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Management of yellow mosaic in legumes

Yellow mosaic diseases (YMD) are major constraints in cultivation and improving the productivity of grain legumes in India.

The disease causes yellow coloured spots scattered on younger leaves followed by yellow mosaic pattern of irregular yellow and green areas of whole leaf.

Symptoms

Infected leaves become puckered and reduced. Later the spots gradually increase in size resulting complete yellowing of leaves. The yellow leaves slowly dry and whither.

The infected plants bear few flowers and pods with some immature and deformed seed thus, affecting yields qualitatively & quantitatively. Some cultivars exhibit yellow mottle and necrotic mottle type of symptoms. Rusty necrotic spots appear in the yellow areas as the leaves mature.

Stunted growth

Diseased plants are stunted, mature late and produce very few flowers and pods. Pods of infected plants are reduced in size and turn yellow in colour.

In soybean characteristic symptom is conspicuous systemic bright yellow mottling of leaves appear. The yellow area are scattered or occur in indefinite bands along the major veins. Rusty necrotic spots appear in the yellow areas as the leaves mature.

The disease is caused by a virus called Mungbean Yellow Mosaic Virus (MYMV) and is principally transmitted by whitefly, Bemisia tabasiGenn.

White flies

Since the virus is transmitted by white flies, controlling them through application of insecticides can reduce the spread of the disease in field. Growing resistant varieties is also helpful in reducing disease spread.

Application of Metasystox (0.1per cent) at two weeks interval after one month of sowing helps in reducing the white fly incidence.

Soil application of Phorate (10 per cent) at 10kg/ha followed by three sprays of Dimethaote 0.1 per cent reduces the disease significantly and also enhances the yield.

Foliar sprays of Thiamethoxam 25 WG at 100 g/ha or methyl Dematon 25EC at 800 ml/ha is also useful.

Intercropping of safflower, sunflower and maize delays the onset and further development of the disease.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Twin solution for energy generation and waste disposal

M.J. PRABU

At present banks do not grant loans for installing this unit

Alternative: Shakthi-surabhi bio gas plant.

“Biogas plants are not a new concept to our rural sector, but their big size, installation cost, need for large quantities of cattle dung, and space restriction prove a deterrent for those opting to install them. But Shakthi-Surabhi, a kitchen waste based biogas plant developed by the Vivekananda Kendra, Natural Resources Development Project (Vknardep), Kanyakumari, after nearly quarter century of experiments promises to change all that,” says Mr. V. Muneeswaran, Supervisor of the Kendra.

“Till date the Kendra is credited for installing nearly 2,500 biogas units across the country and orders for several hundreds more are still pending,” he says.

Better alternative

In what way does this unit promise to be a better alternative to the conventional biogas plants?

Cattle dung is a major input for the conventional plants. And everyday the dung should be mixed as slurry and poured into the gas tank.

But for Shakthi-surabhi, cattle dung is required for initial charging and later on kitchen and other waste alone are sufficient for producing the required gas.

Two colours

The unit comes in two attractive colours. Made to order from 500 to 1,500 litres capacity, is easy to fix or relocate and can be installed either at the backyard (if it is an independent house) or in the terrace or sunshade in flat structures. According to Mr. G. Vasudeo, secretary, Shakthi surabhi works on similar principles of a traditional biogas plant, but modified it to suit urban requirements also.

Required feed materials

Leftover cooked food (veg and non-veg), vegetable wastes, waste material from flour mills, non edible oil seed cakes (neem, jatropha etc) are some of the required feed materials.

“About 5 kg of waste is required for a 1 cubic metre plant which is equal to 0.43 kg of LPG. The unit consists of an inlet waste feed pipe, a digester, gas holder, water jacket, a gas delivery system and an outlet pipe,” explains Mr. Muneeswaran.

The advantage of Shakthi surabhi is not just because it economizes and provides alternative fuel for cooking gas. It is also an excellent mechanism for biodegradable waste disposal.

The process is hygienic and is devoid of odour and flies. The unit also helps in controlling climate change effects and arrests green house gases, and the digested outlet slurry of the unit acts as good organic manure.

"It is estimated that 100 cubic metres of biogas could produce 5 KW of energy to meet a 20-hour power requirement of a house," explains Mr. Vasudeo.

No bank loans

Regarding availability of bank loans for setting up this unit Mr. Muni says, at present banks do not offer loan facilities for installing this plant. But the Government is offering subsidies for those interested.

"Disposal of kitchen wastes over time is a major problem, even in cities. If the garbage is not removed for a couple of days, the stink becomes unbearable.

Disposal of garbage is a major issue that confronts the government. If the wastes are utilised in a proper way to generate energy then it can solve the problem of energy requirement for both the people and the government," says Mr. Vasudeo.

Bakery unit

Not only individuals but institutions such as Swami Shivananda Hospital at Pathumadai run an entire bakery unit on biogas installed by Vknardep.The biogas slurry was pumped out into the lush green garden in the coconut grooves and Azolla is grown on the floating beds of biogas slurry.For more details readers can contact Mr. V. Muneeswaran, mobile: 9486942769 and Vivekananda Kendra, -Natural Resources Development Project, VK-Nardep, Vivekanandapuram, Kanyakumari - 629 702, Tamil Nadu, , email. vknardep@gmail.com, phone: 04652 246296 and 04652 -247126.

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Shade-coffee farms support native bees

Bees can maintain the health of the biodiverse tropical regions. By pollinating native trees on shade-coffee farms and adjacent patches of forest, the bees help preserve the genetic diversity of native-tree populations.

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Sapling plantation drive begins in Cuddalore

CUDDALORE: Collector P. Seetharaman has launched a drive to plant one lakh saplings across the district within 25 days. He planted a sapling at the Agricultural Science Centre at Vriddhachalam near here recently.

He said all saplings would be planted before August 15. A simple technique has been evolved to water the plants.

A bamboo cutting up to a height of two nodules would be planted alongside each plant. Two holes would be made in the bamboo and water filled in the hollow portion.

The water would drip through the holes to moisturise the root. Another simple method of watering is to place a small pot in a pit close to the root.

Mr. Seetharaman said the bamboo and pot should be periodically filled with water. To familiarise people with such a mechanism, demonstrations would be organised at select places and the information spread all over the district.

In this endeavour, the district administration would involve social service organisations, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, industries and traders. Mr. Seetharaman hoped that move would ameliorate the adverse effects of global warming, environmental pollution and unpredictable seasonal variations.

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Farm Query

New paddy thresher

Is there any threshing machine available in India which does not cut paddy stalks into small pieces?

M. Rahman Bangladesh

Mr. Fazlul Haque from Morigaon district in Assam developed a whole stalk paddy thresher. Using this machine, the entire paddy stalk after threshing can be taken out whole instead of chopped pieces. The machine is easy to handle. For details contact Mr. Fazlul Haque, Moirabari village, Morigaon district, Assam, mobile: 98648 67012.

Published: July 28, 2010 23:23 IST | Updated: July 29, 2010 08:44 IST NEW DELHI, July 28, 2010

Conflicting signals on inclusion of non-poor in PDS

The Hindu Paddy being repacked in new gunny bags at a Government godown for PDS in Dhamtari District of Chhattisgarh. File Photo: V.V. Krishnan

Court questions supply of subsidised foodgrains to APL families

The Supreme Court's observation that the above the poverty line (APL) population should be kept out of the purview of the Public Distribution System (PDS) is in direct conflict with the National Advisory Council's (NAC) recent decision for universalisation of the system beginning with 150 yet-to-be-identified districts. At present APL beneficiaries are getting up to 12 kg of foodgrains per family, which has been revised to 15 kg just this Monday for six months, primarily to dispose stocks.

No doubt the court's intention was to ensure that the excessive foodgrains the government is sitting on should be disposed off rather than rot in godowns or get damaged for lack of adequate storage facilities. Also, the court wanted to ensure that the below poverty line (BPL) population was well-covered under the food security net in a country where children and women are infamously mal-nourished.

But what the court has suggested on keeping the non-poor out of the system, what the NAC has recommended, what the Planning Commission wants and what the Union Food Ministry had initially worked out, are sending conflicting signals.

The court has questioned the allocation of subsidised foodgrains to the 11.1 crore APL (non-poor) beneficiaries. The NAC has recommended that 35 kg be provided to APL in majority-poor 150 districts and in five years time, 25 kg be given to almost all APL in the rest of the country. The Planning Commission wants the APL requirement to be contained at 10 kg per month per family on the basis of off take. The Union Food Ministry had suggested in its initial draft proposal that the BPL be provided 35 kg per family per month, while the APL be given “as per availability of foodgrains.”

Various suggestions emerge from the manner in which each is looking at the availability of foodgrains for disbursal under the PDS. The Union Food Ministry wants to play it safe by basing its calculations on the average availability of 43 million tonnes of procured foodgrains per year. The Planning Commission is looking at 55 million tonnes while the NAC has planned for 60 million tonnes.

Be that as it may, the requirement for a BPL family is estimated at 70 kg per month which means that it is dependent on market to meet its full requirement. At the same time, the government cannot impinge hugely on mandi arrivals as this would incur huge costs, upset the markets, cause supply side constraints, put pressure on storage facility and shoot up prices. Therefore, the provision of 35 kg of cheap foodgrains to poor families is to meet the minimum requirement of a family.

Surplus food stocks

The main reason for food stocks to be almost 20 million in excess of norms is because the Food Ministry is awaiting the final decision of the NAC on universalisation of the PDS. Since food security is heading towards becoming a rights-based issue, the government will have to provide by law, drought or floods, rains or no rains, grains or no grains.

In a country where 60 per cent of farming is rain-fed, there is naturally a concern to keep enough stocks in hand to be able to deliver when the proposed National Food Security Bill becomes a reality, possibly by next April. And if the PDS has to be universalised, then it is prudent to keep calibrated surplus stocks in hand, no doubt stored in standardised storage facility.

Let there not be a repeat of the 2005-06 situation when in a knee-jerk reaction, surplus wheat stocks were frittered away and then the country had to import 2.5 million tonnes of wheat at high costs to meet domestic requirements.

hindustantimes

HT Correspondent, Hindustan Times
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Explain foodgrain rot, parties tell govt

A day after Supreme Court took note of a *Hindustan Times* report on foodgrain rotting in the country for want of storage facilities, political parties raised the matter in and outside Parliament on Wednesday.

They demanded a reply from the government as to what was being done to save stocks.

Pressing for an adjournment motion on the price rise issue, Bahujan Samaj Party's Dara Singh referred to the court's directions to the government to submit a report on the grain rot in six states.

On Tuesday, the apex court had sought a response to *HT*'s report from the Centre, declaring that grain should not be allowed to rot but be distributed to the hungry.

The Samajwadi Party's Mulayam Singh Yadav sought to know "why there was scarcity of foodgrain when all godowns were full".

The CPI's Basudev Acharya said his party wanted a definite reply on why the government had failed to control price rise even as lakhs of tonnes of wheat was rotting in godowns.

Congress MP and Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee chief Mohinder Singh Kaypee, meanwhile, demanded a CBI probe, especially into the waste in his state.

He said the Punjab government must answer why huge stocks were being allowed to rot in the open.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/579241.aspx

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 05:53
Humidity: 89%	Sunset: 18:37
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1003.0

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Jul 31	Aug 1	Aug 2	Aug 3	Aug 4
32° | 28°	32° | 27°	32° | 27°	32° | 28°	30° | 27°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Sugar drops 3-pc as mills cut prices

28 Jul 2010, 1742 hrs IST,AGENCIES

MUMBAI: Spot sugar dropped nearly 3 per cent on Wednesday after millers slashed prices to bolster demand, and as good rains in cane-growing areas depressed sentiments further, dealers said.

Millers have been asking for lower rates for the non-levy sugar, two dealers and one miller said. Non-levy, or free-sale sugar, is sold by millers in the open market and each mill is given a monthly quota to sell.

"Mills have reduced quotes in tenders to sell non-levy quota for July. Significant amount of the quota is still unsold," said a member of the Bombay Sugar Merchants Association.

Sugar millers had not been lowering prices despite a weak demand in the past fortnight. They even decided to raise prices of the sweetener by 4-6 per cent last week in an attempt to trim losses after prices fell below cost of production.

In Kolhapur, a key market in top producer Maharashtra, the most traded S-variety sugar dropped by 2.8 per cent to 2,650 rupees ($56.6) per 100 kg.

India's sugar stocks at the start of the new season in October will rise to 5.9 million tonnes, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said last week.

Cane-growing states like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka received good rains in past four days and are likely to get more rains this week, weather department said.

Sugarcane acreage in India has risen 18.6 per cent to 5.28 million hectares in 2010/11, ISMA said in a statement on July 26.

The world's biggest consumer is likely to produce 25.5 million tonnes of sugar in 2010/11, compared to 18.8 million tonnes in the current year ending in September.

How to control inflation

29 Jul 2010, 0534 hrs IST,Rajan Bharti Mittal,

Let me start by welcoming the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) move to have a mid-quarter review of monetary policy from now. In a fast-changing and quite unpredictable macroeconomic environment, there is a need for continuous assessment and policy action. By reviewing the monetary policy every six weeks, RBI can provide a more realistic and faster response to developments. This will also take the surprise element out of the off-cycle actions, as noted by RBI.

Coming now to inflation, if we look at the headline index, we see that inflation has been at double-digit levels since February 2010. Latest figures show that in June 2010, headline inflation stood at 10.6%. Disaggregated numbers further show that while inflation in primary articles has remained at elevated levels for an extended period, with inflation crossing the 15% mark in recent months, the price rise phenomenon is now spreading to other segments as well.

Data shows that non-food manufacturing inflation has seen a rapid build-up, rising from near zero in November 2009 to 7.3% in June 2010. This increase in prices of manufactured goods can be explained by three factors. First is the incessant increase in prices of raw materials and industrial inputs.

Second is the upward revision in wages and salaries, with several companies renegotiating their compensation contracts to match the higher cost of living. Third and most important is the recovery in economic situation with demand holding at strong levels in the economy. This has led to an improvement in capacity utilisation levels with some segments of industry now facing constraints to meet the rising demand.

The RBI is understandably worried about this increasingly generalised nature of inflation. It has made its concern public and to clamp down inflation, it has introduced a series of quick and successive policy rate hikes.

On July 2, 2010, we saw the repo and reverse repo rates being hiked by 25 bps. On July 27, 2010, RBI repeated the act, but this time, the reverse repo was hiked by 50 bps against 25 bps that was the consensus view amongst economists who participated in Ficci's latest Economic Outlook Survey.

With the RBI making it clear that the balance of policy stance has to shift 'decisively' to 'containing inflation' and 'anchoring inflationary expectations', we can pre-judge the direction in which monetary policy will move in the days ahead.

The question now is whether these moves will help in cooling down prices and bringing inflation back to the more acceptable 5% level. In our view, the answer is both yes and no. Let me explain.

The tightening of monetary policy by RBI will be followed by an increase in lending rates by banks for all kinds of borrowers. Once this happens, you will see some impact on industrial growth. The logic is simple: A rise in interest rate will compress both consumption and investment demand and this, in turn, will impinge on industrial activity. As a follow up, you will see some relief from capacity constraints and manufacturing inflation will moderate.

This is what RBI is aiming at, and our experience shows that industrial growth will trend down and manufacturing inflation will get controlled as expected. However, what happens to manufacturing inflation alone does not determine the overall inflation situation in the economy. This is because we also have a more volatile component of primary articles inflation. And this does not respond to monetary policy manoeuvring. Controlling primary inflation, particularly food inflation, requires an altogether different approach.

Today, we are betting on a good monsoon that will give us a favourable kharif output. And once the new crop comes into the market, food prices should settle down. However, this is not a solution to food inflation. We cannot keep chasing the monsoon every year to keep food prices under control. We have to realise that with high growth, rising incomes and aggressive development work being undertaken in rural areas, food demand is increasing rapidly. And the only way to maintain price line here is to have a sustainable policy for the farm sector. We have to increase productivity, match demand with supply and ensure that higher output gets distributed throughout the country. Improving the state of farm economy calls for some serious action.

In case of pulses, which is the main source of protein for a large proportion of our population, we need a quantum jump in yields through intensive R&D. Additionally, government must put in place a robust procurement mechanism for lifting the pulses output. Today, we rely only on Nafed for procurement of pulses, and this has not proved to be an effective channel to extend benefits of higher MSPs to producers of pulses.

In case of fruit and vegetables, we need to minimise the wastage ratio that can be as high as 40%. Here, government must encourage private sector participation in building the required storage and transportation infrastructure. The supply chain from farm to the market needs to be streamlined and government must leverage the capabilities of private sector including foreign retail players in this mammoth task.

In case of cereals such as rice and wheat, India has sufficient buffer stocks, but the real problem lies with distribution. The public distribution system in the country has failed. We need to develop and alternate mechanism to PDS. Also , when it comes to releasing food grain stocks in the open market, FCI should extend selling smaller quantities of, say, 100 tonnes, at multiple locations through electronic platforms. Bulk sales through routine tendering process slow down the response time to any shortages that may appear from time to time.

By deploying monetary policy, we cannot hope to achieve medium- or long-term price stability. The decisive action to tackle inflation has to be in the form of acceleration of farm sector growth and ensuring comprehensive and timely distribution of agricultural produce. Also, focus must go back to economic reforms, which will ease supplyside constraints and bottlenecks.

(The author is president of Ficci)

Business Standard

Thursday, Jul 29, 2010

Unmoved by fear of sugar glut, refiners eye new mills

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai July 29, 2010, 0:22 IST

Even estimates of excessive sugar availability following a bumper cane output next season is unlikely to deter sugar companies from setting up greenfield refineries near ports.

Four major sugar producers – Balrampur Chini, Shree Renuka Sugars, EID Parry and Simbhaoli Sugars – had proposed an accumulative investment of about Rs 1,000 crore to set up a massive refining capacity of 6,500 tonnes per day (tpd) across several Indian ports.

The main purpose of the port-based refineries was to import raw sugar into the country and export the same on “quantity-to-quantity” or “grain-to-grain” (export equivalent to import in tonnage term) basis. This practice, according to existing norms, will attract no import duty on refined sugar, said a top industry official.

At present, raw sugar imports in India do not attract duty because of the scarcity of the sweetener during the previous two seasons. Following the revised output estimate to 18.8 million tonnes from nearly 15 million tonnes and an even better forecast for the next season, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar hinted at an import levy in October.

Industry trade body Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has estimated next year’s output at 25 million tonnes — more than India’s total consumption of 24 million tonnes. With a carry over stock of about 6 million tonnes, the country may not require imported raw sugar to meet domestic demand next season.

Still, we will continue to run the refinery as per capacity, said Sanjay Tapriya, director, Finance of Simbhaoli Sugars.

Delhi-based sugar producer Simbhaoli Sugars is in the process of setting up a 1,000 tonnes per day (tpd) refinery facility at Gandhidham, barely 2 km from Kandla port in Gujarat. It plans to invest Rs 180 crore on the plant. The company currently has most of its cane crushing, distillery and co-generation facilities in Uttar Pradesh.

Justifying the need for such refineries near international harbourss, Tapriya said: “We are planning to maintain the cycle of the sugar season when the supply constrains emerge after every three years. In case, supply remains smooth in India, we will focus on exports in deficit countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the West Asia. But, when demand surpasses the supply we will divert our output to domestic market.”

Kolkata-based Balrampur Chini has proposed to install balancing equipment on its 500 tpd of refining facility at Hydergarh, Uttar Pradesh, which is expected to have an investment of Rs 5-6 crore.

“The plant already exist, therefore, no major investment is required. We are planning to install some imported equipment which will fetch up an additional refining capacity of 500 tpd in UP,” said Kishore Shah, chief financial officer of Balrampur Chini.

The Middle East requires huge quantity of sugar for its domestic consumption. India will have geographical advantage to supply sugar from western ports if the country’s internal supply remains smooth.

Another sugar and ethanol producer, Shree Renuka Sugars plans to set up a 3,000 tpd refinery near Kandla port to process raw sugar imported from its newly acquired Brazilian companies Equipav SA Acucar e Alcool and Vale Do Ivai S.A. Acucar E Alcool. The refinery with an investment of Rs 400 crore is set to commence commercial production in December 2010.

Murugappa Group’s flagship company EID Parry has also formed a joint venture with Cargill International SA to set up a port-based standalone sugar refinery in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, at an estimated investment of Rs 325 crore ($72 million).

With an initial capacity of 600,000 tonnes per annum, expandable to 10,00,000 tonnes, the refinery would be the largest in the south-Asian region. In the joint venture, EID Parry will hold 51 per cent, while the remaining 49 per cent of equity will be held by Cargill International.

Maize, pulses to gain in Bihar

Satyavrat Mishra / Patna July 29, 2010, 0:24 IST

Rain shortage may hit rice output for second consecutive season.The rain gods have played spoilsport for paddy farmers in Bihar. With a deficit of about 21 per cent, the chances of meeting the target of more than seven million tonnes (mt) rice production looks grim. The only saving grace is the yield of maize and pulses, which is expected to be normal.

Sowing for paddy has been severely affected. “We expected that almost 1.6 million hectares should have been covered by now, but due to deficit and scattered rainfall, sowing has been done only on 0.8 m ha till now,” said Ashok Kumar Sinha, principal secretary of the agriculture department.

“However, we are hopeful this will improve, as sowing continues till the last week of August in some part of the state.” The government had a target of 3.5 m ha for paddy.

Targets are being reviewed. Sinha said, “It will take almost a fortnight before we can say anything.” His department accepts it will be very difficult to achieve even the normal rice output of five mt.

Last year, too, the deficit rainfall forced a revision of estimates. Last year, the total coverage was of 2.3 m ha and the production was 3.07 mt during the kharif season.

However, the production of maize and pulses, especially arhar, is expected to be normal. ‘The land under the maize corps is in sync with our targets. We expect an above normal production of maize this year,” said Sinha.

During this kharif season, the agriculture department expects maize production of 1 mt, higher than the target of 0.9 mt from 0.38 m ha set for the crop.

Officials say better rates and deficit rainfall have led many paddy farmers to switch to maize and arhar. These need much less water. Officials expect an ouput of 160,000 tonnes of arhar this season, from 125,000 hectares.

Bengal paddy area may dip 30%

Namrata Acharya / Kolkata July 29, 2010, 0:27 IST

Rain is once again playing spoilsport in West Bengal, the country’s largest rice-growing state. Rainfall is deficient by about 30 per cent in major rice producing districts in the state.

As a result paddy transplantation in delayed in most districts, though farmers are hoping showers before mid-August. If the present trend continues, the total paddy acreage in the state could come down by 25-30 per cent.

Normally, the total area under rice cultivation in West Bengal is about 5.9 million hectares, and the state produces about 16 million tonnes of rice every year in three seasons — Aus, Aman and Boro.

In 2009-10 (June 2009-July 2010), the total rice production in West Bengal was 14.9 million tonnes, with the total acreage of 5.7 million hectares, according to the provisional government data. Last year, cyclone Aila, followed by a dry spell had led about more than 10 per cent fall in the kharif rice crop, which accounts for more than 50 per cent of the total rice production in the state.

Burdwan, Birbhum, Nadia and Hooghly are the four high rice productivity districts in the state, and consists of about 27 per cent of the total rice acreage, and 32 per cent of the total production. While in Nadia transplantation is on, in Birbhum and Burdwan it is slow and seedlings have withered and died due to scanty rains, according to Pranab Chatterjee, director of farms, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya.

"Rain is less and moreover the Damodar Valley Corporation is yet to release water. Most of the reservoirs are not yet full to discharge water. The meteorological department has said that in many districts the rainfall is less by about 25-30 per cent. We still have time till August 15 for transplantation," said Chatterjee.

In reservoirs like Mayurakshi, Kangsabati, Teesta and Damodar, which together cater the main rice growing areas, the water was yet to reach the optimum level, said Chatterjee.

In West Bengal, about 62 per cent of land falls under irrigation. Worried of another poor paddy season, the state agriculture department has also swung in to action. The state agriculture minister Naren Dey has shortly called a meeting to assess the impact of poor rains on the crops. "Monsoon is in deficit. We are going to assess the impact at a meeting shortly," said Dey.

A senior government official said the situation in south Bengal was particularly alarming as a monsoon so far was less by more than 35 per cent. "We have just completed assessing last year's agriculture production. It will take some time to assess the impact of monsoon. Next 15-20 days are going to be crucial for a good crop," said the government official.

Pulses output in Chhattisgarh to decline on heavy rain

R Krishna Das / Raipur July 29, 2010, 0:25 IST

Somesh Yadav, a farmer in Dharampura village of Kawardha district in Chhattisgarh, was in a state of shock soon after monsoon set in. Not because of scanty rainfall, but owing to the heavy rain that lashed the region.

In his two acres of field, Yadav had taken soybean crop in this kharif season. After sowing, the region witnessed heavy rainfall and the field was filled with water. “At one point of time, I thought seeds would get destroyed because of excess water and the crop would damage this year because of excess rain,” Yadav told Business Standard.

But luckily, a dry spell prevailed for a week in mid-July and brought respite for Yadav. However, many farmers taking oilseeds and pulses crop during the kharif season may not be as lucky as Yadav. For, the wet soil following water-logging in the fields has been preventing them to sow pulses or oilseeds.

“The fields are wet enough to prevent sowing of pulses and oilseeds as the state had witnessed good rain though the monsoon-hit Chhattisgarh late this year,” Sanket Thakur, agriculture scientist and director of Agricon, a non-government organisation working in agriculture sector, said.

According to Thakur, the production of pulses and oilseeds would be affected this kharif season. But the excess water in the fields is a good sign for the paddy crop. The state government had estimated to sow paddy in 3.5 million hectares in the kharif season 2010-11 with a targeted yield of 6.4 million tonnes.

“As of now, state had received about 500 mm of rain as against average rainfall of 1334 mm and sowing of paddy had been completed in 2.7 million hectares,” Deputy Director with state’s agriculture directorate R K Chandravanshi said. Though, soybean sowing has been completed in 135,000 hectares, other oilseeds-pulses crops had been affected, he added.

The officials are however hopeful that not much loss would be caused to the pulses-oilseed crops. In fact, they are jubilant that the paddy production would enhance and compensate all losses.

“If the state receives good rain during flowering of paddy crop, it is set to produce bumper yield this year,” Chandravanshi said.

The dependence on paddy is despite the government reducing the acreage of paddy crop slightly from last year’s 3.7 million hectares to promote oilseed and pulses in the state.

Sowing in MP rises, despite rain deficits

Shashikant Trivedi / Bhopal July 29, 2010, 0:26 IST

Despite scanty rainfall in 30 districts, farmers in Madhya Pradesh have completed sowing in 9.3 million hectares, against 8.74 m ha last year in the kharif season. The state had set a target of 10.83 m ha this year. Normally, the kharif area covered has been 10.4 m ha.

While 17 districts have received normal rainfall, three had none at all. The latest data from the agriculture department shows cereals have been sown on 2.31 m ha against the targeted 3.2 m ha, with paddy on 0.9 m ha (target 1.55 m ha), maize on 0.81 m ha (0.85 m ha), jowar on 367,000 ha (375,000 ha), bajra on 131,000 ha (180,000 ha) and other crops, 95,000 ha (250,000 ha). Normally, the cereal sown area is 3.7 m ha.

As for pulses, tur sowing has been completed on 333,000 ha (target, 450,000 ha), urad 479,000 ha (525,000 ha) and moong 87,000 ha. Total pulses' sowing has been done on an area of 0.91 m ha against the target of 1.12 m ha, up from the normal 0.95 m ha.

As for oilseeds, soya has been sown on 5.1 m ha against the target of 5.35 m ha. Groundnut has covered 181,000 ha against a target of 200,000 ha and sesame 147,000 ha against the 210,000 ha target. Total oilseed sowing has been completed on 5.44 m ha against the targeted 5.85 m ha. And, cotton has been sown on 620,000 ha, against the 650,000 ha target.

"We have covered almost 85.7 per cent of the sowing target till date and so far no report of crop damage has come from any part of the state," a senior official said. Soyabean Processors Association of India said it expected a good crop this year but was apprehensive on the recently announced government support to pulses.

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Taxing food imports

This is an inappropriate time to tinker with import tariffs on essential food commodities.

At a time when the demand for imposing customs duty to restrict import of certain essential commodities such as wheat and sugar is getting shriller, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC) has emphasised, and rightly so, that such duty-free imports should continue in order to augment availability and contain food inflation. The EAC's recommendation makes eminent sense simply because it is now an inappropriate time to tinker with import tariffs. The southwest monsoon is still in progress and it would be at least six weeks before a reasonable estimation of the next kharif crop can be made. At this point in time, rainfall is still below normal and at least 10 out of 36 meteorological sub-divisions face deficient rains. While the prospect for a rebound from last year's drought-affected crops looks highly probable, there are as yet no signs of a bumper crop in the offing. Globally too, agricultural markets are currently weather-driven and August, in particular, is a treacherous month when crops run high weather-related risks.

Meanwhile, at home, August, September and October are months with a series of festivals when domestic food consumption rises manifold. It is absolutely essential that there is uninterrupted availability of essential commodities at affordable prices. A hike in duty may prove counter-productive at this point in time. If anything, the Government must strengthen its own import programme through public sector trading organisations and arrange to supply pulses and cooking oil through the public distribution system. In the case of wheat, despite a large harvest and bin-bursting public stocks, prices are still high, for a variety of reasons. While the grain does move from the producing centres in the north to the consuming markets in the south, wheat imported from Australia or Ukraine is actually cheaper than the domestic produce available in the south. In any case, import volumes are minuscule and are most unlikely to hurt anyone. If anything, consumers will be winners given the superior quality of Australian wheat for certain food applications.

The EAC has also asked for release of food stocks to dampen the price sentiment. Action on this front brooks no delay. However, successful market intervention may involve an element of subsidy as prices will have to be made affordable for consumers. In the case of sugar, the Food and Agriculture Minister is of the firm view that cane crop prospects would crystallise some time in September. There still are several ifs and buts about the size of the next cane crop. So, it would be prudent to wait for clearer picture to emerge and not rush to hike customs duty on imported sugar.

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How to enhance food storage

Shashanka Bhide

An efficient storage system may not necessarily reduce the spread between farm and retail prices, but it can stretch supplies to meet the ever-rising demand, on account of urbanisation and rising incomes.


What is needed is a clear grain handling policy.

There have been periodic complaints on two issues in agriculture for many years.

The first is the poor state of storage of foodgrains purchased by the Government and the second is the wide difference between the price paid by the consumer and the producer. The two are fairly clearly stated, and related, problems but the state of affairs continues to be unsatisfactory.

Government stock of foodgrains is said to be well above 50 million tonnes now, compared with the buffer norms of half this level. The stock has accumulated in times of good harvest with no economically feasible ways to unload them. The level of stocks has varied over the years, but 30-40 million tonnes of stock is not an entirely new situation.

PAUCITY OF STORAGE

Why is proper storage not built, so that grain does not rot, or is not washed away by rain? At a moral level, there can be no defence for not building adequate storage, even when the losses are small, because the grain lost could have fed people.

At a rational level, it may be either an O&M (operations and maintenance) problem that haunts India's capital assets, or a question of whom to bill for the added expense. The O&M argument would explain the scant attention to wear and tear. There is no penalty for poor quality of service. Besides, it may be expensive to build storage facilities and manage operations, as this will add to the cost and the subsidy.

What is needed is a clear grain handling policy that lays down standards for acceptable losses in storage and handling.

These standards may already be there, but they fail when the stocks overflow the storage capacity. With a good monsoon, open-ended procurement leads to unexpectedly high stocks. Some farmers may sell to the government precisely because they do not have the storage.

Growth of better storage capacity has not matched the rising levels of stock. Would the situation be very different if the storage were to be handled by private parties rather than government agencies?

NEED FOR INTERMEDIATION

The private operator would reduce losses more effectively because he expects to sell what he saves.

Even if the foodgrain operations for PDS are managed through food stamps or coupons, some understanding of the losses would be required to ensure that the grain produced is put to best use.

One option is to simply say that no grain can be stored in an unsafe manner, such as in the open. This would mean building adequate storage infrastructure, which may also increase the cost of intermediation.

That large losses in perishable farm produce occur because of the lack of proper processing and storage is quite well known. In the case of fruits and vegetables, the losses are substantial. Large losses occur even when no government agency is in charge. Processing and storage expenses are beyond the reach of an individual farmer or the infamous middleman. The capacity to store what is procured remains a costly affair and is limited to what can be dried and saved.

Some other integrator must build the infrastructure to reduce losses. When this does not happen, the gap between the producer and the retail consumer prices has to account for the losses in transit and storage. Lack of competition perhaps keeps the extent of actual losses hidden, allowing for adulteration, high prices and other unhealthy practices.

There are fiscal incentives to build proper storage and cold chains. This should help the integrators step in, whether they are the large retail chains, or just those who provide storage services. The large losses make additional investments worthwhile.

The new infrastructure may be necessary only because the scale of marketing operations today has grown, to meet the demands of an ever-expanding urban population.

INVOLVING PRIVATE TRADE

Large storage facilities with traders have been viewed with suspicion. How will they be seen now? Perhaps, a robust PDS and higher income levels of the consumers provide the opportunity to make a transition to better storage services.

To reduce storage and handling losses, an efficient storage service is necessary, whose viability is determined by the extent of savings it brings to the system. While this will not necessarily reduce the farm-retail-price spread, it will stretch supplies to meet the ever-increasing demand.

(The author is a Senior Research Counsellor, NCAER. The views are personal. blfeedback@thehindu.co.in)

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Falling futures takes colour off spot turmeric

Erode, July 28

An over Rs 500 a quintal sudden fall in turmeric prices in the last two days due to poor demand has left the growers worried.

The drop was influenced by the futures market where the prices dropped over two per cent on reports of higher sowing of the crop and lower demand.

In the regulated market, prices have dropped Rs 615 a quintal, while in the private market the decline has been Rs 500 in Erode on Wednesday.

The finger variety, which ruled at Rs 14,815-15,219 at the beginning of the week, sold at Rs 14,155-14,665 a quintal on Wednesday in the regulated market. The root variety was sold at Rs 14,017 a quintal. The arrivals werealso high at 2,036 bags (of 75 kg) and of this 784 bags were sold.

The finger variety witnessed a fall of Rs 500 a quintal on Wednesday in the private market. The product was sold at Rs 14,300-14,500.

Similarly, the root variety was sold at Rs 14,200-14,300 a quintal on Wednesday – a drop of Rs 500 in two days.

Asked about the fall in price, Mr R.K. Viswanathan, former Secretary of the Turmeric Merchants Association and a senior trader said: “The up-country demand is virtually nil and there is no demand in local areas. This is the main reason for the fall in prices.”

The arrival in the private and two other cooperatives market has touched ten thousand bags, but the sales were only 4,800 bags.

Low sales

After a month, such heavy arrivals were seen in the market. Traders said farmers brought their commodities in large quantities to the market, encouraged by the prices, but the demand was low.

In Nizamabad, spot turmeric ruled at Rs 15,235 a quintal.

On NCDEX, August contracts dropped Rs 416 a quintal to Rs 14,428. September contracts slid Rs 358 to Rs 14,118, while October contracts ended below Rs 14,000 at Rs 13,828, a decline of Rs 330.

Turmeric is likely to witness more profit booking in the coming days

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Mixed trend in edible oils

Mumbai, July 28

The edible oil market witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday. Palmolein rose by Rs 5 for 10 kg., on global cues and short supply at the local level.

Indigenous oils such as soya refined and cotton refined witnessed a decline by Re 1-Rs 2 on monsoon's good progress, improved sowing and month-end slack demand in the spot market.

In global markets, Malaysia's August crude palm oil futures ended higher by 16 ringgit (MYR) and September by 23 MYR.

Price rise

In Mumbai spot market, approximately 1,000-1,200 tonnes of palmolein and about 40-50 tonnes of soya oil were traded.

Most of the imports are in crude form and in Mumbai, there are only two refineries. They are unable to match the demand. So shortage of refined oils is supporting the rise in prices, said Mr Dinesh Thakkar, a leading trader.

An importer-refinery stopped offering palmolien after quoting Rs 432 for 10 kg in the morning. Ruchi and Allana were active in the market.

The outlook is one of increased demand from Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, China and Bangladesh, which are set to witness major religious festivals.

Demand from these countries will support the uptrend, he said.

Malaysian market

August futures closed at 2,571 against 2,555 MYR on Tuesday; September at 2,528 (2,505) MYR and October at 2,495 (2,485) MYR a tonne.

At the local level, with fresh buying support, NBOT soya oil August futures closed at Rs 482 and September at Rs 484.

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rates were: (for 10 kg) Groundnut oil Rs 865 (Rs 865); soya refined oil Rs 462 (Rs 463), sunflower expeller refined Rs 455 (Rs 455), sunflower refined Rs 510 (Rs 510), rapeseed refined oil Rs 568 (Rs 568); rapeseed expeller Rs 538 (Rs 538), cotton refined Rs 483 (Rs 485) and Palmolein Rs 436 (Rs 431).

Oil extraction prices ruled steady.

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Iffco-Tokio upbeat on farm insurance

New Delhi, July 28

It is probably one of the most innovative, yet transparent and easy-to-administer, insurance products designed for farmers.

Covering about 80 lakh farmers, the Sankat Haran Bima Yojana (SBY) of Iffco-Tokio General Insurance Company (ITGI) is now entering its tenth year of operation. What makes the scheme unique is its simple design, linking accident insurance to fertiliser purchases.

A farmer buying a 50 kg bag of fertiliser from the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (Iffco) – which owns 74 per cent of ITGI – is automatically insured for an amount of Rs 4,000. This insurance is provided free of cost, as the premium of Re 1 for every bag is fully borne by Iffco. The sum insured goes up the more the number of bags the farmer buys, subject to a maximum of Rs 1 lakh, corresponding to 25 bags. The policy is effective for only 12 months from the date of purchase of the bag.

As regards coverage, SBY provides Rs 4,000 (a bag) for death caused by accident, Rs 2,000 towards permanent total disablement and loss of two limbs or vision in both eyes, and Rs 1,000 in the event of loss of any one limb or vision in one eye.

The scheme, moreover, involves no major documentation; even cash receipt against fertiliser purchase is treated as evidence for making insurance claims. Since September 2001, ITGI has disbursed claims totalling about Rs 60 crore to almost 10,000 farmers under the SBY.

SBY a branding tactic

For Iffco – which markets 11 million tonnes or 22 crore bags of fertilisers annually – SBY has been a means to consolidate its brand positioning among farmers. For ITGI, "it has been the best advertisement for spreading the message of insurance among rural customers," says Mr S. Narayanan, Managing Director and CEO, adding "we have sought to piggyback on its goodwill to launch other products for the same market".

These include a cattle insurance scheme, Pashudhan Bima Yojana (PBY), and two weather-related products, Barish Bima Yojana (BBY) and Mausam Bima Yojana (MBY).

The PBY has pioneered the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips for livestock identification, as against the normal brass/plastic tags that lend themselves easily to fraudulent claims.

RFID systems – which transmit the identity of an object in the form of a unique sequence of numbers or letters – enable exact animal identification through automatic capture of data even from a long range. RFID tags also facilitate better herd management, as it is possible to feed and track data pertaining to artificial insemination, pregnancy testing, calving or vaccination of every individual animal in large dairy farms.

ITGI has so far insured approximately 4,000 heads of cattle under the PBY. The scheme charges a premium rate between 3 and 5 per cent of the sum insured of the animal, which is fixed at a maximum of Rs 30,000.

The BBY, which is a rainfall index-based insurance scheme for kharif crops, covered 69,502 farmers during 2009-10, while meeting claims in 16,198 cases. The MBY is a more recent scheme for providing risk cover against temperature, humidity and rainfall aberrations in respect of rabi crops.

While both schemes rely on historical weather data from the India Meteorological Department, the product designs vary according to both region and crop. “For example, if it is paddy grown in a rainfed area, the rainfall deficiency trigger would start from 20 per cent below the normal average for that area. The trigger would be 40 per cent below normal for paddy in irrigated conditions,” explained Mr Narayanan.

Likewise, a farmer in Coimbatore growing jowar (a relatively sturdy crop) may have to pay a premium of only 4.5 per cent of the sum insured. The same would go up to 7.5 per cent if he raises cotton, which is a more sensitive crop.

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Pulses go off the boil on weak offtake

Indore, July 28

Prices of pulses continued to fall on Wednesday as hoarders engaged in profit-booking and domestic demand declined.

Pulse prices have fallen drastically in the local mandis since the last few days.

This week, tur dal has declined by Rs 200 a quintal, masor by Rs 300 and urad by Rs 150 a quintal respectively.

With sharp fall in domestic demand and arrival of new moong and moong dal consignments in the spot market, prices have plunged to Rs 6,200-6,300 a quintal from last week's Rs 7,000-7,400 a quintal.

Traders here do not foresee any sharp rise in pulses' prices as the monsoon is getting active and the production is expected to increase.

In the local mandi, chana dal was quoted at Rs 2,600-2,700, registering a fall of Rs 20. Chana dal (medium) was sold at Rs 2,800-2,825, and chana dal (bold) was quoted at Rs 2,900-2,925 a quintal.

Masor dal was quoted at Rs 3,925-4,150, down Rs 75 from the previous close; tur dal at Rs 5,800-5,900; tur dal (sawa number) at Rs 5,250-5,300 (a decline of Rs 75); tuar dal (markewali) at Rs 6,300 (up Rs 100) were the other per-quintal prices on Wednesday.

Moong dal was quoted at Rs 6,200-6,300 a quintal and moong monger was sold at Rs 7,200-7,345.

According to traders, pulse prices in the past one week have decline by 10 per cent due to weak demand in domestic market.

Considerng the arrival of new moong in the market, traders expect prices to fall by Rs 200-300 a quintal.

In the local market, new moong quoted at Rs 5,525 a quintal and chana (kanta) at Rs 2,250 a quintal. The price of tur in the local mandi fell by Rs 100-150 a quintal.

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Exporters' buying helps castor gain

Rajkot, July 28

Castor futures gained on Wednesday despite good rains and higher sowing as stockists and exporters built up fresh positions and arrivals dwindled.

Castor September futures on Rajkot Commodity Exchange gained Rs 22 to close at Rs 3,694 a quintal compared with the previous closing of Rs 3,672. Spot castor increased by Rs 12.50 to Rs 3,540.

Arrivals decreased slightly in Gujarat and were at 6,000-7,000 bags of 55 kg. The price was Rs 710-720 for 20 kg.

In the Saurashtra region, arrivals were 700 bags and the price was Rs 680-694. Fresh positions were built in the futures market as the price of August Benchmark contract on NCDEX increased Rs 30 a quintal to Rs 3,775 a quintal.

Castorseed prices gained by over Rs 20 a quintal at major mandis in today's trading and quoted at Rs 3,590 a quintal at Disa mandi.

According to market sources, the current price is quite low compared with the all-time high of around Rs 3,760/quintal. Lower price attracted fresh buying by exporters.

An RCX trader said: “The market is likely to witness volatility in the next few days as the demand could fall if the prices increase and vice-versa.”

According to Government data, 66,000 hectares have been brought under castor crop currently in Gujarat compared with 49,700 hectares in the same period last year.

According to an Ahmedabad-based trader, with higher prices and arrival of rain, castor acreage in the State is likely to increase 25 per cent.

On NCDEX, August contracts increased Rs 30 a quintal for castorseed to Rs 3,775, while September contracts gained Rs 31.50 at Rs 3,745.

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Sugar drops as mills blink on base price

Mumbai, July 28

Sugar prices dropped sharply on Wednesday as mills started to sell below the base price of Rs 2,700 a quintal fixed last Thursday.

Parity between resale delivery and direct purchase from mill, the trading volume was low.

On Wednesday the spot price dropped Rs 30 a quintal for S-grade and Rs 75-80 for M- grade. Mr Tokershi Dedhia of Surya traders said that spot markets' lukewarm response led to similar decline in naka and tender delivery rates on the Vashi wholesale market.

From Tuesday evening, mills have started offering at reduced price (almost Rs 125 to Rs 150 below their base price). On Wednesday, mills offered S-grade at Rs 2,650.

On Wednesday, Vashi market witnessed arrivals at 23-55 truckloads (10 tonnes each) and lifting was 45-47 truckloads. All market players are waiting for the August free sale announcement, said Mr Hiren Dedhia.

According to the Sugar merchants Association on Monday, the spot market rate for S-grade was Rs 2,760 -2,790 a quintal. M-grade was at Rs 2,780-2,880.

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Slack demand softens wheat

Karnal, July 28

Wheat prices ruled unchanged at the levels of Rs 1,195 a quintal on lukewarm demand. Prices had touched Rs 1,210 a quintal last week. A new Desi wheat variety, kitchen queen new marka, of Madhya Pradesh, has been introduced in the grain market.

On Wednesday, the Dara variety, mainly used by flour mills, was quoted Rs 1,180-1,195 a quintal, the fine variety ruled around Rs 1,210 and Tohfa variety of Madhya Pradesh ruled at Rs 2,190. The new variety has been introduced here by the RN Traders of Guna (Madhya Pradesh).The brought 50 quintals stock. The variety was quoted at Rs 2,100 a quintal.

Lokwan variety was quoted at Rs 1,810; Angoor variety between Rs 2,110 and Rs 2,130 a quintal; Nano variety was quoted Rs 2,045, while the Kangan and Parle-G variety ruled around Rs 2,160.

Around 250 quintals of Dara variety arrived on Wednesday and the stocks were lifted by the small atta chaki millers and the local traders at Rs 1,195 a quintal as against last year's Rs 1,210.

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Pipped on home soil

Shelf life dictates:A worker unloading apples imported from Chile at a cold storage in the Kothapet Fruit Market at Gaddiannaram near Hyderabad. Large-scale imports have affected the sales of domestic varieties coming from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. A crate of domestic apple sells at about Rs 600 but retailers lapped up the foreign variety, selling at over Rs 700, for its shelf life.

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Pepper futures fall sharply

G. K. Nair

Kochi, July 28

Pepper futures market, which shot up steeply on Tuesday, fell sharply on Wednesday to correct itself, according to market sources.

Bearish reports of lower offers from Indonesia and Vietnam aided the fall. In the morning, rumours were in the air that Indonesia was ready to sell Lampong Asta at $ 4,000 a tonne (c&f), Kochi, which led to the sharp fall. However, the market recovered marginally and closed much below the previous close.

Unconfirmed reports said Indonesia was quoting $ 4,150 a tonne (c&f), Kochi. But the total cost of the imported material at the offered rate would cross $ 4,600 a tonne when 15 per cent value-addition cost is added.

In that case why should one import when exchange-certified and packed material is available at Rs 208 a kg, which will also work out to around $ 4,600 a tonne. Imports would not be attractive, market sources told Business Line.

Vietnam was offering 500 GL black pepper at $ 3,800- $ 3,900 a tonne (f.o.b). But, the material needs to be checked by the authorities for quality, mainly about the presence of Salmonella, moisture and dust content, they said.

August contract on the NCDEX was down by Rs 506 to close at Rs 20,820 a quintal. September and October fell by Rs 458 and Rs 447 respectively to close at Rs 21,110 and Rs 21,310 a quintal. Total turnover increased by 7,452 tonnes to 36,841 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 456 tonnes to 20,298 tonnes showing heavy liquidation and switching over.

August open interest fell by 1,751 tonnes to 11,154 tonnes while September increased by 1,403 tonnes. October declined by 32 tonnes to 1,098 tonnes. Spot prices, in tandem with the futures trend, dropped by Rs 200 to close at Rs 20,100 (ungarbled) and Rs 20,600 MG 1 a quintal.

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Lower offerings at Coonoor tea auctions

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, July 28

An analysis of the listing by brokers shows that a volume of 16.92 lakh kg will be offered for sale No: 30 at the auctions of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held on Thursday and Friday. It is the second lowest volume of the last six weeks.

It is 91,000 kg less than last week's offer but as much as 1.65 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

LEAF AND DUST

Of the 16.92 lakh kg on offer, 11.51 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 5.41 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 15.87 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 1.05 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades.