

Cucumber is cool, but...



The Hindu TRY PICKLING THEM: Cucumbers. Photo: Arunangsu Roy Chowdhury
[lifestyle and leisure recipes](#)

The high water content in cucumbers gives them a unique moist and chill taste. Cucumbers are cylindrical in shape and commonly range in length from six to nine inches, although they can be smaller or much larger. Their skin, which ranges in colour from green to white may either be smooth or ridged, depending on the variety. The flesh is pale green, dense yet aqueous and crunchy. There are numerous edible, fleshy seeds.

As cucumbers are sensitive to heat, choose ones that are displayed in refrigerated cases in the market. They should be firm, rounded at the edges, and their colour should be bright medium to dark green. Avoid cucumbers that are yellow, puffy, have sunken water-soaked areas, or are wrinkled at their tips. Thinner cucumbers will generally have less seeds than those that are thicker. While many people are used to purchasing

cucumbers that have a waxy coating, choose those that do not have this coating, so the nutrient-rich skin can be eaten without consuming the wax and chemicals trapped in it.

Cucumbers are a rich source of vitamin C and the mineral molybdenum. They are also rich in vitamin A, potassium, manganese, folate, dietary fibre and magnesium and contain the important mineral silica.

Now, for a recipe.

Cucumber pickle

Ingredients

White vinegar: 70 ml

Water: 70 ml

Sugar: 70 gm

Salt: 5 gm

Cucumbers: 6, small

Onion, coarsely chopped: 45 gm

Red chillies, thinly sliced: 10 gm

Method: In a medium saucepan, combine the vinegar, water, sugar and salt. Cook on medium heat for about three to four minutes, stirring often, until the sugar and salt dissolve. Remove from heat and let the dressing cool to room temperature. Peel the cucumbers and cut them lengthwise into 4 long strips. Slice each strip across into small triangles. (You should have about 3 cups.) Place them in a small serving bowl or in several small serving bowls. Top with the chopped shallots and chillies.

Shortly before serving, pour the cooled dressing over the cucumbers. Serve at room temperature or cover and refrigerate for a day or two; serve cold.

BHOLANATH JHA, Chef de Partie, Taj Connemara

One man's initiative ensures water-security in drought condition



Planting lakhs of trees, designing hundreds of check dams, and evolving new techniques of irrigating tree saplings in dry regions are feats of an out-of-the-box thinker named Mr. Premjibhai Patel, Rajkot, Gujarat.

Mr. Patel's tree planting efforts first started from Rajkot, but soon spread to states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Every morning, carrying a bagful of seeds and a small spade, the farmer planted seeds on field bunds, along road sides, and vacant lands. Individuals and some institutions also volunteered to help in the farmer's effort at ecological restoration.

Since manual seed planting proved laborious, Mr. Patel developed a petrol-driven mechanical blower mounted on a jeep back for broadcasting seeds.

The blower, which cost about Rs 12,000, blows seeds upto a distance of 15 meters, says the farmer. Using the blower he broadcasted 10 tonnes of tamarind seeds in several villages.

Mr. Patel also developed a unique technique for tree planting in drought prone regions of Kutch, Bhuj, and Saurashtra. He selected plastic pipes of about seven inches diameter and 1-1.5 feet height.

“Bore two small holes on opposite sides at the top end of the pipe and place it inside a half foot pit. Keep the root of the seedling next to the pipe inside the pit. Add a mixture of sand, soil and gravel to fill the pipe. Insert a small stick through the two holes at the top of the pipe and remove the pipe. Water poured on the sand reaches the roots of plants without wastage or evaporation,” he explains.

The rate of seedlings survival increases by this method, according to the farmer.

Now Mr. Patel is concentrating on watershed development through an organization called Vruksh Prem Seva Sanstha Trust. The trust works through about 150 nature clubs on nearly 1,000 hectares. The trust launched a campaign in several villages for ground water conservation through well recharge.

“Though the government introduced several schemes to encourage the development of checkdams’ in drought prone regions of Gujarat and offered subsidies, villagers did not evince interest in them because they often considered check dams as government projects. To motivate people to actively participate in building dams and to bring awareness on groundwater recharging I introduced a scheme for people,” says the farmer.

Mr. Patel himself bears the cost of checkdam construction except cement cost. (In some cases the farmer also bore the total cost including cement). Those interested in the scheme contacted him and he personally visited the area to get first hand information about the location and help them construct the dams.

Explaining the checkdam construction method Mr. Premjibhai says:

"I place large stones in the middle of the flowing water and use river sand, stones and cement to fill the gap between the stones. Iron rods are inserted into holes in the stones for added strength. The body wall of the dam is built in such a way that it slopes at an angle of 60 degrees and the width of the top wall maintained at one metre height (height can be increased in future)."

According to the farmer, circular dams are more economical than the straight ones, because the thin walls of the dams make them cost effective.

About 1,500 check dams and 50,000 feet of pipeline for recharging underground wells are his contribution to society.

Mr. Premjibhai's initiative in water conservation ensures water security even in a drought season. Today farmers no longer remain idle even during summer as ground water table has increased considerably and there is timely water availability for agricultural activities. He also bagged the National Water Award recently from the Ministry of Water Resources.

For more information readers can contact Mr. Premjibhai Patel, Fulara Mill Godown, Furniture Gali, Rajmarg, Upleta, Rajkot, mobile: 9426202340.

Black polythene mulch for weed control in mulberry

Being a widely spaced crop, mulberry suffers heavy yield loss due to weed growth which reflects adversely on silkworm cocoon productivity and profit of the farmers and hence it is essential to control it in time.

But under the prevailing situation of labour shortage and hike in wage rate, weed management becomes difficult and the weeding expenditure attributes significant increase in cost of cocoon production. Chemical weed management is not advisable because of its side effects to soil, mulberry and silkworm.

Black polythene sheets

Mulching is an age-old practice especially in horticultural crops in many countries. Though various natural and synthetic materials are suggested, black polythene mulching is found predominant as it is reported very effective in control of weeds in vegetable gardens.

An attempt was therefore made to use black polythene mulch as an alternate weed management tool in mulberry garden.

How to apply

After pruning and application of fertilizers, the space between the mulberry rows is covered even with grown up weeds, using LDPE sheets of 200 gauges and the irrigation is done normally.

The scrap material is cheapest at Rs.15-20 per kg whereas fresh sheet is available in market at Rs. 40-45. It is estimated about 200 kg of sheet is required for one acre of mulberry garden costing about Rs. 3,000 to 8,000 depending upon the quality.

However, the material can be used for years together. As an economic measure farmers can use little quantity to mulch a portion of garden for 7-10 days which is enough to subside entire weed population and can be shifted to other portions subsequently. The mulch is also compatible with drip irrigation system.

Advantages

Photosynthesis of weeds is arrested and they ultimately die as the sheet totally blocks the sun light. Further, black polythene mulch increases soil temperature as well as conserves the soil moisture by preventing the evaporation of water from soil surface.

The method is eco-friendly and effective against all types of weeds in mulberry gardens and found economic under present situation.

N.Sakthivel, B.Mohan

& R. Balakrishna

*Research Extension Center Central Silk Board Srivilliputtur & Regional Sericultural
Research Station Salem, Tamil Nadu*

Business Standard

Thursday, Jun 24, 2010

Tea shortage to worsen as pests damage crop

Bloomberg / June 24, 2010, 0:07 IST



A tea shortage in India may worsen as pest attacks damage plantations, lowering output and boosting prices, according to the world's biggest tea-growing company.

Output in India, the top grower after China, may be less than last year's 979 million kg after excess rain hurt tea shrubs in northeast states, which account for more than 70 per cent of production, Aditya Khaitan, managing director, of McLeod Russel India Ltd., said in an interview on Wednesday.

Reduced supplies may increase costs for companies including Unilever Plc and Tata Tea Ltd., owner of Tetley brands, and lift earnings at producers McLeod and Jayshree

Tea & Industries Ltd. Prices reached a record at the world's biggest auction centers last year after dry weather in Kenya and Sri Lanka cut output.

"It may be a good time to get into tea stocks for short- term gains as prices of good quality tea will start to inch up now," said Anup Ranadive, an analyst with Tower Capital & Securities Ltd. "Last year it was drought that pushed up prices and this year its rain."

A smaller harvest may increase the domestic shortage by 25 per cent to as much as 75 million kg by the end of 2010, Khaitan said. A 100 per cent tax on imports curbs supplies to the market where demand is growing at 3.5 per cent annually, he said. "The market will feel the shortage in the coming months and the trend is looking positive for prices," he said. "We've seen the high point of production and low point of prices."

The average tea price was \$2.43 a kg at the weekly auction held in Kenya's port city of Mombasa on June 14 and 15, 18 per cent more than the \$2.06 a kg a week earlier, African Tea Brokers Ltd. said June 18.

In India, prices have risen by Rs 15-20 a kg from a year ago as producers cover their future needs by purchasing at auctions, Khaitan said. Overseas sales may fall by 10 million kg to 15 million kg from last year's 191 million kg as local demand and prices gain, he said. Production in the four months through April has risen 12 per cent to 162.3 million kg and the trend will reverse in the coming months, Khaitan said.

Less rains check paddy sowing, for now

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai June 24, 2010, 0:02 IST

The slow progress of the southwest monsoon is unlikely to affect the overall paddy sowing area in this kharif season, say experts. Rainfall has been deficient by about five per cent, which is estimated to have curtailed the paddy sowing area less by six per cent than this time last year. But overall acreage is expected to increase with the progress of the monsoon.

The Union agriculture ministry had forecast the total paddy acreage area to expand to 42 million hectares (ha) in 2010-11 as against 36.1 million ha last year, which experts believe is too ambitious.

Since the progress of monsoon is very slow, the acreage area may rise by one or two per cent, not more, said Vijay Setia, President of the All India Rice Exporters' Association. However, he agrees with the official estimate of an output rise by 15 per cent, compared to last year.

GOOD SIGNS		
Year	Production (mn tn)	Yield (kg/ha)
2003-04	88.53	2,078
2007-08	96.69	2,202
2008-09	99.15	2,186
2009-10	87.60	2,425

Source : Agriculture ministry

The US Department of Agriculture had estimated India's total rice output to rise by 16 per cent to 99 million tonnes on normal monsoon expectations.

Last year, total rice output fell 12 per cent to 87.5 mt, owing to a poor monsoon, from a bumper 99.2 mt in 2008-09. About 80-85 per cent of paddy is sown in the kharif season and 15-20 per cent in the rabi season. India is the world's second-largest rice producer.

The Union agriculture ministry says the total area sown was 1.097 million hectares (ha) as on June 18 (375,000 ha more than the previous week), as compared to 1.173 million ha on the same date last year, about 6.5 per cent less. However, sowing is still in a very early stage.

Among states where more area has been planted since last year are Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

Monsoon rainfall begins in most paddy growing areas of North India in the last week of June, when farmers normally commence the trans-planting of paddy sprouts.

The intermittent pre-monsoon stormy rain in states like Punjab, Haryana, UP, Bihar and West Bengal prepared the ground well to sow paddy seeds, for these require some moisture for germination.

As the sprouts grow, the requirement of water increases. Paddy is a rain-fed crop, which requires two to three inches of water-logging in the field through the 90-120 day period for bumper production.

Too early

“It is premature to predict the paddy sowing area at this point, as the entire season is ahead. Paddy sowing will depend on overall rainfall and their distribution. But we can assume that overall sowing will recover as the days progress,” said Sharad Maru, president of the Grain, Rice & Oilseed Merchants Association.

V K Chaturvedi, managing director of Usher Agro, a Mumbai-based rice and wheat miller, said: “Sowing has started for only the summer crop, for harvesting in October, while the seasonal paddy is sown in late June-early July. Hence, sowing for the kharif season is yet to begin to set a trend for the entire year.”

However, a part of the area of sugarcane and oilseeds will be diverted, especially in central and western states, to paddy due to lower realisation in competing crops, Chaturvedi said.

There has also been an increase of Rs 50 a quintal in the minimum support price (MSP). At the beginning of the season, the government raised MSP for common variety rice to Rs 1,000 per qtl and for the Grade-A variety to Rs 1,030 per qtl for the 2010-11 season, against Rs 950 per quintal during the previous season.

Non-basmati rice up on retailers demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 23, 2010, 15:22 IST

In restricted activity, non-basmati rice prices rose by Rs 25 per quintal in the wholesale grains market today on pick up in retailers demand. Elsewhere, the grain prices continued to move in a narrow range in the absence of buying support and settled around previous levels.

Marketmen said pick up in demand from retailers led to a rise in wholesale non-basmati rice prices. In the rice section, rice permal raw and sela prices gained Rs 25 each to Rs 1,750-1,800 and Rs 2,050-2,100 per quintal, respectively.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Wheat MP (desi) 1,750-1,850, wheat dara (for mills) 1,240-1,245 chakki atta (delivery) 1,245-1,250, atta Rajdhani (10 kg) 175, Shakti bhog (10 kg) 175, Roller flour mill 640-660 (50 kg), Maida 750-780 (50 kilos) and Sooji 800-820 (50 kg)

Basmati rice (Lal Quila) 9,300, Shri Lal Mahal 9,300, Super basmati rice 9,000, Basmati common 5,200-5,300, rice Pusa-(1121) 4,550-5,050, Permal raw 1,750-1,800, Permal wand 1,825-1,975, Sela 2,050-2,100 and Rice IR-8-1,550-1,575, Bajra 935-945, Jowar yellow 1,450-1,525, white 2,250-2,300, Maize 975-985, Barley (UP) 1,040-1,060 and Rajasthan 1,080-1,090

Soyabean, palmolein oil up on firm global trend

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 23, 2010, 15:14 IST

Prices of soyabean and palmolein oils rose upto Rs 20 per quintal in the wholesale oils and oilseeds market today on fresh buying by vanaspati millers amid firming global trend. Castor and neem oil in the non-edible section, also showed some improvement on industrial demand.

Traders said fresh buying by vanaspati millers and reports of a rising trend in Malaysia led to a rise in wholesale soyabean and palmolein prices. Meanwhile, palm oil futures for September delivery gained 0.7 per cent to \$741 a metric tonne on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange.

In the edible section, soyabean refined mill delivery (Indore) and soyabean degum (Delhi) rose by Rs 20 and Rs 10 to Rs 4,450 and Rs 4,350, while palmolein (rbd) gained Rs 20 to Rs 4,190 per quintal. Sesame mill delivery also went up by Rs 30 to Rs 5,850 per quintal.

In the non-edible section, castor and neem oils gained Rs 50 each to Rs 7,000-7100 and Rs 3,650-3,750 per quintal, respectively.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Oilseeds: mustard seed 2,500-2,600 and groundnut seed 2,100-2,850

Vanaspati ghee (15 litres tin) 720-830

Edible oils: Groundnut mill delivery (Gujarat) 7,350, groundnut Solvent refined (per tin) 1,220-1,230, Mustard Expeller (Dadri) 4,750, Mustard Pakki ghani (per tin) 665-820, Mustard kachi ghani (per tin) 820-920, Sunflower 6,300, Sesame mill delivery 5,850, Soybean Refined mill delivery (Indore) 4,450 Soyabean degum (Delhi) 4,350, Crude Palm Oil (Ex-kandla) 3,700, Cottonseed mill delivery (Haryana) 4,080, Palmolein (RBD) 4,190, Rice bran (phy) 3,750 and Coconut (per tin) 1,020-1,050

Non-edible oils: Linseed 4,000, Mahuwa 4,000, Castor 7,000-7,100, Neem 3,650-3,750, Rice bran 3,200-3,300 and palm fatty 3,225-3,300

Oilcakes: groundnut de-husk 800-850, sesame 950-1,150, Mustard (new) 1,025-1,050, Mustard 1,200-1,210 and Cottonseed 1,075-1,175

Water woes cut down cotton area in north

Kalpesh Damor / Ahmedabad June 24, 2010, 0:04 IST

While there are expectations of more nationwide cotton acreage this year as compared to last year, given the steep rise in prices, the cumulative area sown in North India till date has been affected due to non-availability of sufficient irrigation.

The acreage in Rajasthan and Haryana has come down, while Punjab has seen an addition of only 29,000 hectares (ha). The North India Cotton Association says the total area under cotton in these three northern states is 1.305 million ha on date, a decline of 142,000 ha from the 1.447 million ha of 2009-10. The crop is irrigation-based in these three states; sowing starts by mid-April and the majority of it is over by the second week of June.

The area under cotton in Haryana and Rajasthan has fallen to 450,000 ha and 330,000 ha in Kharif 2010 from 507,000 ha and 444,000 ha, respectively, in 2009. It has increased in Punjab, to 525,000 hectares as against 496,000 hectares last year, though analysts had earlier been expecting more to be sown.

“There was non-availability of canal water, especially in Haryana and Rajasthan,” said Rakesh Rathi, president, NICA. Earlier, the cotton body was expecting a 5-10% rise in the acreage. Considering the fall in acreage, the cotton production in North India may dip to 3.5-3.7 million bales (a bale is 170 kg) this cotton marketing year from the previous year’s level of four million bales.

However, cotton traders and government officials estimate a rise in the country’s total cotton acreage. Sowing in major growing states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh has begun.

“Around 30,00,000 hectares of land has been covered under cotton crop in the entire country,” said Arun Dalal, owner of an Ahmedabad-based cotton trading firm.

Linear alkyl benzene prices to remain stable

Anindita Dey / Mumbai June 24, 2010, 0:06 IST



Stability expected with a softening bias after growing 17% year-on-year.

The price of linear alkyl benzene (LAB) is likely to remain stable with a softening bias after growing 17 per cent year-on-year. LAB is an essential ingredient for synthetic detergents (soaps and detergents).

According to Capital online data services, almost 95 per cent of LAB production is consumed in the manufacturing of synthetic detergents used by the household sector.

The remaining five per cent is used for other products like liquid detergents, pesticides and paint. Besides, LAB accounts for 45 per cent of costs of synthetic detergents. Top industry sources closely associated with manufacturing of LAB are of the view that the primary reason for the drop in prices is excess supply while the demand remains the same.

“Most of the units using LAB overseas are facing a slowdown in demand and are thus either running below capacity or are shutting down. This squeeze in demand overseas is resulting in dumping by global LAB manufacturers in the Indian market. The domestic manufacturers would have to jostle with the extra supply. Moreover the raw material for LAB, kerosene and benzene, are expected to witness a fall in prices,” the sources said.

The domestic industry had earlier appealed for a safeguard duty or anti-dumping duty on the overseas supply which however was rejected by the government.

Industry sources, however, clarified that the excess supply in the domestic market is however not affecting the operating capacity of domestic manufacturers since the industry adopts a dynamic and competitive pricing strategy.

Sources further clarified that prices may not fall further and would be range-bound since in the domestic market, unlike other products where substitutes are easily available especially in polymers, LAB does not have a viable substitute.

Industry insiders are of the view that prices may remain stable for sometime but may soften after a month by Rs 500-1,000 a tonne. LAB price was at Rs 89,200 a tonne in May after witnessing a year-on-year growth of 17 per cent from Rs 76,200 a tonne a tonne in the year-ago period.

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European firm's basmati pesticide residue claim challenged

Validated protocols not followed in testing, charges AIREA.

Harish Damodaran

Arun S, New Delhi, June 23

After shrimps, table grapes and honey, it is basmati rice shipments from the country that are now facing the heat in the European Union (EU).

Reports by a Hamburg-based private testing firm suggesting elevated residue

levels of Isoprothiolane — a fungicide used to control rice blast disease — in Indian basmati has triggered nervousness among exporters, who fear hostile action by retailers in the 27-member bloc.

LISTED FIRM

The All-India Rice Exporters Association (AIREA) has threatened legal action against the Hamburg firm, which is part of the \$900-million Eurofins Scientific Group. The latter, a leading global bio-analytical services provider, is listed at the NYSE Euronext Paris and Frankfurt exchanges.

AIREA has alleged that Eurofins' test reports have not followed officially validated and peer reviewed methods/protocols, even while sowing confusion among large retailers who tend to withdraw products from their shelves at the slightest doubt.

During 2009-10, India exported an estimated 2.6 million tonnes (mt) of basmati rice valued at almost \$3 billion. Of the total 2.6 mt, EU accounted for roughly 0.3 mt.

Japanese limit, a pointer

Isoprothiolane, significantly, does not fall in the list of 716 pesticides, for which maximum residue limits (MRL) are specified either 'definitively' or 'temporarily' under Annexes II and III of the European Commission Regulation No. 396/2005.

Pesticides not covered under these annexes are automatically assigned a 'default' MRL of 0.01 mg/kg, corresponding to the lowest concentration of their residues that are measurable using routine analysis. Isoprothiolane, thus, attracts an MRL of 0.01 mg/kg under EU regulations. As against this, Japan's Ministry of Health has set the same at 0.1 mg/kg, while being even higher, at 2 mg/kg, in respect of residues in rice.

“The average Japanese consumes 20 times more rice than his European counterpart and still its Government permits a higher tolerance limit for

Isoprothiolane. It only shows how the 0.01 mg/kg MRL has been set arbitrarily without any scientific risk-based studies. On top of it, you have now firms offering to test basmati samples for this fungicide based on the same default MRLs and using methods/protocols not officially validated in this case”, said a Delhi-based exporter.

Validation by others

According to him, any test measurement method must be subjected to ring trials or validation by other laboratories. “Since the issue here concerns Isoprothiolane in basmati, where India is a country of origin, there is every reason to involve our laboratories as well in the exercise. Both Indian and EU regulatory authorities should work towards establishing officially validated testing protocols, failing which we would be victims of testing terrorism. Today it is Isoprothiolane, tomorrow it could be some other chemical or agri-product,” he added.

The exporter claimed that the possibility of excess Isoprothiolane residues in Indian basmati was remote given that hardly any incidence of blast was reported last year. Blast is often associated with good rains, whereas 2009 happened to be a terribly bad monsoon year.

Moreover, Isoprothiolane levels are less of a concern in rice, which is eaten only after cooking — unlike honey or grapes that are consumed raw. That is precisely why the Japanese authorities have fixed a higher MRL for this fungicide in respect of rice.

Incidentally, even in table grapes, the problem chemical — Chlormequat chloride, a plant growth regulator — was assigned the same default level of 0.05 mg/kg under EU regulations.

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Europe slowdown may hit coffee exports

Concern over weak demand for robusta parchment.

A Srinivas

Bangalore, June 23

The impact of Europe's economic crisis on India's coffee exports has started to show, in the form of weak demand for the robusta parchment variety. Major exporters have expressed concern that despite the spurt in robusta and arabica prices on the London and New York coffee exchanges over the last month, sales have not picked up to the anticipated level.

India produces 15,000-20,000 tonnes of robusta parchment, all of which is exported. While the latest crop was expected to be above 25,000 tonnes, growers said there were feeble inquiries for the same. The debt-hit countries — Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal — account for 34 per cent of India's coffee exports.

Mr M.G. Medappa, General Manager, Balanoor Plantations and Industries, an exporter of premium coffee varieties to Europe, said: "The fact that the rise in international arabica prices is not being reflected in the premium commanded by Indian arabicas is an indication of a problem in Europe. Inquiries from roasters in Europe for Indian coffees have become uncertain. Exporters are forced to work on thin margins. A weaker euro is bound to impact coffee demand."

Industry sources said that even suppliers to regular customers in Europe are under pressure to reduce their prices. While the New York prices of arabicas went up from about 130 cents/lb to 159 cents/lb in the first fortnight of this month, there was no significant change in domestic prices over this period, a reflection of slack in export demand that, in turn, affected the domestic market. Dealers in Europe who have committed to consignments are finding excuses to back out, they said.

Dr N.K. Pradeep, President, Karnataka Growers' Federation, said: "There is sluggish world demand in April and May, when the coffee in India is shifted to the curing works. The gap between the farm gate price and the international price widens during this period. However, this year, the gap is Rs 10 per kg against the usual Rs 6-8 per kg. Even when the market is bullish, the grower gets 20 per cent of the total value of the produce."

Price correction

Traders, however, believe that the downward price pressure on Indian varieties is more in the nature of a correction over last year's levels. Mr Suresh Babu of Chaitanya Coffees, a trading concern, said: "Indian planters are holding on to robusta parchment, believing that the present price is too low. Robustas on the London exchange are trading at just over \$1,500 a tonne, against \$2,200 a tonne a year ago. Further, Indian robustas commanded a premium of \$550 last year, which has now fallen to \$400-450 a tonne. There is a demand, but not at last year's prices."

Mr Babu said: "Buyers are ready to buy for December and March shipment but not as yet for July and September shipment."

Mr Amit Pant, Business Manager, Olam Agro India Ltd, said: "Only if there is an institutional crisis in Europe, causing banks to tighten credit to those who are less credit-worthy, would highly leveraged roasters be in trouble. But at present there are no indications of a hit in demand in Europe."

Interest rates in Europe are low. The high prices are — as is often the case — on account of supply-side factors, such as the shortfall in Columbian milds."

Over the last three years, with Columbian milds being in short supply, Indian arabicas have been commanding a high premium over the New York exchange price. "Arabica prices are likely to be good, because the next Columbian crop is not

due before the end of December. Unfortunately, Indian arabicas, which are similar but not the same, are not in a position to benefit because most of the exports are completed between January and June,” Mr Pant said.

Mr Alfonso Penagos Consuegra of Penagos Hermanos, a producer of coffee-pulping machines, said: “Columbian coffee producers made a wrong forecast. The next crop should be good. The recession in Europe will not have any impact on coffee drinking, as it did not in the US. People can be seen drinking coffee everywhere.”

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Kerala Cabinet approves hike in milk price by Rs 3 a litre

Rise in cost of fodder, overheads forces the increase.

Our Bureau

Thiruvananthapuram, June 23

The State Cabinet has decided to give its go-ahead to a proposal for a hike in the prices of milk marketed by the dairy farmers' cooperative, Milma.

Milma milk would become dearer by Rs 3 a litre, the Chief Minister, Mr V. S. Achuthanandan, told newsmen after a routine meeting of the Cabinet here on Wednesday.

INPUT COSTS

The Chief Minister said that the hike was inevitable because of the unbridled rise in the price of fodder and various overheads.

A study conducted by National Dairy Research Institute, Bangalore, had indicated

high input costs for milk produced in the State.

While Milma would willingly forfeit any share from the spoils, the dairy farmers stand to get Rs 2.76 a litre and the primary cooperatives and agents will get 12 paise for each litre, the Chief Minister said.

Milma had originally sought Government permission to raise the price of milk by Rs 5 a litre.

According to the Chief Minister, the decision to effect the hike was a delicate balancing act trying to meet the needs of the dairy farmers and consumers.

QUANTUM DECLINES

Out of the 10.5 lakh litres of milk supplied by Milma everyday, less than half is procured within the State. The rest is shipped in from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. But over a period time the quantum of milk sourced from outside the State started to decline, forcing Milma to import milk powder.

Earlier, a special committee headed by the Additional Chief Secretary, Mr P.K. Mohanty, had been asked to go into the question of the price hike.

PSC RANK LIST

The Cabinet also decided to extend the validity of rank lists published by the State Public Service Commission. The list will expire on May 31.

The department heads and appointment authorities will be directed to report all vacancies that are likely to rise up to March 31, 2011, so that the maximum number of candidates is absorbed from the rank lists. The heads of departments and appointment authorities would be directed to report vacancies before July 31, the Chief Minister added.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Thursday, Jun 24

Max Min

38.2° | 26.6°

Rain: 0.2 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 89%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 05:44

Sunset: 18:37

Barometer: 1002.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Friday, Jun 25

Max Min

36° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Jun 26



34° | 28°

Rainy

Sunday

Jun 27



34° | 28°

Rainy

Monday

Jun 28



34° | 28°

Rainy

Tuesday

Jun 29



33° | 28°

Rainy

Wednesday

Jun 30



34° | 28°

Rainy