complaints from any quarters so far, she said indicating the scheme was being implemented to the utmost satisfaction of the beneficiaries and the villagers as well.

The Collector said farmers should clearly specify the particular area or official for any slackness in the implementation of the scheme.

Necessary steps had been taken to distribute the quality fertilizers through primary agricultural cooperative societies and private outlets. Sufficient quality of fertilizers were also being stocked in the private and cooperative outlets. About 2,913 tonnes of urea, 1,472 tonnes of DAP, 1,519 tonnes of potash fertilizers and 1,542 tonnes of complex fertilizers were stocked for distribution in the district.

The Collector said that last year sugarcane crop was laid out in 90 hectares in five blocks of Pudukottai, Gandarvakottai, Thiruvavur, Annavasal and Arantangi under the precision farming method. During the current year, it is proposed to bring 120 hectares under precision farming in sugarcane crop at Karambakudi, Arimalam, Viralimalai, Kunnandarkoil and Annavasal blocks.

J. Raghavan, DRO, B. Krishnasamy, Joint Director of Agriculture, P. Raju, PA to Collector (Agriculture), P. Rasu, Deputy Director of Horticulture participated in the meeting.

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Organic farming

The students exnora and Post Graduate Department of Social Work of Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College, Tiruchi, in association with Trust Me, a social service organisation, conducted a workshop on organic farming at Konalai village recently.

Prof. Shanthi Kandasamy delivered a lecture demonstration on organic farming and preparation of organic manure. Over 100 farmers participated in the programme, a press release from the College said.

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Mettur level

The level in the Mettur dam stood at 75.58 feet on Friday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 868 cusecs and the discharge, 1,800 cusecs.

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Agriculturists herald new farming system based on fertilizer trees

CHENNAI: Top scientists from international agricultural institutes are heralding a new system of farming based on using fertilizer trees to increase crop yield.

The new system, which was inspired by small time farmers in Africa who grew the Acacia, could provide a solution to dwindling paddy production in India and will help mitigate climate change, they say.

“The Acacia tree has been used by farmers for centuries. We started doing research on it to find out how much it benefits the crop and it’s quite staggering. If millions of farmers are growing it, and if the science is showing how valuable it is, why are we not making clear that this is useful for other farmers?” said Dennis Garrity, Director General of the Nairobi-based World Agroforestry Centre, who is at the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation to foster an exchange between African and Indian agricultural specialists.

Scientists discovered that the Acacia tree holds the same amount of nitrogen in its leaves as three bags of commercial fertilizer. When the tree drops its leaves crop size can improve by as much as 150 per cent, Dr. Garrity said. This limits fertilizer usage, stores more carbon on land and provides animal feed, fuel and timber to the farmer. Farming systems like these also have longer growing seasons and better resistance to drought.

The African Acacia is similar to a number of native Indian trees and trial results across six states have had very positive results, Dr. Garrity said.

More importantly, research is beginning on a new type of tree that is adapted to standing water and can be planted in rice fields.

Nine-point action plan

The MS Swaminathan Research Foundation on Friday issued a nine-point plan of action following the release of the Chennai declaration on Biodiversity on Wednesday. It aims to create a “Climate cum Gene Care” movement that will integrate government departments, strengthen farming and tribal communities, refocus research priorities, and promote climate resilient farming systems.

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Water level

MADURAI: Water level in the Periyar dam on Friday stood at 111 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 120 cusecs and a discharge of 300 cusecs.

The level in the Vaigai dam was 38.09 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 31 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 766 mcft.

Over 1.42 lakh tonnes of paddy procured

At a cost of Rs. 147 crore in Nagapattinam district



In progress: A. Annadurai, District Revenue Officer, inspects paddy procurement at a DPC in Thirumangalam in Nagapattinam.

NAGAPATTINAM: Over 1.42 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured through direct purchase centres in the district at a total procurement cost of Rs.147 crore.

The procured paddy was being stored at the 12 open warehouses and four storage godowns set up for the purpose.

Additionally, the procured paddy was also being transported to other districts by rail and road.

Direct procurement

Direct procurement from individual farmers with a produce of over 300 sacks of 40 kg each was also in progress.

Under this scheme of direct procurement, over 550 metric tonnes of paddy had been procured in the district.

Efforts were on to ensure proper entry in the token registers maintained for the procurement of the produce of the farmers at the direct purchase centres.

Efforts to meet target

All efforts were under way to achieve the total procurement target of 3 lakh metric tonnes in the district and office bearers at direct purchase centres had been asked to ensure that no leeway was given for malpractices or complaints.

Further, following incidents of malpractices, seven writers and an assistant had so far been relieved from their posts, a release from the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation said.

Earlier, A. Annadurai, District Revenue Officer, inspected the procurement process at a direct purchase centre at Thirumangalam here.

A procurement of 476 metric tonnes witnessed a disbursement of about Rs.44 lakh at the aforementioned direct purchase centre.

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Farmers highlight their problems at meeting

SALEM: Tardy disbursal of old age pensions, pest menace, poor distribution of funds for drip irrigation etc. were some of the issues that were highlighted at the farmers' grievances day meeting here on Friday.

An old man was brought by a group of farmers at the meeting to meet Collector J. Chandrakumar who presided over the proceedings.

They said that the man was 75-year-old Thailanur Annadurai who had been denied pension despite umpteen representations.

Bribe

They also charged that officials had demanded bribe to disburse the welfare assistance to the old man.

Hence, the Collector should initiate stern action against those responsible, they urged.

Another farmer Shanmugam from Panamarathupatti said that pests were destroying the crops.

He said that scientists wanted neem cakes to be used for the same.

But no fertilizer shop was selling quality neem cakes.

The district administration should ensure the same, he insisted.

Govindasamy, another farmer, said that the funds allotted for drip irrigation should be disbursed to farmers directly without the involvement of intermediaries.

The district should be declared drought-hit and buses to Pudrakopuntanpalayam were yet to be operated despite the Collector's assurances in earlier meetings.

The Collector promised to look into the grievances.

District Revenue Officer Kalaiarasi and other officials participated in the meeting that had been organised.

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Commodity Futures Market explained

TIRUCHI: Commodity Futures Market (CFM) gave advance price signals to the farmers and also enabled them for hedging the produce to mitigate any price risk, said V. Shunmugam, Chief Economist, Multi Commodity Exchange, Mumbai, here on Friday.

Speaking at an awareness cum training programme on Commodity Futures Market organised jointly by the Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute (ADAC and RI) of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and Forward Market Commission, Mumbai, and Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), Mumbai, Dr. Shunmugam explained the farmers about the dire need of CFM and its benefit to the farming community.

Farmers show interest

The farmers evinced keen interest to know about the intricacies of CFM and took active participation in the interaction session at the end. T. G. Senthilvelan from MCX cleared the various doubts raised by the farmers.

Government officials and farmers from various districts including Tiruchi, Perambalur, Thanjavur, Pudukottai, Karur and Nagapattinam participated in the programme.

Earlier, a two-day training programme was held on Wednesday and Thursday for the scientists of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and about 25 scientists from various parts of the State participated in it.

G. Kathiresan, Dean, ADAC and RI, presided over the inaugural.

K. Jayanth, Director, Forward Market Commission (FMC), explained in detail about the regulatory safeguard mechanism of the FMC for the conduct of orderly trading.

Rao Saeib Mohethih, Assistant vice-president, FT Knowledge Company, Mumbai, conducted simulated training for the participants.

Dr. Shanmugam in his valedictory address pointed out the economic benefits of the CFM and projected its future growth potential and presented its international perspectives.

S. Senthil Nathan and S. Muraligopal, Professors from Department of Agricultural Economics, TNAU, Coimbatore, also spoke.

Power supply to farm connections “erratic”

Seeking solution: Collector T. Soundiah addressing the farmers at the grievance day meeting in Tiruchi on Friday.

TIRUCHI: Power supply to agricultural connections has been erratic in some parts of the district, especially in the Manapparai region, farmers representatives have complained.

Raising the issue at a farmers’ grievance day meeting held at the Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute here on Friday, Karuppanan, district secretary of the DMK farmers’ wing and a few other farmers from the Manapparai region complained that power supply was erratic during the past few days.

Farmers were unable to irrigate their fields under the situation, he said and appealed to the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board to ensure that uninterrupted power supply was maintained to farm connections during the specified hours.

A couple of days back, just about two hours of supply was given in some villages, a farmer alleged.

Responding to the complaints, an official of the TNEB attributed the problem to the sudden rise in demand over the past few days and assured that steps were being taken to regulate the supply.

Collector T. Soundiah, who was in the chair, instructed the official to ensure that a schedule of the supply hours be drawn up and publicised.

A. Nagarajan of Puliur urged the State government to release 3,000 cusecs of water from the Mettur dam during the non-Mettur season to meet the requirements of standing crops irrigated by the 17 irrigation channels in the mid-Cauvery basin. He urged the district administration to take steps to stop pumping of water from the Cauvery using heavy duty motors by farmers in Namakkal, Erode and Karur districts.

Mr. Soundiah assured that he would take up the matter with the respective district Collectors.

Mr. Nagarajan also sought to know whether water would be released in the Uyyakondan in view of the on-going flood prevention project works in Tiruchi City. Mr. Soundiah instructed the River Conservation Division of the Public Works Department to convene a meeting with district officials and farmers to discuss the issue. “Farmers should be intimated in advance on whether they could go in for cultivation or not,” he told the PWD.

The AIADMK farmers’ wing district secretary Sivaraju complained that the Agricultural Engineering Department was not implementing the subsidised drip irrigation scheme in the district for the past two years. Mr. Soundiah pulled up an official for failing to come up with a proper explanation on the complaint.

The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam district secretary, C. Masilamani, appealed to the district administration to ensure that the Thindukarai 'korambu' and the Pudu Vathalai channel were renovated before June as already agreed upon by the PWD.

P. R. Viswanathan, president, Tamil Nadu Tanks and River Irrigated Areas Farmers' Association, called upon the district administration to take steps to desilt and renovate the Karuppur, Puthanatham, Sangenthi, Alangudi Mahajanam, Komakudi, Pallapatti tanks and the Puthanatham Pudukulam, Panguni and Ayyan channels.

Earlier, farmers were taken on a study trip to the Model Farm on Pressurised Irrigation Systems set up at the agricultural college. N. Ponnusamy, Joint Director of Agriculture and others were present.

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Fertilizer majors hail new subsidy policy

The move will help rejuvenate soil thereby increasing farm productivity

NEW DELHI: Fertilizer producing companies have hailed the decision of the Monmohan Singh Government to introduce nutrient-based subsidy, stating that it will help attract more investment in the sector.

"Apart from reducing the fertilizer subsidy burden of the government, this move will help rejuvenate the soil, thereby increasing farm productivity on a sustainable basis so as to ensure food security for the nation," IFFCO Managing Director U. S. Awasthi said.

Mr. Awasthi said the new policy would help in bringing the much-needed relief to farmers and the fertilizer sector and assist in improving the soil health through balanced and integrated use of nutrients, including secondary and micro nutrients. "The new fertilizer policy will also attract investment in the sector, which has been almost stagnant over a decade. This will facilitate timely availability of fertilizer to farmers and will reduce imports," he added.

Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Chairman and Managing Director U. S. Jha also welcomed the move, but said that there would not be any improvement in margins for the company.

"The prices of phosphorus and potassium-based fertilizers are not expected to be de-controlled immediately," he said.

Credit rating major Fitch Ratings India Pvt. Ltd. (FRIPL) was of the view that the proposed nutrient-based fertilizer subsidy scheme could result in an increase in farm-gate prices of fertilizers. In its 2010 series outlook report on the fertilizer sector, Fitch feels that the proposed scheme would subject the retail process to market forces including global commodity prices.

It said the scheme could also significantly alter the earnings potential and credit profiles of fertilizer manufacturers but admits that the shift from cost-plus and import price-parity driven subsidy scheme to nutrient-based one would reduce the financial burden of the government.

The Centre has announced nutrient based subsidy (NBS) scheme, which will come into effect from April 1. It has decided to raise the retail price of urea by 10 per cent and allow manufacturers to fix the rates of DAP and MOP fertilizers. At present, the maximum retail price (MRP) of urea is Rs. 483 a quintal, while DAP costs Rs. 935 a quintal and MOP Rs. 445.50 a quintal.



Urban green spaces may actually contribute to global warming

ANI, Feb 20, 2010, 05.13am IST

WASHINGTON: In a new research, scientists have found that urban green spaces may actually contribute to global warming, than curb it down.

Turfgrass lawns help remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and store it as organic carbon in soil, making them important "carbon sinks."

However, greenhouse gas emissions from fertilizer production, mowing, leaf blowing and other lawn management practices are four times greater than the amount of carbon stored by ornamental grass in parks, the study from UC Irvine researchers has shown.

These emissions include nitrous oxide released from soil after fertilization.

Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas that's 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, the Earth's most problematic climate warmer.

"Lawns look great - they're nice and green and healthy, and they're photosynthesizing a lot of organic carbon. But the carbon-storing benefits of lawns are counteracted by fuel consumption," said Amy Townsend-Small, Earth system science postdoctoral researcher and lead author of the study.

Turfgrass is increasingly widespread in urban areas and covers 1.9 percent of land in the continental US, making it the most common irrigated crop.

In the study, Townsend-Small and colleague Claudia Czimczik analyzed grass in four parks near Irvine, California.

Each park contained two types of turf: ornamental lawns (picnic areas) that are largely undisturbed, and athletic fields (soccer and baseball) that are trampled and replanted and aerated frequently.

The researchers evaluated soil samples over time to ascertain carbon storage, or sequestration, and they determined nitrous oxide emissions by sampling air above the turf.

Then, they calculated carbon dioxide emissions resulting from fuel consumption, irrigation and fertilizer production using information about lawn upkeep from park officials and contractors.

The study showed that nitrous oxide emissions from lawns were comparable to those found in agricultural farms, which are among the largest emitters of nitrous oxide globally.

In ornamental lawns, nitrous oxide emissions from fertilization offset just 10 percent to 30 percent of carbon sequestration.

But, fossil fuel consumption for management, the researchers calculated, released about four times more carbon dioxide than the plots could take up.

"It's impossible for these lawns to be net greenhouse gas sinks because too much fuel is used to maintain them," Townsend-Small concluded.

The research results are important to greenhouse gas legislation being negotiated.

"We need this kind of carbon accounting to help reduce global warming," Townsend-Small said.

"The current trend is to count the carbon sinks and forget about the greenhouse gas emissions, but it clearly isn't enough," she added.

Cleansing polluted Ganga, Yamuna on BJP agenda

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INDORE: Focusing on pollution in the Ganga and Yamuna, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Friday formed a committee headed by former party president Rajnath Singh to prepare a programme to mobilise public support to save the rivers.

Describing the river as a symbol of faith for Indians, party president Nitin Gadkari said here during the three-day BJP leadership meet: "For the Ganga to remain in flow forever, it is imperative that it should be made pollution free".

"A committee has been formed in this regard under the leadership of Rajnath Singh. The chief ministers of some of the BJP ruled states and environment specialists will also be there to assist him. They will chart out a programme. A website will also be created."

Initiating a discussion on the Ganga-Yamuna Shuddhi Abhiyan, Rajnath Singh said: "The central government had launched the Ganga action plan to make it pollution free. Crores of rupees have all ready been spent but the main target has not fulfilled yet. Instead, there is a lot of corruption. "

He demanded a white paper on the issue from the United Progressive Alliance government.

Supporting Rajnath Singh, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said: "India will be saved when the Ganga is saved."