

COIMBATORE, July 26, 2010

Siruvani water level inches closer to only halfway mark

Corporation is closely watching water position: Mayor

Water level in the Siruvani Dam, a major drinking water source for the city and some suburbs, is making an excruciatingly slow rise. Water overflowed from the dam on July 19 last year. But, it had not touched even the halfway mark of 25 ft (full reservoir level is nearly 51 ft) on Sunday (July 25).

Torrential rain led to one more overflow in August last year. But, the rainfall this year has been very moderate so far. Since July 16, the dam recorded rainfall ranging from 11 mm to 42 mm. Last year, the corresponding period recorded 105 mm to 190 mm.

Mayor R. Venkatachalam said on Sunday that the dam recorded 20 mm rain till 8.30 a.m. that day. "There was more rain during the day and there were also indications of heavy rain in the evening. Hopefully, the water level should rise on Monday," he said.

The Mayor said the Corporation was closely watching the water position in the Siruvani Dam. But, there was no reason for concern at the moment. The South West Monsoon was not over yet and the indications of heavy rain only offered the hope that the dam would get more water.

Referring to a few bursts of heavy rain over the last week, Assistant Executive Engineer of the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board S. Sampath Kumar said that if the monsoon turned vigorous the water level could rise faster in the coming days. But, even if there was an overflow only during the North East Monsoon, the drinking water situation would still be comfortable.

Water from the upper reaches of the Siruvani Hills was flowing into the dam through all the falls, he said. Totally, 87 million litres were being drawn from the dam.

While 72 million litres were being provided for the Coimbatore Corporation areas, the rest went to wayside habitations.

MADURAI, July 26, 2010

Paddy bags go missing from private rice mill

270 bags of PDS rice hidden on the premises

Huge quantity of paddy bags issued to a private mill for crushing from government godown was said to be missing during a surprise check.

Official sources at the Collectorate said here on Sunday that a team swung into action and searched the mill situated at Viratipathu, near here on Saturday.

During examination, they realised that paddy bags were missing. Though the exact quantity was not arrived at, it is feared that more than 30 tonne of paddy was missing.

The team further found that about 270 bags of rice meant for public distribution through ration shops were hidden on the mill premises. Investigations were on with one Rajendran of Arasaradi in this connection.

Collector C. Kamaraj had warned of stern action against persons who indulged in smuggling or manipulation of essential commodities issued by the State government for the public.

The Collector had asked the TN Civil Supplies Corporation authorities to probe the incident.

Meanwhile, following the directive from Mr. Kamaraj, there had been a series of searches in the district by the District Supply Officials and the Food Cell Police.

Two days ago, the officials seized 18 LPG cylinders meant for domestic use from a person in Usilampatti.

Similarly, over 350 rice bags smuggled from various ration shops were allegedly hidden in a private rice mill godown in Anupanadi four days ago.

In another search at Chintamani, the teams unravelled about 200 bags of rice which was about to be crushed in a flour mill.

Published: July 26, 2010 00:00 IST | Updated: July 26, 2010 04:25 IST TIRUCHI, July 26, 2010

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 82.02 feet on Sunday, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,236 cusecs and the discharge, 1,005 cusecs.

Published: July 26, 2010 00:00 IST | Updated: July 26, 2010 04:23 IST Tirupur, July 26, 2010

Subsidies increased to boost pulses production

Sagging pulses production in the district is all likely to get rejuvenated following the recent decision to increase government subsidies for production and distribution of pulses seeds.

Overall area coverage of pulses in Tirupur district in 2009-10 was just 18,110 ha falling much below the assigned target of 39,658 ha.

“The revision of subsidy will entitle the farmer to get Rs. 15 per kg as production subsidy from the corpus created under the National Agriculture Development Programme (NADP) in addition to the subsidy of Rs. 10 per kg for the same obtained till now through National Food Security Mission (NFSM),” Joint Director of Agriculture A. Gopal told *The Hindu*.

Likewise, distribution subsidy scales also had been enhanced.

This apart, the Agriculture Department would extend a premium by procuring the foundation class seeds from the farmers at 20 per cent more than the local market rate (LMR) and certified seeds at 10 per cent above LMR.

“These subsidies are going to play a paramount role in the production of high quality certified seeds required for enhancing the area coverage and production of pulses in the district this fiscal,” Mr. Gopal said.

The department had identified seeds farms over 406 ha on farmers' holdings in the district for production of certified seeds of green gram, black gram, cow pea and red gram.

State Advisor of Uzhaivar Uzhaipalar Katchi and a progressive pulses farmer K.C.M.

Balasubramaniam feels that the subsidies were welcome but that alone would not be enough if the authorities concerned wanted to scale up the pulses production.

“Since rain has been erratic in the district, irrigation facilities should be improved by leaps and bounds as pulses farmers had been struggling in that front,” he said.

PUDUKOTTAI, July 26, 2010

Special package for paddy growers

Seeds, pest repellents, chemicals to be given at subsidised rate

Farmers have enough reasons to venture a million-dollar smile, as the Agriculture Department will release a special package for paddy growers under the Centrally-sponsored 'National Food Security Mission – Rice scheme' being implemented in the district.

The special package, includes subsidised distribution of high quality seeds, hybrid rice seeds, acorus colomus (vasambu), a pest repellent and plant protection chemicals at 50 per cent .

As pest attack poses a serious threat to the paddy cultivation, the supply of 'vasambu' and other chemicals aimed at fending off the pest , said P. Raju, Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge), here on Sunday.

He said the objective behind the 'NFSM-Rice' was to step up the paddy production in the district. Paddy micro-nutrients, cono-weeder, pump sets, power tiller, hand-operated sprayers and paddy transplanter would also be supplied to the farmers.

Subsidy equivalent to 50 per cent of the cost of the farm implements would be sanctioned to the paddy growers.

He pointed out that farmers taking up the rice cultivation under the 'System of Rice Intensification' (SRI) technique would reap a rich harvest . He has appealed to the farmers to get further information from the nearest Agricultural Extension Centre.

Low storage in tanks

Mr. Raju said the spell of rain was quite poor this year in the district. Against the average of 40 mm for the period ending June, the district received just 29 mm of rain. All the 168 tanks in the

Cauvery Mettur Project (CMP) area and another 5,100 tanks in the rain-fed region in the district did not have adequate storage for irrigation of crop.

However, the Agriculture Department has taken all steps for timely distribution of fertilisers and seeds to the farmers.

About 174 tonnes of paddy seed, 20 tonnes of pulses seed and 77 tonnes of groundnut seed had been stocked at the Agricultural Extension Centres.

Mr. Raju also said about 1,900 tonnes of urea, 1,085 tonnes of DAP, 1,430 tonnes of potash and 1,440 tonnes of complex fertiliser had been stocked for distribution through the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies.

Around 693 hectares had been brought under paddy, 810 under millets, 1,319 under pulses, 825 under sugarcane, and 1,680 hectares under oilseeds cultivation, Mr. Raju added .

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- *Move aims at stepping up paddy production under NFSM-Rice scheme*
 - *For details, farmers can contact Agricultural Extension Centre*
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Published: July 26, 2010 00:00 IST | Updated: July 26, 2010 04:21 IST PUDUCHERRY, July 26, 2010

Creation of Farmers Organisations to be encouraged

ATMA helps FO at village level evolve into commodity associations

The Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), Puducherry will encourage Farmers Organisations (FO) at the village level and help them evolve into Commodity Associations, Marketing Cooperatives and other types of FOs at the block and district level.

According to the document outlining the concept and guidelines for extension reform schemes released by the agency, Farmer Interest Groups (FIG) and Farmer Associations will be involved in the preparations of Block Action Plans and will coordinate in organising demonstrations, on-farm and adaptive trials and give feedback on extension and research mechanisms.

The document also said that the Governing Board would select and utilise project funds to support non-governmental organisations in assisting different types of farmers organising into different types of FOs within the particular district.

Feedback mechanism

The agency will also constitute Farmer Advisory Committees, which would be constituted by major stakeholders and farmers' representatives of FOs, for providing a formal feedback mechanism apart from recommending resource allocation across program areas. These committees would review and provide advice to each implementation unit at the block level.

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“Since rain has been erratic in the district, irrigation facilities should be improved by leaps and bounds as pulses farmers had been struggling in that front,” he said.

MADURAI, July 26, 2010

Water level

The water level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 122.20 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 1,463 cusecs and a discharge of 1,237 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 35.11 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 506 cusecs and a discharge of 41 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 2,656 mcft.

DHARWAD, July 26, 2010

ICAR award for Dharwad farm scientist

Nemichandra G. Hanamaratti, who is working as a Senior Rice Breeder at the Agricultural Research Station, Mugad, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, has received the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Award given by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi.

According to a press release issued here, Union Minister of Agriculture Sharad Pawar presented the award to Mr. Hanamaratti during the foundation day celebrations of the ICAR in New Delhi recently.

While agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan was the guest of honour, Union Minister of State for Agriculture K.V. Thomas presided over the function.

Mr. Hanamaratti was chosen for the award for his work in identifying the QTLs (quantitative trait loci) responsible for drought tolerance in rice and development of MGD-101 rice variety. These findings are part of the research he took up under the guidance of P.M. Salimath, Director of Research, UAS, Dharwad.

A native of Mugad village in Dharwad taluk, Mr. Hanamaratti has been working on rice improvement with farmers' participation.

KOCHI, July 26, 2010

Panel to discuss organic farming policy

Development projects using “green” technology will only be given the go-ahead in the Western Ghats region.

The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, formed by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, is also considering the option of introducing organic farming in the farmlands of the ghats to reduce the use of chemicals and pesticides in the region.

The panel will discuss the organic farming policy formulated by the State government at its two-day meeting scheduled in Thiruvananthapuram from Monday. The panel will look into the scope of extending the Kerala experience to various regions of the Western Ghats, V.S. Vijayan, panel member, says.

The committee has invited the Agriculture and the Forest Ministers to the meeting to elicit their views on the subject. The conservation of biodiversity of the ghats region under the existing laws and the use of information technology for the process is one of the major tasks to be undertaken by the panel, Dr. Vijayan says.

The committee was formed to “assess the status of the ecology of the region and to demarcate areas within the region which should be earmarked for notification as Ecologically Sensitive Zones under the Environment Protection Act 1986.” The panel, headed by Madhav Gadgil,

ecologist, proposes to classify the ghat region into various classes considering its ecological and biodiversity features.

While there will be zones where no development activities will be permitted, regulated activities will be allowed in some areas. However, all activities should employ green technology. Use of organic farming practices and environment-friendly construction models will be promoted here, panel members said.

It is estimated that nearly 52 million people are dependent on the Western Ghats for their livelihood.

“The Western Ghats region starts from the mouth of the Tapti river near the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra and extends up to Kanyakumari covering six States. Most of the rivers in Peninsular India have their origin in the ghats and a few of them have inter-State importance. The Western Ghats region is considered one of the four biodiversity hotspots of the country. The region harbours 1,741 species of flowering plants and 403 species of birds. The ghats region is also home to a wide variety of wildlife, including tiger, elephant, bison, lion-tailed macaque and several species of legless amphibians, ” a Ministry communication said.

Published: July 26, 2010 00:00 IST | Updated: July 26, 2010 04:26 IST ANANDAPURAM, July 26, 2010

Impetus for horticulture in Vizag

Tomato and ivy gourd benefit most thanks to new technology



Getti Satya Suri Babu working on his ivy gourd farm at Anandapuram in Visakhapatnam .

Horticulture crops are getting an impetus in Visakhapatnam district once again with new techniques introduced to replace the traditional way of cultivation. Tomato and ivy gourd (Dondakaya - *Coccinia grandis*) are the two crops which have benefited a lot reaping rich dividends of the technology in the district.

Majority of the farmers used to cultivate tomatoes and ivy gourd in Anandapuram, Bhimili, Padmanabham and Sabbavaram mandals leaving the plants to crawl on ground till last year inflicting huge amount of damage to fruits wherever it rained heavily. "We encouraged one farmer during last season to go for tomato trellis and semi-permanent pandals in 40 cents of farm, which showed enormous increase in profits," said Horticulture Officer Anuradha.

Getti Bala Suresh and Satya Suri Babu, brothers duo took to the new way of cultivating ivy gourd giving them good income at a time when none other had the produce to offer in the market. Current price is about Rs.400 for a bag of 30 kg. and two months ago when there was crisis the bags fetched them Rs.600.

During current year total area under horticulture crops has been increasing thanks to the slow-down in construction activity in the last two years and many new farmers were taking to new techniques suggested by the Horticulture Department.

"The department provides 50 per cent subsidy ranging between Rs.30,000 and Rs.60,000 for an acre for laying pandals or creating trellis," she observed.

The ivy gourds are perennial plants that are traditionally cultivated for three years if an infrastructure was created.

"This system has reduced our labour expenses, as plucking the vegetables had become easier," Suri Babu told *The Hindu*. Higher acceptability among the urban population and the plant being known for high nutritional and medicinal values, demand was increasing.

Use of space

For tomato trellis 8-foot-tall rot-resistant posts are grounded 18 inches deep, 5 feet apart, and join them at the top with galvanised iron wires. Strings are attached to the base of each plant

with a non-slip knot then loop over the top bar, this allows stems to braid with the strings as the plants grow.

This helps use space efficiently, relatively inexpensive, provides good air circulation, wind-resistant if parallel to prevailing winds, Ms. Anuradha explained. The tomato yield had improved tremendously in the region with this trellis in place.

hindustantimes



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, July 25, 2010

First Published: 20:35 IST(25/7/2010)

Last Updated: 20:38 IST(25/7/2010)

Inflation to come down after new crops arrive: FM

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Sunday said he does not have a magic lamp to bring down inflation automatically and exuded confidence that it will decline from the present level of over 10 per cent after new crops arrive in the market.

"It (inflation) is a matter of concern, no doubt. But... there is no magic lamp through which you can bring it down or raise it... I do hope it would stabilise after good crop prospects, which is likely to happen during this kharif season," Mukherjee told reporters after meeting with heads of regional rural banks here.

He said new crops would have a moderating impact on prices.

The Finance Minister said even though food inflation has come down to just 12 per cent from over 20 per cent in December, 2009, fuel and "certain other items" are adding to inflationary pressures.

Mukherjee, however, refused to say anything on RBI's monetary action, scheduled to be taken on Tuesday.

To a query whether RBI's actions would rein in inflation, central bank Deputy Governor KC Chakrabarty said, "Whatever steps we take, hope is always there that they will work."

RBI is scheduled to announce the first quarterly review of monetary policy amid expectations that it will raise short-term borrowing and lending rates to cool down high inflation.

Overall, inflation has been at over 10 per cent for the last five consecutive months till June.



The Government has last month raised petrol prices by Rs 3.5 a litre while deregulating it, diesel by Rs 2, LPG by Rs 35 a cylinder and kerosene by Rs 3 a litre.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had expressed confidence that overall inflation will come down to 6 per cent by December on the back of good crops.






<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/577604.aspx>

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather	Monday, Jul 26	Tomorrow's Forecast	Tuesday, Jul 27
 Cloudy	Max 32.0° Min 26.7°	 Rainy	Max 34° Min 27°
Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 05:52		
Humidity: 68%	Sunset: 18:38		
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1003.0		

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jul 28	Thursday Jul 29	Friday Jul 30	Saturday Jul 31	Sunday Aug 1
				
35° 27°	34° 28°	33° 28°	33° 28°	33° 28°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy

Cooking oil prices fry budget plans

Jul 26 2010

July 25: It is not just the price of fuel that is burning a big hole in the pocket of the common man — the cost of cooking oil is doing about as much damage. Sunflower oil, which has become the favourite cooking medium in many households in Chennai, is now priced at Rs 53 per litre. Last week it was Rs 49 per litre. Groundnut oil packs, which sold for Rs 80, are now dearer by Rs 5 a litre.

State Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection (CSCP) department statistics prove that palmolein is jostling for space with sunflower oil in many upper class kitchens in the city. This vitamin A-rich oil cost Rs 42 per litre last week and is now being sold for Rs 46.

Several homemakers in the city say the rising prices are making budgeting for home more difficult. "Compared to other towns, the sale of palmolein oil packs is increasing steeply in Chennai. Many reputed hotels are also picking up this oil," said a senior CSCP official.

Raghunatha Rao, assistant director of the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), said housewives should be informed about the usage of cooking oils. "Price rise has some advantages also. You can switch over to lower-priced oils. Prolonged use of the same variety of oil will result in health disorders like thinning and clotting of blood. You have to change oil at least twice a year," he said. Pointing to the fact that prices of cooking oils are high in the global market, Tamil Nadu Essential Commodities Sellers' Association president P. Soruban said, "We receive palmolein oil from Indonesia and Malaysia. Sunflower oil packs are imported from South America. As the prices of oils are on the rise in the global markets, retailers are forced to hike the price here."

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/cooking-oil-prices-fry-budget-plans-633>



By IANS

26 Jul 2010 09:58:51 AM IST

Rising food prices biggest concern for Indians

NEW DELHI: Rising food prices is the biggest concern for people in the country, says a survey released Sunday.

The Nielsen Company survey found that the concern over increasing food prices has become so big that it has replaced respondents' concern over jobs and the economy.

The overall inflation average for April stood at 9.6 percent as compared to 1.3 percent in the same month of previous year, it said.

The concern over rising food prices will continue to remain the biggest concern for Indians in the next six months, the survey said.

"Increasing food prices is a major concern that has been bothering Indians for some time now. This rise in the price index is on account of dearer food articles and fuel products. Concrete steps needs to be taken to curb the increasing prices," said Piyush Mathur, president, India, The Nielsen Company.

Indians' concern for increasing food prices is followed by their concern for work/life balance (12 percent) and terrorism (12 percent). The public concern over terrorism in India is the second highest globally, behind Turkey.

The economy, global warming, children's education (all 8 percent), job security and parents' welfare and happiness (both 7 percent), are some other issues bothering Indians.

India ranks first for its public concern over global warming.

According to survey, nearly seven in 10 Indians (69 percent) think that the country is currently not in an economic recession. Out of those who think that India is currently in an economic recession, 64 percent think that the country will be out of recession in the next 12 months.

The survey was conducted among 27,000 Internet users in 48 countries May 10-26.

By Devaraj B Hirehalli

24 Jul 2010 04:38:22 AM IST

Farmers feel let down ahead of CM's visit

TUMKUR: Ahead of Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa's scheduled visit to the house of organic farmer Siddalingappa at Makanahalli village on July 31, some of the other farmers who too have taken up organic farming have reportedly felt let down since they are not taken into confidence about his programme at the village.

Members of Navajyothi Organic Farmers' Association alleged that the administration and the Organic Farming Mission has selected 500 farmers of the district barring Makanahalli farmers who are supposed to be mere audience.

Along with Siddalingappa, they have taken up organic farming under state government's 'Organic Village Programme' which was launched in 200607. They have been successfully continuing with the organic farming with small land holdings.

One of the members of the Association, Chandrappa alleged that the organisers have made Siddalingappa the Mission's member and left out the others in the village which amounted to "discrimination". A number of other farmers too expressed similar resentment.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bihar now a trusted source of maize

26 Jul 2010, 0635 hrs IST, Shyamal Gupta,

Bihar, which a few years ago was more in news due to the fodder scam, is now known for being one of the trusted sources of maize origination.

Productivity of maize in Bihar is 2,541 kg/ha, which is far greater than the all-India average productivity of 1,907 kg/ha.

Bihar's maize, which is primarily a rabi crop, has been a success sector mainly due to the quality of the produce as well as a simplified tax structure compared to other states. Both traditional and hybrid seeds are grown in the state and are increasingly replacing up-land rice in the kharif season and wheat in the rabi season.

With rich water resources and available irrigation in winter and summer seasons, irrigated area under maize increased and so have the yields. For the last two seasons, increased participation of national players and a few multinationals has led to a structural change in the maize ecosystem in Bihar.

Earlier, procurement was done by three Kolkata-based traders with a long deferred payment condition of 45 days. However, with a broad-based participation, improvement in overall payment conditions to producers has taken place and more transparent price discovery is already happening.

It is important that the state government continues with the efforts of having more secured enabling environment and also insulates the industry from kneejerk reactions, which some of the other states have sometimes resorted to. Any slippage on this account would lead to the underpinning being shaken in the maize sector.

The differential (the spot market price minus the market support price) has increased from 100 to 1,600/mt (currently spot prices at 10,000/mt). This has led to higher farm-gate realisation in all the states including Bihar.

While a number of national and regional players are trying to set up the starch and feed industry, it would be more important if the state government acts in a rational manner rather than with a fear of price rise and pursues a consistent policy. This would enable Bihar to steal a march over the other states.

The National Commission on Farmers had found that the main anchor states of our food security system, Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh, are in a state of ecological and economic crisis. The "Alternative Fertile Crescent" has a large untapped yield reservoir, particularly Bihar, Eastern UP, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam.

This region has a well-endowed water resource. The commission recommended that the region can become another fertile crescent, if a synergetic package of technology, services and market opportunities are introduced

. Bihar seems to be better positioned than any other state in the eastern crescent.

While the lack of market infrastructure and market information system is said to have dogged Bihar during the last few decades, an improvement in the environment has led to creation of more feed processors showing interest in the state and a few starch manufacturers have already started setting up units in Bihar.

The value chain is being increasingly integrated in the state, new traders and players have already become active and the processors are trying to set up units. The state will no longer remain only a sourcing destination but will be an important region of value chain in the maize industry.

The state needs to guard itself from short-term reactive actions, greed of the petty local political interests and local-level officials who are disconnected with the overall development pursued by the policy makers of the state.

Sugar traders slam mills for 'cartel'

26 Jul 2010, 0117 hrs IST,ET Bureau

PUNE: After cooperative sugar mills in six states decided to raise the base sale price by `200 per quintal last Thursday, traders have come together to seek government intervention in stopping the 'cartelling and syndication' by the mills. However, the Maharashtra Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation (Sakharsangh) managing director Prakash Naiknavare said, "We are not following any restrictive trade practices.

We have only made an appeal to the affected parties not to incur cash loss by selling sugar at below the production cost as it may result in non-payment of cane prices to the farmers on time."

The cooperative mills in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat had decided to raise the floor price for selling sugar by `200 per quintal for all grades of sugar from

July 23 to August 31. The mills in Maharashtra had earlier set the base price of S-30 sugar at `2,500/quintal.

Mr Naiknavare said there was 100% response to this earlier appeal as no mill had sold below `2,500/quintal. The Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association held a meeting on Friday to appeal to the government to stop such 'restrictive trade practices'.

Business Standard

Monday, Jul 26, 2010

Rains, firm prices brighten castor sowing prospects in Gujarat

Kalpesh Damor / Mumbai/ Ahmedabad July 26, 2010, 0:31 IST

In the wake of monsoon lashing almost all the parts of Gujarat and record prices of castor seed, traders and farmers expect the area under castor to increase during ongoing Kharif season. Traders see castor acreage in the state rising by around 25 per cent this year.

Sowing of castor has begun in the state and the possibility of rise could be seen from the fact that the area under castor sowing is higher as compared to the same period last year.

As per the data provided by the agriculture department of the state, around 66000 hectares have been brought under castor crop as on date, which was nearly 49700 hectares same period in 2009.

"Castor sowing is expected to rise atleast by 25 per cent this Kharif season considering the higher prices and arrival of rains at a time when castor sowing is taken up," said Nilesh Shah, Ahmedabad-based leading castor expert and trader.

In past couple of days, rain god has smiled on North Gujarat, one of the major castor growing region in the state. This will help increase increase castor acreage as castor sowing starts in the first half of July.

Another major factor to push up castor sowing is record prices of the commodity. Increased demand of castor oil from China, Europe and other overseas markets has resulted into castor

prices touching a record level of Rs 750 per 20 kg in various markets of Gujarat. The prices are currently hovering around Rs 710-725 per 20 kg in Ahmedabad.

Interestingly, spot prices of castor at present are higher than rapeseed/mustard, groundnut and cottonseed. "This will attract farmers to go for castor sowing," said another castor trader from the city.

As per the castor crop survey of The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA), total area under castor crop in Gujarat for the year 2009-10 stood at 4.37 lakh hectares, which was down by 3 per cent as compared to the corresponding year. Area under the crop had declined in all the major castor growing districts except Ahmedabad, Patan, Rajkot, Surendranagar and Vadodara.

However, the production during 2009-10 was one per cent higher due to better yield. The output hovered around 7.34 lakh tonnes. The growth was mainly seen in the districts such as Vadodara (28 per cent), Ahmedabad (24 per cent), Rajkot (19 per cent), Patan (16 per cent) and Sabarkantha (8 per cent).

THE HINDU Business Line

Business Daily from THE HINDU group of publications

Monday, July 26, 2010

Date:26/07/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/07/26/stories/2010072650271200.htm>

[Back](#) Import duty on wheat not warranted

G. Chandrashekhar

Kolkata, July 25

Many South India-based wheat processors (roller flour mills) and importers holding outstanding contracts for import of wheat are worried that the Finance Ministry may choose to stop such inflows by imposing a stiff rate of customs duty.

Their fears have been reinforced by statements from New Delhi that levy of duty was under consideration.

An objective assessment of the situation including unabated food inflation, high prices of domestic wheat in southern region, consumer-friendly import prices and potential for a sharp rise in domestic wheat prices after August do not justify levy of import duty on wheat at this point in time.

Perhaps it is for this reason that the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council in its recent meeting recommended that zero duty on wheat, rice and sugar should continue until food inflation comes under control.

Importers are hoping that the Finance Ministry will respect the EAC's recommendations and refrain for the time being from tinkering with the duty structure.

In any case, the volumes expected to arrive are minuscule as compared with production of over 800 lakh tons as estimated by the Government.

These imports are not going to hurt growers because they have already marketed the harvested crop.

On the other hand, because of superior quality of imported wheat, food processing units that make bread and cookies as well as consumers will benefit immensely.

While premium wheat from Australia costs Rs 14,600 a tonne, Food Corporation of India (FCI) wheat is on offer at Rs 14,280 a tonne. Premium Australian wheat is most suitable for bread and cookies.

If anything, wheat from Ukraine/Black Sea region is a lot cheaper at Rs 12,900 a tonne. It is well known that offtake of FCI wheat in South India is lukewarm because of high prices and irregular supplies.

The Karnataka Roller Flour Mills Association, in a recent representation to the Government, has sought extension of the zero duty regime for imported wheat till March 31, 2011, and has estimated that import may be about 3 lakh tonne maximum.

It is necessary to emphasise that wheat is an essential food commodity whose consumption is growing the fastest in the four southern States.

It is imperative New Delhi wields the instrument of customs tariff judiciously and cautiously.

Frequent changes in trade and tariff policies have already generated a lot suspicion overseas about the stability of the country's policies. Unwarranted restrictions on cotton exports are a good example.

On wheat imports no tariff restrictions are warranted – in any case not at this point of time.

Any such ill-timed restriction will distort the market and surely hurt roller flour mills and consumers in South India.

There will be little benefit that anyone will derive. New Delhi must clear the cloud of uncertainty over wheat import tariff.

It is vital that import contracts with overseas suppliers are honoured and consumer interests are fully protected.

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Back Wheat prices rise on speculation over import duty

Roller flour mills say it's not the right time to impose customs duty.

M.R. Subramani

Chennai, July 25

Wheat prices surged in the domestic market last week on speculation that the Centre may slap customs duty on imports.

Not just the rise but the Centre's move itself has left the user industry, particularly the roller flour mills, worried since it feels it is not the right time to impose the duty that was revoked in 2006.

“Currently, wheat from Uttar Pradesh delivered at railway shed in Tamil Nadu is quoted at Rs 1,390 a quintal. This is Re 1 higher than the price fixed by the Food Corporation of India under the open sale scheme,” said a South India-based miller.

On Thursday, wheat prices jumped Rs 20 a quintal on speculation.

According to industry sources, the issue of import duty is feared to come up at a meeting of empowered group of Ministers on Monday.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for August delivery ended at Rs 1,251.40 a quintal on Saturday, while September contracts closed at Rs 1,270.60.

“The point is not imposition of import duty but the global market scenario. International prices of wheat are ruling firm now and any duty at this stage is not advisable,” the sources said.

CBOT

Wheat futures on the Chicago Board of Trade gained 1.5 per cent last week. The prices have increased 28 per cent so far this month.

Wheat production in Russia, the largest global exporter, has been affected due to drought. The five million tonnes drop in the Russian production has pushed up the prices higher. Besides Russia, wheat production in Ukraine, another major exporter, has been projected 15 per cent lower.

Milling wheat in Europe was quoted at \$234.40 (Rs 11,000) a tonne during the week-end.

“Imports into the country are meagre. Less than two lakh tonnes of wheat have been imported since April. No bulk imports are taking place in view of the stringent phyto-sanitary norms. Imports are done mainly through containers,” said a miller in Tamil Nadu.

Imports

Until last week, Australian wheat import in containers through Tuticorin cost \$280 a tonne (Rs 13,150). Now, it costs \$302 (Rs 14,175). Besides, flour mills will have foot an additional Rs 1,800 a tonne to get it to their gates.

“We are importing Australian wheat to blend it with our wheat for biscuits and breads. It helps us to get quality produce. If the duty is re-imposed, the cost of wheat-based product will surely rise,” said another South India-based miller.

The Centre had toyed with the idea of re-imposing the import duty in April but put it off till this month.

With monsoon playing truant, the general view is that the Government might not think of imposing import duty now.

It won't be a wise move as it will aid further food inflation, said industry sources.

According to sources, the talk of import duty gained momentum after two vessels were sighted on seas carrying wheat in bulk.

One was sighted near Mumbai carrying wheat from the Black Sea region and the other near Tuticorin with Australian wheat.

Bulk import of wheat could land the importer in problems if the quarantine authorities reject the consignments for not meeting the phyto-sanitary requirements.

In 2006-07, the Centre amended the phyto-sanitary norms to facilitate imports and overcome supply shortage.

The amendment expired in March 2009, forcing the users to physically clean the imported wheat before bringing it into the country.

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Back Agri-commodity futures to see correction on profit-booking

Jeera prices firmed up as international prices surged in major origins such as Syria and Turkey. Hopes of increased demand from the domestic and global markets added to the trend.

Our Bureau

Chennai, July 25

Agri-commodity futures are likely to witness correction, particularly in the spices and oil complex, this week as traders are likely to resort to profit-booking.

According to Angel Commodities, the prices have technically formed a bearish candlestick pattern (evening star Doji). Therefore, prices may undergo correction if the support levels are breached.

Last week, jeera (cumin) gained 5.5 per cent at Rs 15.18, while refined soyabean oil was up 3.7 per cent at Rs 483.9 for 10 kg. Soyabean increased 3.1 per cent to close at Rs 2,075 a quintal and pepper rose 2.4 per cent.

Jeera prices firmed up as international prices surged in major origins such as Syria and Turkey. Hopes of increased demand from the domestic and global markets added to the trend.

All major oils increased on inadequate rainfall in the central parts of the country. Further, hot and dry weather in the US provided support.

Potato was one commodity that dropped over 10 per cent on better arrivals and release of stocks from the cold storages.

Support for jeera, in case of correction, comes at Rs 14,800 and below that at Rs 14,600. For refined soya oil, the supports are at Rs 478 and then at Rs 476. In the case of soyabean, initial support comes at Rs 2,055 and then at Rs 2,045.

Among other commodities, chana futures price will demand on domestic demand in the short-term. In the medium and long term, prices will be influenced by the trend in other pulses and domestic market, said Angel Broking.

Pepper prices are seen ruling firm in the short-term on global shortage. Overseas demand, Brazil production will dictate the course of the medium term.

Export and domestic demand will determine the short-term prospects of turmeric, while in the medium and long term, the commodity will take cues from production and inventories. The same holds good for jeera, too.

For soyabean, the prices are likely to be range-bound in the short-term but in the long term, bears could gain upper hand on poor demand for oilmeal in the export and domestic markets. Refined soybean oil is also likely to witness a similar trend.

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Back Positive outlook for Karnataka pepper

A. Srinivas

Bangalore, July 25

The pepper output in Karnataka, grown principally in coffee estates, is estimated to be an improvement over last year, when it was estimated at little over 15,000 tonnes. The year 2009-10 was a considered to be a “bad year”, with the state's output down over 20 per cent. The State's annual pepper output is in the range of 20,000 tonnes, although official estimates are much lower.

This is only slightly lower than Kerala's annual pepper output of 25,000-30,000 tonnes. Tamil Nadu accounts for another 6,000-8,000 tonnes.

Paper on pepper

According to a paper ‘Pepper Production Prospects 2009-10’, published in the Indian Journal of Arecanut, Spices and Medicinal Plants Vol 11 (4), a publication of the Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Development: “As it is a mixed crop (in Karnataka), it is a general practice to under-report/non-report area coverage and production to avoid taxes. Approximate area under pepper is more than 50,000 ha. An overall decline of 22.5 per cent in production of black pepper has been estimated for 2009-10. Last year (2008-09), the State witnessed a bumper crop of 20,185 tonnes and the likely production during 2009-10 is estimated at 15,645 tonnes.”

Mr M.G. Medappa, General Manager, Balanoor Plantations and Industries, said: "Although the weather was initially conducive for a good crop this year, due to scanty rainfall during flowering season in June, the crop would not be big as expected."

Mr K.M. Nanaiah, Chairman, Karnataka Planters' Association, said: "The present weather of small, intermittent showers are ideal for pepper. South Coorg had a better pepper crop last year and North Coorg may have a better crop this year. Hassan and Chikmagalur are expected to have a better crop."

Mr Anil Bhandari, Member, Coffee Board, said: "The pepper blossoming is good, the rain beneficial. The pepper crop in the coming period ought to be reasonable." Mr Shaji Philip, Chairman, Coffee Committee, UPASI, said: "The pepper is doing okay now. There has been rain. Prices are ruling good."

The paper estimated an increase of 17.6 per cent and 36.5 per cent in the 2009-10 output for Kerala and Tamil Nadu over 2008-09, or at 29,152 tonnes and 8,238 tonnes, respectively.

With pepper prices are ruling in the region of Rs 200 a kg, coffee growers in Sakleshpur and Polibetta may well earn more from pepper than coffee, as is the norm in these places. Mudigere is considered to be ideal for pepper. "A 30-acre plantation in these regions, for instance, could fetch Rs 30 lakh of pepper and Rs 20 lakh of coffee," growers said. If there are 70-80 vines in an acre and even if each vine yields 5 kg of pepper, the income will be about a lakh at current prices. Yield will be lower in large estates, growers said.

"Coffee is grown as a profitable mixed crop in almost all the coffee plantations and arecanut gardens," the article in the journal observes. It is grown in Kodagu, Hassan, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Uttara Kannada and Dakshina Kannada districts.

Wilt disease

"There is no activity with pepper – no scientists visiting plantations," they said. While wilt, a disease caused by excessive rain has damaged pepper vines in the past, the damage could have been contained with more attention from growers.

“Planters have also started growing cardamom because of the high prices. But the life of a cardamom plant is not as long as coffee and pepper,” growers said.

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Back AP tells fertiliser makers not to overcharge farmers

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, July 25

The Andhra Pradesh Government has asked manufacturers and dealers of fertilisers not to charge the farmers more than the MRP (maximum retail price) of the products.

“We have received reports that farmers are being asked to pay much more than the MRP to cover the expenditure on transport. It seems the manufacturers are passing on the burden to the dealers, who in turn, are making the farmers pay the additional costs. This is not tenable. We have brought this to the notice the Central Government,” Mr N. Raghuveera Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Minister for Agriculture, said.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, he said the Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers had deputed Mr Satish Chandra, Joint Secretary in the Ministry, to Hyderabad last week to discuss the issue with the manufacturers and dealers.

He asked the farmers not to give in to the demands of retailers and to bring it to the notice of the Government officials if they are being charged more.

On the availability of fertilisers, he said the State needed 36 lakh tonnes of fertilisers for the season. “We have already despatched 18 lakh tonnes and readied stocks of four lakh tonnes more.”

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Back Copra prices increase

Our Correspondent

Erode, July 25

Copra prices increased by Rs 2 a kg for the fine variety at the Avalpoondurai regulated market in this district during the weekend on demand from coconut oil crushing units.

In the auctions conducted on Friday and completed by late in the night, fine variety copra sold at Rs 33.85-36.95 a kg, Rs 2.10 higher than last week.

All the 980 tonnes (1,800 bags) of fine variety that arrived were sold to crushers of Tuticorin, Kangeyam and Kerala.

The second variety was sold at Rs 32.60-35.15, also Rs 2 higher than last week.

All the 592 tonnes of the variety were sold.

Avalpoondurai Regulated Market is one of the biggest copra market in Tamil Nadu. Quality copra arrives from various parts of Tamil Nadu, while sometimes Sri Lankan copra too is up for sale. Buyers prefer Avalpoondurai copra as its oil content is good.

Officials said during 2008-2009, 13,837 tonnes of copra valued at Rs 53.46 crore were sold. In 2009-2010, 17,238 tonnes valued at Rs 51.10 crore were sold.

During April-June this year, 3,049 tonnes of copra worth Rs 9.86 crore have been sold. Farmers expect that prices will touch Rs 38 a kg, as the demand is high.

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Back Cotton farmers opt for double-gene Bt technology

Bollgard cotton coverage		
<small>(in lakh acres)</small>		
	BG-I	BG-II
2002	0.72	Nil
2003	2.30	Nil
2004	13.00	Nil
2005	31.00	Nil
2006	84.62	2.35
2007	132.55	12.77
2008	126.00	42.60
2009	78.20	114.20
2010*	50.00	160.00

*Projections.

Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, July 25

The widespread acceptability of Bt technology among India's cotton farmers is a recognised reality today.

This year, out of the total projected cotton area of 260-265 lakh acres, about 225 lakh acres would be sown under Bt hybrids/varieties. Considering that the latter figure stood at a mere 72,000 acres in 2002, it represents perhaps the most rapid rate of diffusion for any technology after the mobile phone.

But even this tells only a part of the story. Equally remarkable, though not as well known, is the way farmers have graduated from the first-generation 'single-gene' Bt hybrids to adopting more advanced 'double-gene' versions of the same technology.

Till 2005, the Bt cotton hybrids grown in the country predominantly incorporated the US life sciences major Monsanto's proprietary 'Bollgard-I' (BG-I) technology. These genetically modified plants harboured a foreign 'cry1Ac' gene isolated from a soil bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt, that produced proteins toxic against the American bollworm, spotted bollworm and pink bollworm.

From 2006 onwards, farmers began planting seeds based on Monsanto's second-generation Bollgard-II (BG-II) gene construct that deployed a stacked combination of two Bt genes, cry1Ac

and cry2Ab. The new Bt technology, it was claimed, not only offered enhanced protection against the three bollworm insect pests (due to better protein expression from the action of dual genes), but even control over beet and fall armyworms.

In 2006, only 2.35 lakh acres were planted under BG-II Bt hybrids, as opposed to 84.62 lakh acres under BG-I.

Last year, BG-II coverage, at 114.2 lakh acres, exceeded the 78.20 lakh acres of BG-I. This year, BG-II sowing is expected to further go up to 160 lakh acres, while decreasing to 50 lakh acres for BG-I. In addition, there would be 15 lakh acres under alternate Bt gene constructs of JK Agri-Genetics, Nath Biogene and the Central Institute for Cotton Research.

“The trend on the ground is clear: Farmers are making a shift to double-gene Bt technology”, said Mr Jagresh Rana, Director of Mahyco Monsanto Biotech India Ltd (MMB). MMB, the licensor for Bollgard technology, is a 50:50 joint venture between Monsanto and its 25 per cent-owned local partner, Mahyco.

Conscious shift

How much of the shift to double-gene technology is conscious, stemming from genuine awareness among farmers about the additional benefits from its use? “Well, farmers definitely know the difference between planting single-gene and double gene-based Bt hybrids. At the same time, the shift has also taken place because the price difference between the two technologies is not very significant. And that has to do with State Government policies”, noted Dr Paresh Verma, Director (Research), Shriram Bioseed Genetics India Ltd.

The Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat Governments have fixed a maximum retail price (MRP) of Rs 650 for every packet of Bt cotton seeds bearing single gene trait, with this being Rs 750 a packet in the case of BG-II technology.

In Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, the MRPs have been similarly set at Rs 750 for BG-I and Rs 925 for BG-II packets, each containing 450 gm of Bt cotton seeds.

Indian farmers currently obtain an average 6.5 quintals of kapas (seed-cotton) on every acre. At Rs 3,000 a quintal, this translates into revenues of Rs 19,500. On the other hand, farmers plant

1.3-1.5 packets in an acre. At the prevailing MRPs, the additional cost of shifting from BG-I to BG-II would be hardly Rs 200 an acre or one per cent of the gross revenue.

According to Dr M Ramasami, Managing Director of Rasi Seeds Pvt. Ltd, the favourable economics of adopting BG-II technology has forced seed companies to slash prices of single-gene Bt packets to even below the Government-fixed MRP levels in some cases. "There are sales happening at Rs 500-550 a packet, as companies are resorting to somehow liquidate inventories by offering more discounts to the distribution channel", he added.

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Back **Quality teas continue to gain at Coonoor sale**

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, July 25

The rising trend in prices witnessed last week for quality teas continued at Sale No. 29 of the auctions of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association, here on Friday. In all, 53 marks of CTC teas from bought-leaf factories fetched Rs 100 and more. Darmona Estate topped in both the leaf and dust markets.

"Our Pekoe Dust (PD) fetched Rs 152 a kg – the week's highest price among all CTC leaf and dust teas. Our Broken Orange Pekoe Fanning (BOPF) topped leaf market fetching Rs 146. In all, 10 of our grades got Rs 107 and more," Mr Dinesh Raju, Darmona Managing Partner, told Business Line.

Deepika Supreme got Rs 148, Homedale Estate and Professor Rs 146 each, Shanthi Supreme Rs 140.50 and Hittakkal Estate and Vigneshwar Estate Rs 140 each.

Among orthodox teas from the corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 250, Curzon Rs 170, Kairbetta Rs 152, Havukal Rs 147, Coonoor Tea Rs 142, Tiger Hill clonal Rs 137, Mailoor Rs 132 and Glendale Rs 130. In all, 19 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Select whole leaf orthodox teas were dearer by Rs 2-5 a kg. Better liquoring CTC leaf grades fetched Rs 1-2 more and cleaner blacker sorts, Rs 2-5. Some high-priced sorts eased up to Rs 5.

Primary orthodox dusts were dearer by Rs 2-5 while secondaries eased Rs 1-2.

High-priced CTC dusts gained Rs 2-3 and better medium sorts Rs 2-4.

Some plainers were withdrawn even after shedding Rs 3,” an auctioneer said.

Unsold tea

Teas worth Rs 2.29 crore remained unsold, with 25 per cent of the 17.83 lakh kg on offer withdrawn for want of buyers.

About 23 per cent of leaf and 26 per cent of 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 from Rs 34-40 for plain dusts and Rs 90-140 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Exports

On the export front, Pakistan bought in a wide range of Rs 41-70 a kg and the CIS Rs 39-48.

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Back Pepper prices to remain high on tight supply

G.K. Nair

Kochi, July 25

Pepper market appears to be passing through an interesting phase. Prices continued to remain at higher levels in all origins. The beneficiary of the high prices will be Indonesia, which is harvesting its new crop.

Strong domestic demand in the country has pushed up prices here and that, in turn, has resulted in Indonesia marketing their produce at higher levels. Indian prices are likely to stay outpriced given the strong domestic demand.

Meanwhile, major stockists in north India are said to have stocked sufficient pepper anticipating price rise. As a result, availability of ready pepper in the market seems to have been severely squeezed.

The speculation of the stockists that prices will increase is based on the nervousness shown by certain quarters who have to frantically cover black pepper from the market so as to fulfil their re-export commitments. These stockists were also covering at higher levels as for them it would be profitable as they have bought pepper at Rs 130–160 from Karnataka and Kerala when the prices dropped.

When they average out the price, they can easily sell below the current spot price, market sources told Business Line.

Good demand

In spite of the recession in major overseas markets, demand has been good so far, outweighing supply, pushing prices up.

During the week, Indian pepper prices continued its upward run. August, September and October contracts on the NCDEX went up by Rs 617, Rs 643 and Rs 652 respectively to close at Rs 20,800, Rs 21,041 and Rs 21,240 a quintal.

Total turnover increased by 27,671 tonnes to 1,72,866 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 1,197 tonnes to 18,450 tonnes. Upsurge continued in spot prices with MG 1 crossing Rs 200 a kg.

It went up by Rs 800 to close at Rs 20,300 (MG 1) and Rs 19,800 (ungarbled) at Saturday closing.

Overseas buyers in the US and the Europe are on holidaying and would be back by mid-August the market trend would be known only on their return. India, in fact, does not have much material to offer to overseas markets.

However, if prices remained somewhat nearly competitive some demand might come from selected pockets and selected buyers who are ready to buy at a premium over others, trade sources said.

During the week, weak operators who had bought good quantities, had to liquidate for want of money to pay their suppliers, which in turn had strengthened the hands of bearish operators to pull down the market sharply midweek. Good quantities were liquidated in August. But, good domestic demand pushed all the contracts on the pepper futures market as “all the North Indian bulls were on the run to buy pepper”.

If the prices in India continued to rise, there is a possibility that Indonesia and Brazil might find buyers here for their pepper, an overseas report said. “There has been continued strength in black, as had been anticipated. Indonesia remains the only competitive source other than Brazil, although resellers were taking profits and have positions in premium grades that allow them to compete with origin,” it said.

Sri Lanka is reportedly showing “some quantities of lighter grades at competitive levels and this is drawing interest, interestingly mostly from India. India's internal market had surged during the period and has just reversed in the last day or so, possibly as a result of the Sri Lankan offers”.

The pepper market remained strong this week, according to the International Pepper Community (IPC), prices in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka were higher than that of last week. In Lampung, pepper harvest is continuing. Small portion of dried pepper from the harvest has entered the local market. Local demand was reportedly higher and prices continued to be consolidated at higher level. In Brazil, the harvest is expected to come in September, but sales seem to have increased. Farm prices in Belem were down at the week's close, but fob prices increased marginally. In India, trading continued to be more active as indicated by the continuous increase in the volume of trade at the Commodity Exchange. Average prices increased by around 5-6 per cent from last week.

In Vietnam and Sarawak, prices were reported stable at the higher side throughout the week. In dollar terms however, local prices were down marginally, due to weakening of Malaysian Ringgit against the US dollar.

In Sri Lanka, pepper price at growing areas increased further by 4 per cent. Average prices of white pepper increased in Belem and Bangka, while in Sarawak and Vietnam, prices were reported stable.

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Back **Good demand for quality teas at Kochi sale**

Our Bureau

Kochi, July 25

There was good demand for quality leaf and orthodox dust teas at the Kochi tea auction and prices of superior grades firmed up. Weaker demand for CTC dust dragged prices lower. Arrivals maintained average levels at 12,99,500 kg at the dust and 2,77,500 kg at the leaf auction .last week.

CTC dust grades opened weak and continued their fall as the auction progressed. AVT remained active while Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation was quite selective. Hindustan Unilever and Tat Tea covered only small quantities. Kerala loose tea traders and upcountry buyers also remained subdued, while exporters targeted medium and plain teas. High-grown grades found good demand at the orthodox dust sale and prices firmed up. Medium and poorer grades quoted lower. Exporters operated on medium orthodox grades.

Leaf auction

Superior whole leaf grades appreciated at the orthodox leaf tea auction while other grades quoted lower. HUL was active on good whole leaf grades. Fannings was absorbed by tea bag producers and upcountry buyers. Good liquoring and bolder grades were firm at the CTC leaf auction. Others were irregular and lower grades found no buyers.

Better export enquiry was noticed on bolder grades while other grades were absorbed by internal buyers.

Top prices

KilKotagiri BOPD quoted the top price at the dust auction at Rs 129, followed by Chinnar SFD at Rs 122, Pasuparai SFD at Rs 119 and Chinnar SRD at Rs 116. At the leaf auction, Pascoe's Woodlands green quoted the top price at Rs 231 followed by Chamraj FBOP and Chamraj FP at Rs 199, while Chamraj OP quoted Rs 198.

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