

Pre-requisites for sustainable food security

M. S. Swaminathan



The Hindu A woman cooks for her family comprising five children, living in a shanty along a drain and garbage dump, in New Delhi. File photo: Sushil Kumar Verma

The goal of food for all can be achieved only through greater and integrated attention to production, procurement, preservation and public distribution.

The President, in her address to Parliament on June 4, 2009, announced: “My Government proposes to enact a new law — the National Food Security Act — that will provide a statutory basis for a framework which assures food security for all. Every family below the poverty line in rural as well as urban areas will be entitled, by law, to 25 kg of rice or wheat per month at Rs. 3 per kg. This legislation will also be used to bring about broader systemic reform in the public distribution system.”

Since then, various arms of the government as well as civil society organisations have been working to help redeem this pledge. The National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Sonia Gandhi recently provided a broad framework to achieve the goal of food for all and forever. The NAC's suggestions include the swift initiation of programmes to insulate pregnant and nursing mothers, infants in the age group of zero to three, and other disadvantaged citizens, from hunger and malnutrition. Such special nutrition support programmes may need annually about 10 million tonnes of foodgrains. The NAC has stressed that in the design of the delivery system

there should be a proper match between challenge and response, as for example, the starting of community kitchens in urban areas to ensure that the needy do not go to bed hungry. Pregnant women should get priority.

The NAC has proposed a phased programme of implementation of the goal of universal public distribution system. This will start with either one-fourth of the districts or blocks in 2011-12 and cover the whole country by 2015, on lines similar to that adopted for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP). This will provide time to develop infrastructure such as grain storage facilities and Village Knowledge Centres and the issue of Household Entitlements Passbooks. The NAC is developing inputs for the proposed Food Security Act covering legal entitlements and enabling provisions based on the principle of common but differentiated entitlements, taking into account the unmet needs of the underprivileged.

The food security legislation will be the most significant among the laws enacted by Parliament. It will mark the fulfillment of Mahatma Gandhi's call for a hunger-free India. It should lend itself to effective implementation, in letter and spirit. This will call for attention to four pre-requisites. These are food production, procurement, preservation and public distribution.

Production: India faces a formidable task on the food production front. Production should be adequate to provide balanced diet for over 1.2 billion persons. Over a billion cattle and other farm animals need feed and fodder. The recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) made in five reports submitted to the Minister of Agriculture between 2004 and 2006, and the National Policy for Farmers placed in Parliament in November 2007 need to be implemented. These provide a road map to strengthen the ecological-economic foundations for sustainable advances in productivity and production and impart an income orientation to farming, helping bridge the gap between potential and actual yields and income in farming systems. Since land and water are shrinking resources, and climate change is a real threat, the NCF has urged the spread of conservation and climate-resilient farming. A conservation-cultivation-consumption-commerce chain should be promoted in every block. This will call for technological and skill upgradation of farming practices. Methods to achieve a small farm management revolution that will result in higher productivity, profitability and stability under irrigated and rain-fed conditions are detailed.

The widening of the food basket through the inclusion of nutritious millets, the mainstreaming of nutritional considerations in the National Horticulture Mission, and the consumption of salt fortified with iron and iodine will help reduce chronic protein-energy under-nutrition and hidden hunger caused by the dietary deficiency of micronutrients such as iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A and Vitamin B12. A sustainable food security system can be developed only with home-grown food, not imports.

Procurement: Procurement should cover not only wheat and rice but also *jowar*, *bajra*, *ragi*, minor millets and pulses. When India started the High Yielding Varieties Programme in 1966, *jowar*, *bajra* and maize along with rice and wheat were included in the food basket in order to keep it wide. Community Grain Banks operated under the social oversight of Gram Sabhas will facilitate the purchase and storage of local grain. Farmers are now worried that the government

may lower the minimum support price (MSP) to reduce the subsidy burden. This will kill the food security system. The MSP should be according to the NCF formula of C2 (that is, the total cost of production) plus 50 per cent. The actual procurement price should be fixed at the time of harvest, taking into account the escalation in the cost of inputs like diesel since the time the MSP was announced. Unlike in developed countries, where hardly 2 per cent to 3 per cent of the people are farmers, the majority of consumers (over 60 per cent) in India are farmers. Their income security is vital for food security.

Preservation: Safe storage of procured grain is the weakest link in the food security chain. India is yet to develop a national grid of modern grain silos. Post-harvest losses are high in foodgrains and in perishable commodities such as vegetables and fruits. A Rural Godown Scheme was initiated in 1979, but it is yet to take off. The government called off the “Save Grain” campaign some years ago, ending a relevant programme in the context of food security.

Public Distribution: The strengths and weaknesses of India's public distribution system, the world's largest, are being discussed widely. Corruption and leakages are widespread. There are States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Chhattisgarh where the PDS is being operated efficiently. The challenge is to learn from the models and convert the unique into the universal.

In the ultimate analysis, what is relevant for human health and productivity is nutrition-security at the level of each child, woman and man. India has to shift from viewing food security at the aggregate level to ensuring nutrition-security at the level of each individual. This will call for concurrent attention being paid to availability, access and absorption. Indian agriculture is in a state of crisis, both from the economic and ecological points of view. Unless attention is paid to soil health care and enhancement, water conservation and efficient use, adoption of climate resilient technologies, timely supply of needed inputs at affordable prices, credit and insurance, and producer-oriented marketing, a higher growth rate in agriculture cannot be realised.

In the area of access, the MGNREGP and the Food Security Act that seeks to ensure 35 kg of staple grain at Rs.3 a kg will help. This has to be combined with efforts to create avenues for market-driven non-farm enterprises. When China started its agricultural reform, a two-pronged strategy was adopted. It involved higher productivity and profitability of small farms and greater opportunities for non-farm employment and income through Township Village Enterprises. In India there is still a gross mismatch between production and post-harvest technologies. This results in the spoilage of foodgrains and missed opportunities for value addition and agro-processing. The use of agricultural biomass is generally wasteful and does not lead to the creation of jobs or income.

In the field of absorption of food in the body, it is important to ensure clean drinking water, sanitation and primary health care. Even in a State like Tamil Nadu where steps have been taken to ensure food availability at affordable cost, a food insecurity analysis done by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) along with the World Food Programme shows that the level of food security is far better in households with toilets. The Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission, the Total Sanitation programme and the National Rural Health Mission are all important for food security.

India's global rank in the areas of poverty and malnutrition will continue to remain unenviable, so long as the country does not enable all its citizens to have a productive and healthy life. The Food Security Act holds out the last chance to save nearly 40 per cent of India's population from the hunger trap.

(Professor M.S. Swaminathan is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, and Chairman of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation.)

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Swaminathan urges scientists to work with farmers

Noted agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan on Friday urged researchers to take the lead in forging strong relationships with farmers to help them improve their incomes and yield per hectare.

“The green revolution was a farmers' revolution. It were the farmers who triggered the high yield programme [in wheat],” he said in his Foundation Day Lecture on ‘Agro Bio-diversity Management for Sustainable Food Security’ at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Annual Awards ceremony here.

Union Agriculture and Food Minister Sharad Pawar gave awards to five outstanding institutions, 127 scientists and three farmers.

Outlining a road map for effective management of the agro bio-diversity to maintain sustainable food security, Dr. Swaminathan emphasised the crucial role of technological research in achieving breakthroughs which result in revolutions.

He urged farmers to develop awareness regarding locally available agro bio-diversity in neighbourhood community to encourage grassroots *conservation*. *“Local community participation in all conservation efforts is an essential component for success. A bio-diversity literacy movement should be initiated to educate people regarding the importance of genetic resources.”*

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Thailand using wasps to combat cassava predator



AP In this undated photo released by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), scientists check at cassava plantations for signs of pests and diseases at a field in Nakhon Ratchasima province northeastern Thailand.

Agricultural scientists unleashed insect against insect on Saturday in a bid to save northeast Thailand's cassava plants from an infestation that could cut harvest from the billion dollar industry in half.

The team released 10,000 wasps in Khon Kaen province to prey on mealybugs, said Rod Lefroy, a researcher for the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. If the trial goes well, another 250,000 eventually will be set loose.

Cultivated by 5 million Southeast Asian farmers, cassava is used in biofuel and livestock feed, and its starch is extracted for use in food. Thai exports of the crop account for more than 60 percent of global totals and generate about \$1.5 billion for local farmers annually, the group and its research partners said.

The crop, originally brought from South America by Portuguese traders centuries ago, thrived before the mealybug infestation, which has spread to 200,000 hectares (494,000 acres) in Thailand's north and northeast and could cut yields by up to 50 percent, leading to millions in lost revenue, they wrote in a statement.

The mealybug, *Phenacoccus manihoti*, sucks the sap of cassava until it is dry and shrivels up.

CGIAR, whose regional headquarters is in neighbouring Laos, initiated the *Anagyrs lopezi* wasp project after Thai farmers noticed bugs clinging to withered cassava plants in large numbers last year, when crop production decreased by 20 percent to 30 percent, Lefroy said.

"Although they are very small, they tend to amass in quite large numbers on the underside of leaves," said Lefroy, who is working with the Colombia-based International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, the Benin-based International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and Thailand's Agriculture Ministry.

"They're very white and look like they're covered in a silky fur," he said.

After confirming the identity of the invasive bug, the team in Thailand imported the biocontrol wasps from Benin in Africa, and began a massive breeding and testing program to prepare for Saturday's release. In the 1980s, wasps were successfully used in Africa to eradicate mealybugs preying on cassava.

The female wasps, only 2 millimeters (0.08 inches) long, inject their eggs into the mealybugs and feed on them, gradually reducing their population.

Lefroy said it is increasingly a regional problem and until recently Asia was largely exempt from the mealybug problem.

"We really need to move into a phase where we admit the honeymoon is over," he said.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Vegetable prices likely to fall by August-end on fresh arrivals

19 Jul 2010, 0752 hrs IST, Madhvi Sally, ET Bureau

CHANDIGARH: Vegetable prices, which have touched an all-time high in recent weeks, are likely to fall in the next one month with new crops from Punjab and Haryana to be harvested in August .

Seen as an annual trend during the monsoon season , prices of vegetables have increased by 50-100 % across north India. A flood-like scenario in key vegetable-growing districts of Punjab and Haryana, along with an increase in the fuel prices, have further escalated the prices of crops, especially tomato, seasonal vegetables like bottle gourd, other cucurbits, lady's finger, leafy vegetables, cauliflower etc.

Currently, the markets in Delhi, Chandigarh and other north Indian states are getting vegetables largely from Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Punjab and Haryana that have not been affected by floods.

Even as tomato was selling at Rs 50-60 a kg in the Delhi market, compared to Rs 20-25 a kg a fortnight ago, an official in the Azadpur mandi said that the wholesale rate of tomato was varying between Rs 20 and Rs 25 a kg. "We are waiting for the new crop from Punjab and Haryana that will lead to fall in prices. Currently, supplies from Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are erratic due to rain and landslides ," informed Digvijay Kapoor of Maa Vaishno Fruits and Vegetables Company, a firm based in Chandigarh mandi. Peas coming from Himachal Pradesh were selling at Rs 70-80 per kg and at Rs 40-50 per kg in retail, whereas bottle gourd, lady's finger and other seasonal vegetables were selling at Rs 30-40 a kg in retail market.

However, the prices of potato have remained stable compared to the previous year selling at Rs 15 a kg for the new crop coming from Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. Cold storage potatoes were selling at Rs 6-10 a kg in retail. Truck loads of tomatoes and seasonal green leafy vegetables are coming from Shimla, Kinnaur and Solan in Himachal Pradesh to the northern Indian markets. From Uttar Pradesh, it is the districts of Saharanpur, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar that are largely supplying vegetable crops.

"I am selling tomato for Rs 15 a kg to the local trader in the Solan mandi," informed Meera Devi a marginal farmer from Haripur village in Solan district of Himachal Pradesh. Ms Devi said she knew of the prevailing rates in the market but was not able to do self retailing of her produce as

this year there was a bumper crop which had to be taken care of.

Haryana horticulture, joint director, Dr Arjun Singh Saini informed that the districts of Ambala, Kurukshetra and Karnal were the tomato growing belt of Haryana which have been flooded after the recent spate of rainfall. "Over 20,000 hectare in the states is under tomato. Fresh seedlings are being given to farmers and we expect new crop to arrive from next month," he said.

Similarly, the Punjab government has started providing extension network to guide the farmers in re-sowing operations in the vegetable growing districts of Patiala, Ropar and Nawanshahar . Nurseries of cauliflower, cabbage, tomato are already selling in the market and plantation in fields is going on.

At the cash-and-carry joint of Bharti Walmart in Zirakpur in Punjab, tomato prices on Sunday were ruling at Rs 28 a kg, bottle gourd at Rs 25 a kg, peas for Rs 42 a kg, spinach for Rs 23 and french beans for Rs 28 a kg. According to the Bharti Walmart spokesperson the rains have not impacted the supplies as on date, but could increase the price of green leafy vegetables and other fruits and vegetables if the rains continued .

Pepper prices surge across globe on tight supply

19 Jul 2010, 0431 hrs IST,S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Pepper prices remain buoyant

Black pepper prices have remained buoyant for the past few weeks. Spot prices of garbled pepper, which stood at Rs 179 per kg in the beginning of July, have climbed to Rs 195 per kg on Saturday. Tight supply situation both in the domestic and international markets is keeping the prices high.

India seeing insufficient supply

Market arrivals of pepper have remained low throughout the past few weeks. Traders and

industry spokesmen said the arrivals are not even sufficient to meet 50% of the daily demand. The production this year is slightly less than the last year's output of 50,000 tonnes. The farmers in South India are not selling their products in the open market as they expect prices to go up further. They anticipate that the prices will go beyond the Rs 200 per kg mark shortly.

Gaps in global production

The supplies are tight at the global level too. An industry estimate is that Vietnam has already shipped out 75,000 tonnes and the country may not be left with substantial volumes. Indonesia, which produced close to 35,000 tonnes last year, may end up with much less pepper this year. The country has already sold a small quantity this year. Brazil is also expected to enter the market with a slight lower crop, according to early estimates. Analysts have stated that the global supply shortfall this year is likely to be in the range of 33,000 tonnes.

Global prices move to near-parity levels

With supplies remaining tight in almost every origin, international prices in different markets are moving towards near-parity levels. While the Indian offer price is around \$4,450 per tonne, Indonesia's price is in the range of \$4,350-\$4,400 per tonne. Vietnam's offer price is around \$4,400 per tonne. Brazil is also matching the price with offers pegged at around \$4,300-\$4,350 per tonne. Exporters said that some global resellers are offering the spice at \$200 less than the international price level. But with the buyers adopting a need-based buying strategy, resellers have not been able to sell much.

Demand to peak in October, November

Amidst such a scenario, the domestic demand is all set to pick up after the monsoon. The festival demand will come in from different regions. The demand will peak in October-November as pepper is stocked up for the winter season. Imports look difficult in the immediate future but the processor industry seems to have built enough stocks to last a few more months.

Power business will make up for fall in sugar profits: Ponty Chadha

19 Jul 2010, 0425 hrs IST, Man Mohan Rai, ET Bureau

THE undisputed king of liquor trade in Uttar Pradesh, Gurdeep Singh Chadha, more popularly known as Ponty Chadha, who heads a \$1.5-billion empire out of Lucknow, has bagged two sugar mills in the UP government's ongoing privatisation bid and has appetite for more. The reclusive Ponty Chadha, in a rare interview, says he is looking at controlling a cluster of six to seven mills in the next couple of years. In a sense, it is homecoming for Mr Chadha, whose father Kulwant Singh Chadha, started with a sugar crusher in Moradabad in the 60s. He then migrated to liquor trade, which his son, Ponty, along with two brothers, have taken to staggering heights aided by some contentious policies of the state government. While the liquor trade, in which he enjoys total domination in UP, remains the mainstay of the group that is in the throes of a restructuring. Mr Chadha tells ET about his ambitious plans for sugar and power sectors.

What is the existing capacity of your sugar units and how much are you targeting?

We currently have a total cane-crushing capacity of 16,000 tonnes crushed per day (TCD) at our two mills in Punjab and one in Uttar Pradesh at Dhanuara in JP Nagar district. The two UP government mills we won have a capacity of 3,000 TCD each. We will be pumping in around Rs 200 crore into each of these two mills to scale up their capacities to 8,000 TCD each. Together, all these five mills will have a crushing capacity of 32,000 TCD once the expansion is complete. If we manage to win more mills in the ongoing disinvestment programme, the total capacity would go up accordingly. We also plan to set up two new sugar mills in UP in the area where our mills are located.

Do you think this was the right time to enter as the sugar cycle is on the downturn and all indications are that the next couple of years would not be very profitable?

Yes, we understand that. It is quite true the sugar sector will not be very profitable in the next two to three years. But our business model is based on having better sugar recovery than the rest of the players, assured cane supply, reducing costs and most importantly cogeneration

power units would compensate the lean cash flow from sugar.

How do you propose to increase sugar recovery and get assured cane supply which can be a tricky task?

We are very clear about having all our sugar mills in the same area i.e., located close to each other. We want to have a cluster, of six to seven sugar mills, which will share the cane area boundaries with each other. This would mean that there would be no other millers in the area and all the cane would naturally come to us. We are working on having a contiguous cane area of two lakh hectares. This massive chunk of cane area would enable us to introduce better-yielding varieties of cane to the farmers for our mutual benefit. Farmers would not travel far from their fields to sell cane and with our mills enveloping the area, the cane would naturally come to us. Also with mills being in close vicinity, transportation cost would go down drastically. We would be able to save about Rs 100 crore a year through such measures alone.

Will cogen power projects be a major focus area for you?

Power would in many ways be the main thrust area. We will have cogen units at all our sugar plants and with the government allowing coal-based generation during the off season, it would be a major flow of cash for us. In fact, the way we have planned things is that the cogeneration units would pay for the cost of acquiring the government mills and paying off the loans. As you said, sugar will not generate much profit in the next two years or so, and we have calculated that the cogeneration power units will help us generate enough profits to meet our liabilities and capital expenditure.

What is the optimum price of cane that you see for the next season? Where do you see ethanol prices headed?

This year, farmers got a high price for cane due to initial estimates of underproduction. The price of cane in the next crushing season cannot be that high due to crash in sugar prices. What should an optimum price of cane be I cannot really say as a host of factors including the market price of sugar decide that.

Do you see consolidation happening in the sugar sector?

Consolidation in the sugar industry is bound to happen at some point. Those millers who have just confined themselves to producing sugar only would eventually lose out. Those who have not been expanding their cogeneration power units would eventually start bleeding and would be forced to sell out to bigger players.

Would you also consider setting up large thermal power projects, independent of the sugar units?

We are definitely considering entering the power sector, but right now our entire focus is on our existing businesses and the expansion into the sugar sector. We are also exploring the possibility of setting up sugar units in Ethiopia. Paper and steel production are also on our radar. But these are still at the initial stage.

Business Standard

Monday, Jul 19, 2010

Cotton prices up 15-30% due to high demand

Press Trust of India / Mumbai July 18, 2010, 14:11 IST

Cotton prices have risen by 15 to 30 per cent since the beginning of the year across varieties due to limited supplies and high demand, an economist said.

"Cotton prices scaled historically high levels in June, driven by active purchasing by mills and strong demand from yarn producers in Asian countries. The overall shortage in supplies of the raw material, coupled with heavy buying especially from China, saw physical market prices of cotton race forward," NCDEX Knowledge Management Department Economist Kavita Chacko said here.

Prices for Shankar 6 variety cotton ruled around Rs 29,500 per candy (356 kg) in the physical

markets in June, 2010. Domestic prices were supported by fresh export demand after the government lifted the ban on exports, Chacko said.

Cotton prices soared to record highs in June, largely on the back of limited supplies and high demand. The upward momentum in prices was supported by the surge in demand for the raw material from China.

Chacko pointed out that the Indian government has partially lifted curbs on cotton exports, allowing registered exporters to ship overseas from July 2, 2010.

The government is also likely to fix the volume of cotton exports from the country each year, declaring in advance the quantity available for export and for domestic consumption.

Restrictions on the export of raw cotton were imposed by the government in April in an attempt to help the labour-intensive domestic textile industry as cotton prices soared due to the 15-20 per cent shortage in global cotton production.

India, having recorded good production in 2009-10, was an important supplier to the world cotton markets, Chacko said.

The distribution of monsoon rains fell short of expectations in June and sowing in many parts of the northern zones was affected as a result. However, the recent progress in the monsoons, covering most of the country, has improved the prospects for cotton sowing.

As of the end of June, 2010, a 19 per cent increase in cotton acreage was seen on a year-on-year basis. The area under cotton cultivation stood at a little over 26 lakh hectares, according to the Directorate of Cotton Development.

Various agencies have been forecasting a sharp increase in Indian cotton production in the current season, with farmers shifting to cotton owing to better crop remuneration.

The Cotton Corporation of India expects cotton acreage in Gujarat, one of the chief producer states, to increase by 10 per cent.

Various agencies have forecast domestic cotton production in 2010-11 to cross 300 lakh bales.

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[Back](#) **Good domestic demand lifts pepper**

G K Nair

Kochi, July 17

Strong domestic demand amid tight availability coupled with the bullish activities by the operators has kept the Indian pepper market hot during the week.

Meanwhile, bear operators were also playing their role by spreading bearish reports that all the overseas Ramadan requirements have been met and the European markets, except for some pockets in Eastern Europe, have also covered their immediate requirements.

Besides, some reports said it is hard to sell nearby shipments to the US. All these are aimed at pulling the prices down as the Indian market has reacted more than what they anticipated, the trade sources said.

Major stockists in the main centres in north India were covering. But ready pepper was not available in required quantities. Many were covering farm grade pepper from the investors. Interstate dealers based in Tamil Nadu (TN) were covering from the dealers in the plains farm grade pepper at Rs192-193 a kg and taken to TN where no tax is levied on pepper and then transported to north Indian centres, they said. National level cooperatives were also covering good quantities.

Mismatch

Investors were selling farm grade pepper Rs 2 below the July price and buying back their sales. The demand-supply mismatch now in the domestic scenario here, which absorbs about 3,500-4,000 tonnes of pepper monthly, has probably been taken as a tool to push the market up by the bull operators.

There were also bullish reports saying that the availability in India and Vietnam was tight and hence the prices are expected to touch \$5,000 a tonne. Consequently the market was highly volatile.

Karnataka was reportedly quoting Rs 205 a kg and it shows that there is a squeeze in availability of ready pepper, they said.

The availability situation globally is said to be tight with the demand outweighing the supply that is evident from the prices ruling around \$4,000 a tonne for several weeks. This mismatch is likely to continue this year as the production in the growing countries has not shown an increase corresponding to the demand, market sources claimed.

The current upward trend in the Indian market could be attributed also to the alleged buying spree by those who sold the pepper imported for value addition and re-export as the date for the shipment of the material is nearing. These people are allegedly now trying to get the time for value addition and re-exporting extended, i.e., till they could get the material. Since there had been good buying support even at higher prices in the world market the criteria of recession could not be used as a tool, market sources said.

All the contracts on the NCDEX shot up this week. July, August and September went up by Rs 1,234, Rs 1,204 and Rs 1,202, respectively, to close at Rs 19,980, Rs 20,245 and Rs 20,450 a quintal.

Total turn over increased by 24,782 tonnes to 1,31,309 tonnes. Total open interest moved up by 507 tonnes to 19,647 tonnes.

Spot prices shot up by Rs 1,000 to close at Rs 19,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 19,500 (MG 1) a quintal on strong domestic demand and tight supply position.

According to the International Pepper Community (IPC) report for the week, the pepper

market was very strong this week. Prices increased sharply in most of the origins, with the exception of Sarawak which had reported a stable price throughout the week. This continuous increase in prices has encouraged growers in Vietnam to deflate their stocks.

Vietnam appears to have sold out their material leaving a very little carry over stocks. Prices at HCMC increased significantly by 12 per cent locally and 15 per cent in f.o.b. price.

In India at the Commodity Exchange, the prices were very active and increased almost daily based on the news of shortage from other origins. On an average, prices here increased by 6 per cent from last week. In Lampung, the harvest is increasing to reach a peak by July end till August. Unfortunately, the wet weather condition is not favourable for harvesting and drying. Consequently, arrival of new material was limited and prices escalated daily. It is predicted that "output of this year crop is more or less same or slightly low compared to the last year production...however, production of light berries is expected to be more."

Brazil is estimated to harvest pepper in September/October. Demand for the next harvest is reported to have increased. Prices in Brazil also increased almost daily. In Sri Lanka, pepper price at growing areas increased further by 7 per cent.

The market for white pepper continued to firm up. Prices in Bangka and HCMC increased significantly, while in Sarawak were reported stable. Material of white pepper in Vietnam was very limited, while new material from Bangka is expected to arrive in the market by August end.

Export of black pepper from Indonesia in January-March 2010 increased by 147 tonnes from 6,378 tonnes in 2009 to 6,525 tonnes, while export of white pepper decreased further from 6,050 tonnes in January-March 2008 to 2,719 tonnes in 2009 and 2,398 tonnes in 2010, thereby recording a consistent of declining trend, the IPC report said.

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[Back](#) Popular fruit lacking quality storage

FOCUS APPLE.



Girish Aivalli

Popular for its titillating flavour – which can be sweet or tart – apple is one of the most popular and widely consumed fruit in the world. It is also among the highest traded fruit in the global fresh fruit market due its propensity of having a long shelf life, easy to ship, resistance to diseases and high seasonality.

Apple is a temperate fruit that originated in Central Asia. In 2008, global production of apples was about 70 million tonnes with an average productivity of 14.36 tonnes a hectare. China is the leading producer of apples contributing to about 43 per cent of the global production (29.8 million tonnes) followed by the US contributing to about six per cent of the global production (4.4 mt). Austria leads in terms of productivity with yield of more than 91 tonnes a hectare.

Apple was introduced in India at the beginning of 20th century by a visiting missionary from the US. India ranks second in the world in terms of area under apple cultivation with more than 2.6 lakh hectares under the crop. Among the fruits grown in India, apple has the third largest area under cultivation after banana and mango. India is ranked 7 {+t} {+h} in terms of apple production with about three per cent of global production (two mt). However,

productivity is just 7.65 tonnes a hectare.

Rising area

While the area under apples in India has been increasing by a compounded annual growth rate of more than 6 per cent during last six years – production is characterised low yields as most apple orchards in India are old.

The low productivity and poor quality of apples is linked to monoculture of a few old cultivars that have degenerated over the years. Also, apple requires 1,600 hours of chilling during the dormant stage for healthy crop but due to temperature fluctuations at lower altitudes this requirement is not completely met leading to lower yields and smaller fruit size. Due to temperature fluctuation, occurrence of mite is also on rise in last few years affecting quality of fruit.

Hilly regions

Apple production in India is mainly concentrated in the hilly regions along northern Himalayan range with extension towards north eastern States as well. Major apple cultivating States are Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh. About 95 per cent of India's apple area falls under the north western hills region, covering six districts of Jammu and Kashmir, six districts of Himachal Pradesh and eight districts of Uttarakhand.

In the north eastern hills, good quality apple is grown in a small area in Arunachal Pradesh. Apple is also grown in Sikkim and Nagaland.

Most of the apples grown in India are variants of the Red Delicious or Royal Delicious varieties and the harvest period is from August to December. Although some harvest activity begins as early as June, the bulk of the harvest occurs during August to November.

Exports

India exports a marginal volume of its apple output constituting about 0.5 per cent of the world's total apple exports. In 2008-09, India's apple exports stood at Rs 52.2 crore (44,552 tonnes) mainly to Bangladesh (83 per cent) and Nepal (13 per cent). India imports apples

(58,401 tonnes) mainly from the US (33 per cent), China (32 per cent) and Chile (25 per cent).

About 10-20 per cent of apple produced in India is being processed. Main processed products of apple are apple juice concentrate, jams, and squashes. Development of the apple industry would need implementation of multi-dimensional and sustainable solutions including:

Providing for quality planting material and developing apple varieties that are more resistant to water scarcity, climate changes, with better yields and which are more amenable to processing.

Introducing traceability and certification norms to promote quality and hygiene and thus promote better participation in global trade.

Post-harvest handling and grading standards need to be upgraded and enhanced as currently grading standards are only partly fixed.

Encouraging R&D efforts in yield-improvement technologies and development and diffusion of quality-enhancing technologies across the value chain.

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Back With unique agro-climate

FOCUS SIKKIM.



Girish Aivalli

Agriculture is the mainstay of majority of rural populace of Sikkim. Its economy is linked with agriculture that serves as the source of livelihood and economic security of sizeable native population. It is estimated that over 80 per cent of the rural population depends on agriculture and allied sectors for economic, food, and nutritional security. With less than 14 per cent land available for productive cultivation, the share of agriculture to gross state domestic product (GSDP) has declined from 48.7 per cent in 1980-81 to just 18.8 per cent in 2006-07.

Performance

The total food production in the State steadily increased from over 61.8 thousand tonnes in 1980-81 to 1.03 lakh tonnes in 1997-98 and 1.06 lakh tonnes in 2008-09. The State that hardly has 79,000 hectares (ha) of net sown area, this range of output is rather very high. Though maize is never a part of the staple food item in Sikkim, its production still contributes over 50 per cent of the total foodgrain production in the State. On the other hand, the share of rice the main food item, in the total food production has been hardly 22 per cent.

The State is deficit in rice production, which is its staple food. Therefore, Sikkim is dependent on import of rice from outside the State. The area coverage by high-yielding variety during 2008-09 is 26,112 ha and the seed replacement ratio has increased in all major crops such as rice, wheat, maize, soyabean and mustard.

Agro-climatic conditions

The agriculture scenario is dominated by soil acidity, excess moisture during monsoon period and moisture stress during post monsoon/winter, heavy weed infestation, low temperature stress during winter, occurrence of hailstorm in pre-kharif maize (March-April), and incessant rain from May to September that causes leaching of nutrients and pesticides applied to kharif crops. The prevailing climate favours high incidence of diseases and pests that drastically reduce the crop yields.

These factors certainly cause fall in production and productivity of major crops.

Nevertheless, the root of the problem is in the persistent domination of traditional cultivars

in the various crops cultivated from maize to rice and other crops like finger millet, soyabean, buckwheat, toria and others. The systematic intervention made in the State in this field has contributed positively in tackling this traditional menace. The consumption of pesticides/fungicides and other plant protection materials have significantly increased. The State has switched over to integrated pest management concept of plant protection which includes pest monitoring, rapid roving survey, field scouting and agro eco-system analysis. The State bio-control laboratory has also become functional and is now in a position to produce various bio-agents for release in the field.

Horticulture Development

The total horticulture production in the state in 2008-09 was 155.4 thousand tonnes in acreage of 58.715 thousand hectares. Citrus fruits especially oranges contributed to approximately 67 per cent of the total fruits production. The total production of spices was 41.7 thousand tonnes contributing to 26.8 per cent of the total horticulture production. Of the Indian output, almost 88 per cent comes from Sikkim. There are 17 rural markets in Sikkim (6 each in the south and west districts, 4 in the east and only one in the north district). They are largely unorganised and not well frequented, given the low purchasing power of the rural populace. The vast agro-climatic sweep across three major zones allows the production of more than 4,000 varieties of plants and shrubs, and 450 species of orchids.

The cut flowers, which are considered to be a new and upcoming item in the commodity basket of Sikkim, are now being disposed of in the metropolitan cities. Simfed is arranging a tie-up with Himalaya Drug Company, Bangalore, to boost the rural economy through contractual farming with 100 per cent buy-back of the production in chirata, kutki and bojo and other medicinal plants.

Food Processing Scenario

Horticultural produce from Sikkim is usually "exported" in its raw State and, in many cases, processed in other parts of the country. Recently, a few private initiatives, such as processing dalle khorsani into chili paste and pickle, fruit processing into jams and squashes, and marketing of Sikkim Gouda cheese, have been started, but these are small

in scale, and mainly marketed locally or in neighbouring areas.

In the process, the State loses out on employment-generating opportunities, income and revenue, both directly from agro-processing as well as from allied activities such as packaging, labelling, and so on. The fruit-processing factory in Singtam was one of the most vital outlets for the orange growers till this factory went sick for many years. The superlative quality of the orange produced in Sikkim – a small, tight-skinned mandarin both fleshy and sweet – and the orange products, whether bottled as a squash, canned as juice, concentrate, marmalade or fruit segments used to be the fastest selling items on the production range. The State has initiated the steps to establish a poultry processing unit at Melli and a poultry estate, the first of its kind, in the entire country, at Mangalbarey on a cooperative basis with progressive farmers.

Animal Husbandry

Animal husbandry is an integral part of the rural household economy of the State. Livestock or poultry-rearing is the major supplementary activity of an estimated 89 per cent of the population. Depending upon the agro-climatic and topographical variations there are broadly two forms of animal husbandry practice in the State.

For people living in higher altitudes (in the north, west, and east districts), such as the Lachungpas, Lachenpas, Gurungs and Sherpas, livestock rearing is the main occupation, and has been so for decades. They rear yaks, sheep, upland cattle and equines, which are mainly fed by grazing. The second and more dominant form of animal husbandry practice is as part of a mixed farming system of the lower and mid-altitudes.

The main occupation is the cultivation of field and horticultural crops, and animals are reared mainly to sustain these activities by acting as a source of farm manure and bullock power. The native cattle of Sikkim are Siri and Siri type but artificial insemination and placing of exotic breeding bulls in veterinary dispensaries and veterinary hospitals have influenced the native type into the crossbred.

Nearly 50 per cent of the population is crossbred the rest are Siri and non-descript type. The marketing of milk and milk products in the State is being done through Sikkim Milk Union Ltd. The activity under dairy development is to revitalise, assist the activities of the

present Sikkim Milk Union Ltd to organise dairying in north district.

The main activity includes production enhancement, improve processing and marketing activities, training and extension, manpower development, streamlining procurement activities. The State has recorded the total milk production of 49,000 tonnes in 2008-09.

Poultry farming

Poultry farming is commercially viable and employment oriented activity aimed at perceptible improvement in the economic condition of the rural poor. The Government has created infrastructure for a hatchery-cum-breeding farm of 5,000 layer and 10,000 broiler parent stock in Bermiok, south Sikkim in collaboration with Venkateshwara Hatcheries Ltd, Pune.

Another poultry farm at Kamling, West Sikkim is being established. The State Government has been successful in achieving 100 per cent chicken meat self-sufficiency within the State. In terms of eggs production, the State plans to secure 100 per cent self-sufficiency before the end of the current year.

Sheep rearing

Sheep rearing is a traditional activity amongst people inhabiting the alpine areas of the State whose subsidiary is the carpet and blanket weaving industry. Moreover, there is a growing demand for both mutton and wool in the State, thrust is being given to strengthen the existing infrastructure and continue the ongoing scheme.

Pig husbandry is a very popular and lucrative occupation amongst the local Sikkimese. Two new pig breeding farms at Assam Lingzey and Melli Dara are being set up for increasing the production of piglets in the State.

Sikkim has 28 fish species as indigenous and many are introduced. The important indigenous species are Mahseer, Katli, Asla, Goonch, Gardi etc. The exotic species introduced in Sikkim are brown trout, common carp, grass carp, silver carp and Indian Major Carps.

Organic state

The Government has vowed to make Sikkim a fully organic State by 2015. The State otherwise has been using relatively insignificant quantity of fertiliser and pesticides and it can do away with this in course of few years time. There has been emerging a niche for organic products both in the domestic and international market. Sikkim has the products varying from food to fruits, flowers to cheese and medicinal herbs to drinking water that could cater to the growing organic market.

Various Governmental agencies have already started working towards this. In a move towards reaching the goal of “Organic State”, the subsidy on fertiliser is being tapered and brought to zero. The Department is propagating and advocating farmers to adopt new and modern technology of organic farming system to sustain the production and certification process for certain identified crops.

Sikkim has a unique agro-climatic character for which the agriculture department makes all attempts to bring about sustainable agricultural methods to be utilised to its fullest advantage. The agriculture department, hence, has a policy to implement different schemes under the macro-management of agriculture such as ICDP, INM , NRM and other CSS programmes such as ATMA, NPOF, etc., which has brought about effective advancement in the agricultural sector bringing about an immense impact to the rural farmers of the State.

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Kharif sowing



In full swing: Agricultural workers take up transplantation of paddy nurseries at Pamarru in

Krishna district, as kharif operations have gained momentum following good rains.

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Back Quality teas gain at Coonoor auction

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, July 18

Quality teas gained at Sale No: 28 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association here on Friday.

In all, 36 marks of CTC teas from bought-leaf factories fetched Rs 100 and more.

“Darmona's Broken Orange Pekoe (BOP) fetched the week's highest price of Rs 154 a kg. Our Red Dust (RD) topped the dust market fetching Rs 150.50. In all, eight of our grades got Rs 108 and more,” Mr Dinesh Raju, Darmona Managing Partner, told Business Line. Homedale Estate got Rs 146, Vigneshwar Estate (Rs 143), Professor (Rs 142), Deepika Supreme (Rs 141) and Hittakkal Estate (Rs 138).

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 171.50, Curzon Rs 150, Corsely Rs 147, Kairbetta and Havukal Rs 146 each, Glendale Rs 141, Coonoor Tea Rs 138, Sutton and Thaishola Rs 135 each, Mailoor Rs 132 and Tiger Hill Rs 130. In all, 25 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Quality better liquoring CTC leaf grades were dearer by Rs 5-10 a kg and better mediums Rs 2-3. Plainers lost Rs 1-3. Orthodox leaf market was easier by Rs 2-3. Primary orthodox dusts grades got Rs 3-5 more, but others lost Rs 2-3.

Better liquoring high-priced CTC dust grades got Rs 5-7 more and better mediums Rs 1-2. Cleaner blacker sorts gained up to Rs 2. Browners suffered withdrawal even after shedding Rs 3,” an auctioneer said.

Teas worth Rs 2.62 crore remained unsold with 28 per cent of the 18.35 lakh kg on offer withdrawn for want of buyers.

About 29 per cent of the leaf and 26 per cent of the dust remained unsold. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 34-39 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-125 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 34-40 for plain dusts and Rs 90-143 for brighter liquoring dusts.

On the export front, Pakistan bought in a wide range of Rs 44-63 a kg and the CIS Rs 39-59.


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Weather

Chennai - INDIA






Today's Weather

	Monday, Jul 19
Cloudy	Max 35.0° Min 24.2°
Rain: 9.0 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 05:50
Humidity: 66%	Sunset: 18:39
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1004.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

	Tuesday, Jul 20
Cloudy	Max 35.0° Min 24.2°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jul 21	Thursday Jul 22	Friday Jul 23	Saturday Jul 24	Sunday Jul 25
				
35.0° 24.2° Cloudy	35.0° 24.2° Cloudy	35.0° 24.2° Cloudy	32° 26° Rainy	33° 27° Rainy