THE HINDU

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060157320500.htm

---

South Australia offers expertise in water management

Delegation to explore possibilities of joint ventures with Indian organisations

---

CHENNAI: With its experience in handling water crises through public-private partnerships, South Australia can help India in its water management programmes, according to representatives of the Water Industry Alliance from the State.

Joe Flynn, CEO of the alliance, who is leading a delegation to India to explore possibilities of joint ventures with Indian organisations, said South Australia had developed expertise in water technology due to extreme scarcity.

While countries such as Israel too boasted of innovations in the field, the Australian experience in sharing of river water between States and its concerns with addressing environmental issues mirrored India's approach to solving the water crisis, he said.

Apart from technological innovations, South Australia had relied on PPPs and the separation of land and water rights to ensure efficient use of water. “Creating a market with trading of water rights similar to commodities trading has also helped in efficient resource management,” he said.

A.K.Tareen, senior trade commissioner – India, Government of South Australia, said the delegation, which also plans to visit New Delhi, Ahmedabad and Mumbai, held discussions with officials from Metrowater, Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board and the Public Works Department.

As Tamil Nadu is a "sister State" of South Australia, there was interest in learning about techniques used by South Australia in managing water for irrigation, drinking supply and also sewage treatment, he said.

Brian Hayes, chairman, Australia-India Business Council, said the companies that were working under the Water Industry Alliance had the full backing of the South Australian government and invited companies in India to work closely with them.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060161970300.htm

---

Madurai milk producers' cup of woes overflowing

Demand for revival of Kappalur cattle feed unit

Photo: K. Ganesan

locked:The defunct Aavin cattle feed plant at Kappalur in Madurai district.

MADURAI: Milk producers in Madurai district have been complaining against the Madurai District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, popularly referred to as Madurai Aavin, for the last few months at the farmers' grievance meetings held at the Collectorate. Besides seeking an increase in milk procurement price, they have been demanding revival of the defunct cattle feed unit at Kappalur and an end to the “corruption and irregularities” in bulk milk coolers.

The milk suppliers were being taken for a ride by those managing the bulk milk coolers (BMC), alleged S. Muthupandi, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Milk Producers' Association. “The fat content of milk supplied by individuals is not tested at the time of supply. Instead, the payment is made on average fat content of the milk supplied by all the members at the BMC,” he said.

Suppliers cheated

“Individual milk suppliers are deliberately shown low fat content,” he said. “Since the BMCs are managed by influential people, the poor farmer is not able to question them. We have been insisting that Aavin employees are deployed there to set things right,” he said.

Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association district president Devaraj wanted testing of milk samples of individuals at the time of supply to prevent corruption.

Mr. Muthupandi alleged that milk was being diverted to private players from the BMC since the accounts there were not managed properly. Many suppliers had gone to private players as the procurement price of milk had gone down with the “reduced” fat-content. “This has led to a fall in total procurement in Madurai Aavin substantially,” he said.

Aavin milk was in great demand among consumers for the guarantee on purity and quality it offered, he said. However, of late, majority of the hoteliers had switched over to private milk after Aavin stopped the sale of full cream milk. Other quality of milk did not suit the hoteliers' requirements. “Neither there is the desired quality nor proper marketing from their side. Curd of Aavin milk is not thick enough after the fat content came down,” said president of Madurai District Hotels' Association K.L. Kumar.

Cattle feed plant

The farmers have also demanded that the Aavin should revive its cattle feed plant at Kappalur. “We used to get cattle feed with 50 per cent subsidy which made our occupation a profitable proposition. But it remains closed for many years,” Mr. Muthupandi said. The Government could sell the feed at a subsidised rate because of its bulk purchase of raw materials.

Responding to the farmers at the recent grievance meeting, Collector C. Kamaraj said that efforts would be taken to bring fodder from Erode cattle feed plant. He also instructed officials to test milk samples from individuals for fat content. Efforts were also taken to increase the number of milch animals by giving bank loans to members of self-help groups.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060157430500.htm

---

‘Use latest technology'

PERAMBALUR: Farmers should take full advantage of the latest technology in agriculture to increase productivity, said Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment D. Napoleon.

Speaking after inaugurating a seminar-cum-exhibition on ‘Agriculture Techniques,' organised by the Agriculture Department here, Mr. Napoleon spoke about the services being rendered through the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) for propagating the latest advancement in agricultural technology to the farmers.

Earlier, Mr. Napoleon honoured 10 farmers.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060159320300.htm

---

Farmers undergo training

THANJAVUR : A group of 40 farmers from Maharajapuram village near Thiruvaiyaru were given training on pulses production under “Pulses productivity enhancement and stabilisation in Cauvery delta zone” by the Soil and Water Management Research Institute (SWMRI) here recently.

B. Chandrasekaran, Professor and Head of SWMRI said that India has the largest acreage and production of pulses accounting for 37 per cent of the area and 27 per cent of the world's production. The production of pulses has increased in a relatively slower rate than desired in the last two decades. The prospects of import of pulses not being bright, the domestic demand will have to be met by increasing production of pulses. In India productivity of pulses is low because of several constraints.

He outlined various technologies which can be adopted by farmers to increase pulses production in the delta zone. S. Vallal Kannan, Assistant Professor, (Agronomy demonstrated the management strategies for water and weed management in pulses. K. Parameswari, Assistant Professor, (Seed science and technology) gave an overview of quality seed production in pulses and demonstrated the technique of designer seeds in pulses. S. Suganya, Assistant Professor, (Soil science and agricultural chemistry) briefed the nutrient management practices and soil analysis techniques. Farmers interacted with scientists and got their doubts cleared.

V.G. Mathirajan, Assistant Professor, (Entomology) explained about the various pest management techniques. An exposure visit to National Pulses Research Centre at

Vamban in Pudukottai district was organised, said a press release issued by SWMRI here on Monday.

Business Standard
Tuesday, Jun 01, 2010

Crop sowing to 'gather pace' with timely rain

Bloomberg / Kochi June 1, 2010, 0:58 IST

Monsoon, which accounts for four-fifths of India's annual rains, reached the mainland in southern Kerala a day earlier than schedule, aiding timely sowing of rice, sugarcane, soybean and cotton crops.

Conditions are "favourable" for further advance of rains into interior and coastal Karnataka in the next 48 hours, the India Meteorological Department(IMD) said in a statement today. The rainy season typically begins on the first of June.

Monsoon rains are critical to the South-Asian nation, where farming accounts for as much as a fifth of the economy.

India's expansion slowed in the December quarter after the weakest rainfall since 1972 last year damaged crops and pushed up sugar prices in New York to near a three-decade high.

"Sowing will gather pace with the on-schedule arrival of the monsoon," said Veeresh Hiremath, an analyst with Karvy Comtrade in Hyderabad.

Adequate showers may help PM Manmohan Singh tame food inflation, which climbed near an 11-year high this year, and pare imports of food staples.

The country overtook China as the world’s biggest palm oil buyer and became the largest sugar importer after last year’s drought led to shortages.

The South-Asian nation has been a net buyer of sugar since the 2008-2009 season, after cane farmers switched to wheat and oilseeds.

Cane has been planted in 4.29 million hectares, five per cent more than a year-ago, the farm ministry said last week.

“Sugar acreage is sure to increase but overall production will depend on how the cane crop fares in Uttar Pradesh,” said Hiremath, referring to the nation’s biggest cane-growing state, that was among the worst affected by dry weather last year.

Cyclone

Tropical cyclone Laila, which lashed the South-Indian coast on May 20, stalled the progress of the monsoon after it arrived over the eastern coast three days ahead of schedule on May 17. The weather office on May 14 predicted rains will set over Kerala from May 30. Monsoon showers may advance to the coastal areas of south Konkan and Goa in the week ending June 10 and the heat wave in northern and central states may abate with pre-monsoon showers, the weather bureau said in today’s statement. Rains this year may be 98 per cent of the 50-year average, IMD said on April 23. The bureau, which failed to predict last year’s drought, considers rainfall to be normal if it is between 96 and 104 per cent of the long-range average.

Farm sector records lowest growth in 5 yrs at 0.2%

Press Trust of India / New Delhi May 31, 2010, 15:07 IST

The country's agriculture sector recorded the lowest growth in five years, at 0.2 per cent, in fiscal year 2009-10 due to widespread drought. Agriculture and its allied sectors had grown at 1.6 per cent in 2008-09.

However, dismal as the farm sector's growth seemed to be, it was not as low as expectations set for the fiscal. It had grown by 0.2 per cent, though the earlier estimation -- arrived at by the Central Statistics Organisation -- had pegged it at a contraction of 0.2 per cent.

Chief statistician Pranab Sen said, "As far as agriculture is concerned, the data keeps changing. When we came up with advanced estimates, we had practically no figures for rabi (winter) crops."

"Now that we have the sowing figures for rabi, we have better growth figures. However, this is partly because of the upward revision of kharif (summer) crop estimates," he added.

The upward revision in the agriculture sector's growth was mainly due to a slight improvement in the kharif production of rice, wheat, cotton and sugarcane -- even as drought hit nearly half the country.

According to the third advance estimate, rice output in 2009-10 improved to 89.31 million tonnes from the earlier estimate of 87.56 million tonnes, while wheat production rose to 80.98 million tonnes from 79.06 million tonnes.

Similarly, the sugarcane production estimate was revised upward to 274.66 million tonnes from the earlier projection of 251.27 million tonnes. Cotton output estimates improved to 22.83 million bales, from 22.31 million bales of 170 kg each.

The weak monsoon had impacted farm production mainly in the third quarter of the last fiscal, as it declined by 1.8 per cent. In 2008-09 also, farm production had contracted in the third quarter -- by 1.4 per cent.

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said, "(in) Third quarter, monsoon had adverse impact (on agriculture)."

In the fourth quarter of last fiscal, agriculture and allied sectors grew by 0.7 per cent against 3.3 per cent a year ago. While it expanded by 0.9 per cent against 2.4 per cent in the second quarter, it grew by 1.9 per cent against 3.2 per cent in the first one.

The agriculture sector contributed around 17 per cent to the country's total economy in the 2009-10 fiscal.

Economy to grow more than 8.5% in FY11: FM

Reuters / New Delhi May 31, 2010, 11:28 IST

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said today that growth momentum would continue and the gross domestic product would grow more than 8.5 per cent in the 2010-11 fiscal year.

He was speaking to reporters after official data showed the economy grew 8.6 per cent from a year earlier in the March quarter and 7.4 per cent for the 2009-10 year.

Business Line

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060152760100.htm

---

Farm sector is key to 8-8.5% growth this fiscal

K.R. Srivats

New Delhi, May 31

The economy could grow between 8 and 8.5 per cent in 2010-11, but much will depend on how agriculture performs in 2010-11, says Dr C. Rangarajan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

"If agriculture performs very well in 2010-11 and grows by four per cent, then this itself could add one percentage point to the GDP growth even if manufacturing and services performance continue to remain at the same level.

"One can expect 8-8.5 per cent GDP growth for the current fiscal depending on what happens to agriculture," Dr Rangarajan told Business Line soon after the GDP numbers for 2009-10 were released here on Monday.

Official data released by the Central Statistical Organisation pegged the agriculture growth for 2009-10 at 0.2 per cent (1.6 per cent). Asked if the authorities' had overestimated the kharif crop failure in 2009-10, he replied in the negative.

"I think a better rabi crop has lifted the agricultural and overall performance, especially in the fourth quarter," Dr Rangarajan said.

Agriculture grew by 0.7 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2009-10 (negative growth of 1.8 per cent in the December quarter).

He also expressed confidence that manufacturing sector growth for 2010-11 would at least maintain the growth level of 10.8 per cent recorded for the entire 2009-10.

Date:01/06/2010 URL: http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060152530400.htm

---

2009-10 turns out not all that bad for farm sector

Drought impacted agricultural production but not farm incomes.

(in Rs cr)

	Agriculture*		Manufacturing	
	2004-05 Prices	Current Prices	2004-05 Prices	Current Prices
Q1	1,54,879 (1.9)	2,22,635 (8.0)	1,64,277 (3.8)	2,07,466 (5.2)
Q2	1,24,247 (0.9)	1,88,666 (9.5)	1,75,583 (9.1)	2,25,003 (9.2)
Q3	2,00,824 (-1.8)	3,19,826 (11.5)	1,83,325 (13.8)	2,38,296 (18.0)
Q4	1,71,951 (0.7)	2,73,466 (17.3)	1,96,790 (16.3)	2,60,336 (24.6)
Fiscal	6,51,901 (0.2)	10,04,594 (11.8)	7,19,975 (10.8)	9,31,101 (14.4)

*Includes forestry & fishing; Figures in brackets represent % year-on-year growth.

Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, May 31

The year 2009-10 was supposedly a bad year for Indian agriculture, given the worst ever monsoon since 1972.

This is partly reflected in the 0.2 per cent growth registered by the farm sector (inclusive of forestry and fishing) in real terms, as per the Central Statistical Organisation's latest revised estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for last fiscal.

The virtual stagnation in agricultural output contrasted with a 10.8 per cent increase in manufacturing, i.e. production from factories.

However, real output growth (or lack of it) is not what ultimately counts, at least for the producer. For him, it is the increase in the value of produce — which is a function of output as well as price — that matters. This value, measured in current prices, is the income that accrues to him.

The value of agricultural output in current prices rose by 11.8 per cent during 2010-11, crossing the Rs 10 lakh crore mark for the first time. This was not substantially below the corresponding 14.4 per cent growth in manufacturing output value.

Simply put, last year's drought impacted agricultural production, but not farm incomes.

The loss (or near-zero growth) of output was more than offset by higher prices, as captured by the large gap between the ‘nominal' (11.8 per cent) and ‘real' (0.2 per cent) increase in agricultural GDP. So, while food inflation definitely hurt India, it may have been a blessing in disguise.

On the other hand, the 14.4 per cent growth in manufacturing income was predominantly contributed by increased output (up 10.8 per cent), with corporates not having as much leeway to raise prices.

It is only the last couple of months that have witnessed India Inc regain some pricing power — rising non-food manufacturing inflation and higher capacity utilisation levels reported by firms being proof of this.

The effect that favourable terms of trade had for agriculture during 2009-10 can be seen in the accompanying table, which compares farm GDP with manufacturing GDP in both real as well as current value terms.

While in constant 2004-05 prices, the value of agricultural output (Rs 6,51,901 crore) stood below that of manufacturing (Rs 7,19,975 crore), it was just the other way (Rs 10,04,594 crore versus Rs 9,31,101 crore) measured in absolute current value.

And this pattern was observed in all but one quarter.

Date:01/06/2010 URL: http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060150831800.htm

---

The falling share of public sector units in pulses imports

Quantum of PSU imports

(in lakh tonnes)

Agency	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Nafed	2.49	1.44	1.11
STC	3.64	2.41	1.15
PEC	3.88	3.74	2.64
MMTC	2.84	1.79	1.05
PSU Total Imports	12.85	9.38	6.95
India's Total Imports	28.37	24.82	34.00
% share of PSU	45.3	37.8	20.0

(Source: Government of India)

G. Chandrashekhar

Mumbai, May 31

One of government's strategies to augment supplies and control rising prices of essential food commodities has been to encourage a greater role for public sector undertakings (PSUs) in import and sale of such foods in the domestic market. The Government seems to have placed great confidence in the ability of its own parastatals to make interventions at appropriate times and deliver real benefits to the intended beneficiary — the aam aadmi.

However, going by the price situation of the past several months, the objective of containing spiralling prices of essential commodities is far from achieved.

Imports on the rise

In case of pulses — where the country faces chronic shortage because of rising demand unmatched by sluggish output — the dependence on imports has been rising in recent years. In response, the Government directed the public sector trading corporations (STC, MMTC and PEC) as well as agri-business cooperative Nafed to import and sell pulses to augment supplies.

This is in addition to free imports by the private trade.

It was also mandated that in such operations of these public sector agencies, losses, if any, of up to 15 per cent would be reimbursed by the Government. No such concession was given to the private sector though Government trading agencies and private trade both operate in the same marketplace, conduct business on similar commercial terms, purchase from same origins and in fact compete with each other.

India's pulses imports have been rising volumetrically in recent years in response to expanding domestic demand and virtually stagnant production. From 22.7 lakh tonnes (lt) in 2006-07, pulses import volumes climbed to 28.4 lt the following year; but dipped to 24.8 lt in 2008-09. In the last fiscal 2009-10, imports totalled a record high 34 lt. Despite a clear mandate from the Government to import and grant of concession for bridging business losses up to 15 per cent, the volume of imports undertaken by these Government agencies in the last three years has actually declined both volumetrically and in percentage terms.

It is far from clear why PSUs have failed to live up to the confidence the Centre reposed on them and refused to rise to the occasion.

Import volume of each one of them in the last three years has fallen. Perhaps an independent enquiry into what dictated their commercial decisions and why they shied away from importing more may throw some light on the issue.

Looking at these numbers — falling import volumes and market share — some may be tempted to exonerate the PSUs by suggesting that their role was rather limited and, therefore, cannot be blamed for the price situation.

Distorting effect

This may not be the right way to look at the issue. If anything, despite falling volumes, the general working of PSUs — issue of tenders, actual imports, storage and disposal — have had a distorting effect on the world and domestic markets.

Both within the country and outside, many players in the pulses market have talked to this correspondent in confidence about how the working style of Indian PSUs unsettles the market, unnecessarily sends bullish market signals to overseas suppliers, favours large local traders while keeping the small traders away and so on.

These government agencies have so far collected more than Rs 300 crore towards reimbursement of losses (up to 15 per cent of landed cost). The amount reimbursed was Rs 143.9 crore in 2008-09 and spurted to Rs 168 crore during last fiscal 2009-10.

It is necessary to review and redefine the role of PSUs in international trade, especially in food commodities. They can play an important role in helping meet government objectives; but unfettered and unregulated freedom can prove counter-productive, like in the case of pulses.

The Commerce Ministry must set guidelines and hold these corporations (STC, MMTC, PEC) and their officials accountable.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060151712100.htm

---

Pepper futures bounce back

G.K. Nair

Kochi, May 31

Pepper futures, which witnessed volatility on Monday, moved up in correction at close after falling sharply on Saturday. Those who sold at the week-end covered today while many switched over to nearby position. This has aided the prices to move up.

Besides, Vietnam was reportedly steady to firm and this also helped the futuresto move up.On the other hand, “just buying and selling” on the screen increased the turnover significantly today, market sources told Business Line.

There were no sellers for spot pepper. Karnataka was offering its pepper at Rs 155 delivered anywhere in India and it was available in the northern parts of Kerala also.

Meanwhile, major stockists in the main centres in north India such as Jaipur, Gwalior, Indore and Delhi were selling pepper at Rs 152 a kg.

They had bought it cheap from Karnataka when it was being sold in Sakleshpur and Chickmagalur at Rs 125 – Rs 135 a kg, trading sources said.

In Kerala, the growers and primary market dealers, who could afford to hold on, were not selling at lower levels. They sold only when the prices moved up to their expected levels. June contract on NCDEX was up by Rs 140 to close at Rs 16,559 a quintal.

July and August also went up by Rs 209 and Rs 165 respectively to close at Rs 16,810 and Rs 16,981 a quintal. Total turnover shot up by 5,198 tonnes to close at 13,409 tonnes.

Total open interest moved up by only 80 tonnes to 16,769 tonnes. June open interest dropped by 874 tonnes while that of July went up by 929 tonnes to 3,483 tonnes. August scaled up by 15 tonnes. Spot prices for want of sufficient buying support remained steady at previous levels of Rs 15,500 (un-garbled) and Rs 16,000 (MG 1) a quintal.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:

http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060150721900.htm

---

Tight cardamom supply fetches record prices

G.K. Nair

Kochi, May 31

The individual auction average price of cardamom hit a record high of Rs 1,421 a kg last week on tight supply amid good demand.

Non-availability from other sources coupled with moderate growth in domestic demand has pushed up the prices , trading sources told Business Line.

Supplies from the other major producer, Guatemala, were limited last year due to poor crop because of unfavourable weather. Total arrivals at the Sunday auction conducted by the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Cooperative (KCPMC) were 16 tonnes and the entire quantity was sold.

North Indian buyers were actively buying. Exporters have stayed away since prices crossed Rs 1,100 a kg. The maximum price stood at Rs 1,551 a kg while the minimum price was Rs 921 a kg, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told Business Line.

He said the individual auction average price during last week vacillated between Rs 1,350/kg and Rs 1,421/kg as the arrivals remained thin. Total arrivals during the week were 92 tonnes against over 300 tonnes during the peak harvesting season. Cardamom Planters Association (CPA) has suspended its auction at Bodinayakannur on Mondays due to very thin arrivals.

Since there has been a continuous squeeze in the arrivals as the days passed by, there is every possibility of the auctioneers suspending their auctions from mid-June for about a month. It would resume before the beginning of Tamil month ‘Adi' on July 17, auction sources said.

Total arrivals during the current season from August 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010 stood at 9,387 tonnes. Of this, 9,214 tonnes of cardamom were sold. Arrivals and sales in the same period last season were 9,665 tonnes and 9,240 tonnes respectively.

Weighted average price as on May 31 was Rs 838.50/kg, up from Rs 526.35 a kg same day last year. Prices quoted for graded varieties on Monday (Rs/kg): AGEB 1,480-1,490; AGB 1,365 -1,380; AGS 1,265-1,275; AGS1- 1,235-1,245; Prices quoted in the local market at Bodinayakannur were AGEB 1,470-1,475; AGB 1,330-1,345; AGS 1,255-1,265; AGS1 1,225-1,235.

The weather conditions in growing areas remained so far favourable. “The real southwest monsoon has not yet touched this belt so far. But, it has been cloudy through out the week without any showers,” growers said. Good rains punctuated by sunshine are good for the crop and if such a situation persisted then a reasonably good crop can be expected this year, they said.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:

http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060150932100.htm

---

Glut depresses potato prices in Bengal

Shobha Roy

Kolkata, May 31

Close to ten per cent of the total quantity of potatoes stored in the cold storages across West Bengal have been released into the market, leading to a further fall in prices. Potato prices (Jyoti variety) in the wholesale market were hovering around Rs 360-380 a quintal on Monday.

The wholesale price of the tuber was at about Rs 425 per quintal just about a fortnight ago, said Mr Mr Patit Paban De, Member, West Bengal Cold Storage Association.

“More than ten per cent of the total 58 lakh tonne potatoes stored across various cold storages have been released into the market. Though farmers are incurring a loss to the tune of about Rs 100-150 per quintal but still they are selling it off in huge quantities now as they anticipate a further fall in prices,” Mr De told Business Line.

Production cost

The cost of production of potato is about Rs 300 a quintal and the cost of cold storage is about Rs 160-180 a quintal. “It has already exceeded the wholesale price the commodity is fetching. Farmers are therefore trying to curtail their losses as much as possible,” said a potato trader.

The export of the commodity from West Bengal to other states and countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Malaysia was also proving to be difficult due to the bumper production of the crop in most regions and the poor market for the tuber, Mr De pointed out.

Date:01/06/2010 URL:
http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/01/stories/2010060150741900.htm

---

Karnataka may shift away from cereals this kharif

State raises sowing targets for oilseeds, pulses.

Less attractive: A file photo of variety of cereals on display. Area under cereals is expected to fall marginally this year, implying that the increase in acreage will be entirely on cash crops.

A. Srinivas

Bangalore, May 31Following the recent pre-monsoon showers, the Karnataka Government, earlier this month, raised its kharif sowing targets for oilseeds and pulses in particular, while reducing that for cereals.

Sugarcane and tobacco kharif acreage is anticipated to increase as a result, by 16,000 hectares each, whereas cotton is expected to fall by 10,000 hectares.

Hike in targeted area

The targeted area under kharif in 2010-11 has been raised by over two lakh hectares (lh), or from 72.5 lakh tonnes (lt) to 74.63 lt; of this, the area under oilseeds has been suddenly revised upwards by one lt to 17 lt and that under pulses by 1.6 lt to 15.1 lt.

The targeted kharif area under cereals has been reduced from 35.51 lt to 34.81 lt.

For 2010-11, the area sown (kharif, rabi and summer) has been pegged at about 115 lh against actual sown area of 112.17 lh in 2009-10. Yet, area under foodgrains (cereals and pulses) is expected to fall marginally this year, implying that the increase in acreage will be entirely on account of oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and tobacco.

Foodgrains output

Expecting good rain right through the year, the State Agriculture Department has pegged foodgrains output in 2010-11 at 123.7 lakh tonnes, an increase of 15.6 per cent over last year's food output. The area under foodgrains in kharif, rabi and summer seasons was 81.2 lakh hectares in 2009-10, against an estimated 80 lakh hectares this year, implying that foodgrain yields are expected to rise.

Estimated oilseeds, sugarcane, tobacco and cotton output are as follows (rise over last year's actual output in parenthesis): 17.6 lt (10 per cent), 205 lt (minus 5 per cent), 0.85 lt (18 per cent) and 9.18 lakh bales (37.3 per cent), respectively.

However, a gap between targeted and actual production was a feature of 2007-08 and 2008-09, in the case of both food and cash crops.

Tobacco has so far been sown in 92,000 hectares, which accounts for 40 per cent of the targeted area. Cotton has been planted in 57,000 hectares, which accounts for 10 per cent of the targeted area. Sugarcane coverage so far, over 20,000 hectares, accounts for 3 per cent of the targeted area.

Jowar has been sown in 62,000 hectares, which is 12 per cent of the targeted area.

Pre-monsoon showers

Good pre-monsoon showers in April have aided the sowing of early kharif rainfed crops such as jowar, short duration pulses (greengram, blackgram, cowpea), sesamum, sunflower, cotton and tobacco in the districts of Mysore, Chamarajanagar, Mandya, Tumkur, Hassan, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Ramnagar and Kodagu districts.

The coverage of early kharif sowing this year, at 2.2 lakh hectares, is much higher than the usual area covered by mid-May of 1.25 lakh hectares. “The more-than-normal pre-monsoon showers have aided land preparation and application of manure in coastal regions, northern regions, parts of Malnad and the southern districts,” Dr K.V. Sarvesh, Director (National Food Security Mission), Department of Agriculture, said.

Sowing of kharif crops in these regions normally commences after the onset of the SouthWest monsoon in the first week of June.

Fertiliser requirement

Fertiliser requirement for kharif 2010 has been projected at 23.6 lt, comprising six lt of DAP, 2.9 lt of MOP, eight lt of urea and 5.7 lt of complexes.

State Agriculture Department officials said, “Although the Centre allocates sufficient quantity of fertilisers for the State, rake availability has at times affected fertiliser movement.” Most of the fertiliser would be required in June and July, when 70 per cent of the kharif sowing is done. Another 18 per cent of sowing is done in August, and 8 per cent as “late kharif” in September. Stocks of over four lt are available with the State, officials said.

Bhoo-chetana programme

However, Dr H. Shivanna, Director, Research, University of Agriculture Sciences, Bangalore, said, “Fertilisers have lost some of their effectiveness, as a result of depletion of soil nutrients.”

“To address this problem, the Bhoo-Chetana programme, to enhance the soil quality in rain fed regions, is being implemented in 15 districts,” Dr Sarvesh said.

State agriculture department officials said that as against the kharif requirement of 7.68 lakh quintals of seed, arrangements have been made for the supply of 10.43 lakh quintals. Of the seeds requirement of 7.68 lakh quintals, cereals account for 4.3 lakh quintals (mainly paddy, maize and bajra) and oilseeds (mainly groundnut and sunflower) another 2.77 lakh quintals.

Contingency plan

Pulses and cotton make up the rest. In the event of erratic monsoon behaviour, a contingency plan will come into effect after July, officials said.

Some of excess seed stocks of nearly three lakh quintals is meant to address this situation. Ragi and horsegram are promoted as contingency crops in the southern region, and bajra and sunflower in the north.

Contingency plans do not change from year to year; but a change every five years or so can be expected, officials said.

hindustantimes

Tue,01 Jun 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Jun 1

Max Min

39.4° | 27.7°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 40%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 05:41

Sunset: 18:31

Barometer: 1004.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Jun 2

Max Min

39° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Jun 3	**Jun 4**	**Jun 5**	**Jun 6**	**Jun 7**
39° | 29°	40° | 29°	40° | 29°	40° | 29°	39° | 29°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy