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## **Training at TNAU in chocolate making**

COIMBATORE: A training programme in chocolate and sugar confectionery will be held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on June 8 and 9. A fee of Rs. 1,000 will be collected in the form of Demand Draft, a university release said.

For details, contact Head, Post-Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003; or call 0422-6611340 / 6611268.

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## **TNAU to launch 'Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative' soon**

*It will be introduced in cooperative and private sugar mills*

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*Productivity of sugarcane in Tamil Nadu can be increased to minimum of 250 tonnes per hectare*

*It is launched in close collaboration with Hyderabad-based ICRISAT*

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MADURAI: A new initiative called Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative (SSI) is going to be launched in the State under the auspices of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

Through the 'sustainable sugarcane' concept, new technology to improve production and productivity of sugarcane will be taken to the sugar mills/farmers for adoption.

P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, said here on Sunday that the varsity had completed the experiments using the new technology and it is now ready for introduction at the field level.

"The concept can bring substantial changes in the production and productivity. The technology is available in our university and it will be demonstrated to sugarcane stakeholders on how to improve the yield," he said during an interaction with reporters.

The TNAU is launching the SSI in close collaboration with the Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

"This initiative will be started anytime soon. Discussions were over on the modalities of launch and the new technology will be introduced in all districts through our research stations/agriculture colleges," Dr. Boopathi said.

According to the Vice-Chancellor, the productivity of sugarcane in Tamil Nadu can be increased to minimum of 250 tonnes per hectare if the Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative was introduced.

The university had carried out extensive experiments in various stages of developing humidity, sprouts and keeping it in nursery.

"Mechanisation in harvesting is the need of the day. Already, Tamil Nadu is leading in sugarcane productivity in India and the introduction of SSI would only strengthen its position globally," he observed.

Drip irrigation

Dr. Boopathi along with the Madurai District Collector C. Kamaraj visited the Agricultural College and Research Institute to address a media awareness programme on the different courses being offered by the TNAU through Open and Distance Learning mode.

Mr. Kamaraj said that the Chief Minister's videoconference with the District Collectors on Saturday had focused on drip irrigation and increasing the crop yield per hectare.

“Many instances were cited on how the productivity had gone up because of drip irrigation. Awareness will be created among the farmers on how technology could be put to better use,” the Madurai District Collector said.

Senior TNAU officials including V. Valluva Paridasan, Director (Open and Distance Learning) and K. Vairavan, Dean, Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai, were among those who participated in the meeting.

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## **TNAU gets more applications this year**

MADURAI: The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, has received more applications this year for its B.Sc. courses compared to last year.

While only 1,224 seats are available for the first year B.Sc. courses, the number of applications received had crossed 6,000-mark.

P. Murugesu Boopathi, TNAU Vice-Chancellor, told The Hindu here on Sunday that more students are coming forward to study B.Sc.(Agriculture) and generally the placement prospects have increased for the students passing out of the university's affiliated colleges.

“This year we received 6,070 filled-in applications (6,682 sold) for first year UG courses while the number was 5,600 last year. Gradually, the interest for agriculture and related courses is picking up,” the Vice-Chancellor said after visiting the Agricultural College and Research Institute (ACRI) in Madurai.

Dr.Boopathi said that the TNAU is offering B.SC in Agriculture, Horticulture, Home Science, Forestry and Agricultural Engineering. The university has 10 colleges under its fold.

“I can say it is zero unemployment for our students. They are getting good placement in nationalised banks, private sector and State Government departments,” he said.

#### Admission process

The TNAU will release the rank list for admission to B.Sc. courses on June 9. Last date for receiving filled-in applications was over on June 4.

Dr.Boopathi said that the first phase of admission counselling would be held from June 16 to 20. For the special reservation quota like ex-servicemen/sports, the counselling would take place on June 29.

If there are any vacancies available after these two rounds, another round of counselling would be held after June 30.

The Vice-Chancellor said that the classes for first year UG students will start on June 22 in all its four agricultural colleges, two horticultural colleges and affiliated institutions for agri-engineering, home science and forestry.

He had a discussion with the Madurai District Collector C.Kamaraj on the courses being offered by the university through Open and Distance Learning mode during a meeting held at the Agricultural College and Research Institute here.

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## Master plan being made for mushroom cultivation

*Special training will be given for SHGs, says Collector*

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*"Meeting held with Horticulture officials"*

*"Marketing support, essential for SHG members"*

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**BOOST:**C. Kamaraj, Collector, along with P. Murugesha Boopathy (right), Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, speaking at a meeting in the city on Sunday.

**MADURAI:** A master plan to promote mushroom cultivation in a big way is being devised exclusively for the self-help groups (SHGs) in Madurai district.

The district administration is preparing a plan to provide training for SHG members in mushroom cultivation, C. Kamaraj, District Collector, has said.

“Last week, we already had a preliminary meeting with the officials of Horticulture Department in this regard. We will meet the SHG members soon and finalise a mechanism to conduct training for them,” he said during his visit to the Agricultural College and Research Institute (ACRI) here on Sunday.

Addressing a joint press conference along with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor P. Murugesu Boopathy, the District Collector said that training sessions would be conducted for the SHGs in a phased manner at various places. “We will have discussions with the District Lead Bank Manager and Project Officer (Mahalir Thittam) on how best the district administration could extend support for mushroom cultivation,” Mr. Kamaraj said. The Collector stressed that marketing support and imparting technical knowhow are essential for the SHG members. Whether banks can come forward to support eligible members would be examined.

#### Course

Responding to a query, the TNAU Vice-Chancellor said that mushroom cultivation suits every district and the university is offering a six-month certificate course for interested persons.

#### 10 contact classes

There will be 10 contact classes for the candidates during this six-month period and they would be conducted at the nearest place convenient for the candidates, he said.

V. Valluva Paridasan, Director (Open and Distance Learning), TNAU, K. Vairavan, Dean, ACRI and P. Banumathi, Dean, Home Science College and Research Institute, Madurai, were among those present at the meeting.

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## Tiruchi progressive farmer gets award for innovation

*He takes classes in integrated paddy cultivation in Tiruchi*



**GOOD WORK:** Former Union Minister of State for Planning V.M.V.Rajasekharan (left) handing over the Udyan Ratna award to progressive farmer M.Jayaraman in Bangalore recently.

TIRUCHI: His innovative techniques in the field of agriculture got him due recognition. Sixty-two-year-old M.Jayaraman of Tiruchi, a progressive farmer and retired Assistant Director of Agriculture, has been conferred the 'Udyan Ratna' by Lt.Amit Singh Memorial Foundation.

The award was presented by V.M.V.Rajasekharan, former Union Minister of State for Planning, at the Swadesh Prem Jagriti Sangosthi-2010 (SPJS) organised by the Foundation based in New Delhi in collaboration with the University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot, in Bangalore recently.

The award was given for innovation and outstanding contribution in adoption and dissemination of technology leading to development of horticulture and rural prosperity. The award was presented in the presence of Bimla Singh, foundation managing trustee, and G.Trivedi, Chairman of SPJS-2010.

Mr Jayaraman said that he was carrying out farming in his own land and cultivating paddy, banana, black gram and sesame. "I am following crop rotation technology and using only certified seeds for paddy, black gram and sesame and disease-free quality suckers (vertical shoots that develop from the base of the banana pseudostem) from my land. My land serves as a model for other farmers," he said.

Mr Jayaraman said apart from adopting new innovative plant protection measures for Erwinia rot disease he was doing mulching in and around young plant by using the dust of black gram leaves (after harvest) to conserve soil moisture.

"I am practising inter-cultivation of sunhemp (green manure crop) in banana fields by sowing away from one foot radius in and around young banana plants. This will protect the young plants from excess sun heat during peak summer and wind damage. This also provides a good source of organic nitrogen and better control of nematodes.' Varietal trial in banana was conducted in his field and several farmers visited. "I am also practising the System of Rice Intensification' (SRI) method of paddy cultivation since 2003. I am concentrating on integrated plant nutrition management for banana and paddy for fetching good yield, he added. Mr Jayaraman, who has participated in several national and international conferences, said that he was producing best quality foundation and certified seeds and selling in the brand name of 'Manicka Seeds' only through NABARD farmers agro clubs to the farmers. He said that he was taking classes in integrated paddy cultivation and SRI methods to the irrigation society farmers at the Agricultural Engineering department training centre in Tiruchi.



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## Area under precision farming to increase

COIMBATORE: Area under precision farming in the State will increase by about 10,000 hectares this financial year. With this the total area under the farming technology will cross 40,000 ha.

Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S. Arumugam told the Assembly recently that the Government had allocated Rs. 27.37 crore to bring 8,500 ha under agriculture crops and a little more under horticulture crops.

The Government provides 50 per cent of Rs. 1.30 lakh – the cost of implementing precision farming on a hectare – as subsidy.

The reason: studies have revealed that there is a 30–50 per cent increase in yield, improvement in quality of produce, uniformity in growth and extended harvest.

According to E. Vadivel, professor at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University who supervised the implementation of the project in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts, precision farming is optimising the use of water, fertilizer and pesticide to match the growth of each crop.

A team of experts from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University implemented the project on a pilot basis on 400 hectares.

The result of the study was so good that in 2007-08 the Government brought around 12,000 hectares under precision farming.

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## **Gale, rain destroy standing crops**

DINDIGUL: Gale, accompanied by rain, destroyed standing crops in several acres in Palani taluk. Many trees and electric posts were also uprooted in around Dindigul, Batlagundu and nearby areas in the past two days. Heavy downpour lashed several parts of the district in the evening of Friday and Saturday.

The worst affected places were Thoppampatti, Shanmugavalasu, Keeranur and Vaagarai.

Many silk worm rearing sheds, cocoon production sheds and poultry farms were damaged at Shanmugavalasu. Sericulture farmers alone incurred loss to the tune of Rs.10 lakh. Standing banana and coconut trees were uprooted at several villages in Palani taluk.

Roof of a few tiled houses at Veyiladichanpatti near Dindigul got blown away in the gale. The compound wall of a government school in Ayakudi also caved in and a school building was fully destroyed at Sirankattupatti in Natham block when an old tree fell on it owing to the strong wind.

Intermittent showers that kept the hopes of farmers alive did not have much effect on storage levels in major reservoirs in Theni and Thekkadi.

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## Sea food exports on the rise in Tuticorin

*Value of exports to touch Rs. 10, 000 crore soon*

Tuticorin: This town has made a name for itself in the business of exporting seafood products throughout the world. Though there are seafood industries in many places in the State, exporters in Tuticorin have carved a niche among their competitors.

With the objective of promoting seafood export industries meet quality standards and hygiene norms, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has a series of new schemes, said K. Rajendramany, Assistant Director, MPEDA, Sub-Regional Office, Tuticorin, who assumed charge recently. A delegation from the European Union was expected to visit Tuticorin in September to take stock of the conditions and infrastructure available at the fishing harbour here.

“The value of marine seafood export from Tuticorin has touched Rs. 9,921 crore through shipment of 6,63,603 tonnes in 2009-10. During the previous year, it was 6,02,835 tonnes, valued at Rs. 8,607 crore. It will touch Rs. 10, 000 crore soon,” he said. With a view to make India the most attractive destination of seafood hub, sea freight assistance was being offered for exporting and importing value-added seafood products. The MPEDA was offering financial assistance to fishermen to enhance the quality and value addition of sea food products under many subsidy schemes.

To promote ornamental fish breeding units, MPEDA was assisting 50 per cent of the infrastructure cost. Through Net Fish, (Network for fish quality management and sustainable fishing), a society functioning under MPEDA, awareness camps

were being conducted for fishermen on methods of fishing to be adopted in post-harvest and pre-harvest management.

Twenty-two fish processing plants, nine ice plants and two fish meal oil plants registered with MPEDA were functioning. Besides, five chilled fish exporters, 10 dry fish exporters and three live fish exporters were operating in the districts of Tuticorin, Ramnathapuram, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Thanjavur, he said.

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## **Laila ups fish price, cost of eggs at all-time high**

Jun 07 2010

June 6: Fall in production in the poultry belt in and around Namakkal has shrunk the omelets at home. Price of an egg has touched an unprecedented high of Rs 3 in the city. The trend would continue for some more time, according to a poultry association spokesperson in Namakkal. Eggs in retail were sold last week at Rs 2.70 each while in the wholesale market, a hundred were priced at Rs 260. Now an egg is being sold at Rs 3 and the wholesale price is Rs 271 per hundred, according to wholesale dealer Kandaswamy in Chennai.

Fish too has become dearer as catamarans are returning from the sea with lower catches even though a week has elapsed since the 45-day ban on fishing got over. The ban for allowing fish to breed should normally increase the catches but this time it has not helped. Fishermen attribute this to the recent cyclone in the Bay of Bengal. And even if the catches improve in the coming days, the fish prices are

unlikely to go down in the city since much of it could be diverted to Kerala in view of the 45-day ban coming into effect along the west coast from June 15, according to Anbu, a Kasimedu fisherman.

A kilogram of seer (vanjaram) fish was sold for Rs 450 per kg in most fish markets of Chennai on Sunday, as against the price of Rs 250-Rs 300 a kg before the ban. Pomfret (vavval) was sold at Rs 450 a kg as against the normal price of Rs 250-Rs 275. The popular snapper fish (sankara) was quoted at Rs 130 a kg, up by at least Rs 30. Only sardine (mathi), largely exported to Kerala, became cheaper.

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<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/laila-ups-fish-price-cost-eggs-all-time-high-159>

## Business Standard

Monday, Jun 07, 2010

### Sugar closes flat

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 5, 2010, 15:45 IST

Sugar prices today ended at previous levels at the wholesale market here in limited deals.

Marketmen said restricted buying against adequate stocks position mainly kept prices around overnight levels.

Following are today's rates in Rs per quintal: Sugar ready M-30 2,875-2,960 and S-30 2,865-2,950.

Mill delivery M-30 2,750-2,870 and S-30 2,740-2860.

Sugar mill gate prices (excluding duty): Kinonni 2,920, Asmoli 2,910, Mawana 2,850, Titabi 2,870, Thanabhavan 2,840, Budhana 2,830 and Doral 2,845.

## Tea exports up 20% in January-April

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 06, 2010, 15:48 IST

Tea exports from India, the world's largest consumer, grew 20.28 per cent to 59.9 million kg in the first four months of the current year on increased demand.

The country exported 49.8 million kg in the January-April period of the last year, according to data released by the Tea Board.

The average price for Indian tea in export markets, however, fell to Rs 123.34 per kg in the reporting period from Rs 127.63 a kg in the year-ago period.

In terms of value, exports fetched Rs 739.67 crore during the January-April, 2010, period, up 16.32 per cent from last year's export value of Rs 635.87 crore in the same period.

While exports from North India remained almost flat at 27.37 million kg, shipments from South India grew to 32.59 million kg against 22.53 million kg in January-April, 2009.

Tea Board Chairman Basudeb Banerjee had recently said that exports of the beverage may go up in the range of between 5 per cent and 10 per cent during the current fiscal, though the official target was fixed at 200 million kg, the quantity of shipments in 2009-10.

India exported 190 million kg of tea in 2008-09.

The country exports CTC (crush-tear-curl) variety tea to Egypt, Pakistan and the UK and the premium orthodox variety of tea to Iraq, Iran and Russia.

India faces competition from Kenya and other African countries for exporting CTC tea, while for the orthodox variety, the competition is from Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Tea output in the country came down to 979 million kg in 2009 against 981 million kg in the previous year. The country expects to produce nearly 1 billion kg of tea this year.

## **Wheat dara strengthens on flour mills buying**

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 5, 2010, 14:24 IST

Wheat dara strengthened further by Rs 5 per quintal on the wholesale market here today on sustained buying from flour mills against limited arrivals. Maize and barley also seen in demand and rose.

Traders said continued buying from flour mills and slowdown in arrivals from producing regions mainly helped wheat dara prices strengthen. Wheat dara (for mills) added Rs 5 to Rs 1,240-1,245 per quintal. Atta flour mills gained Rs 10 to Rs 650-670 per 50 kg.

Other wheat products such as maida and sooji advanced by Rs 20 each to Rs 740-770 and Rs 780-800 per 50 kg in line with wheat trend. Maize and barley also rose by Rs 10 and Rs 40 to Rs 970-980 and Rs 1,000-1,020 per quintal.

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) 1,250-1,255, atta Rajdhani (10 kg) 175, Shakti bhog (10 kg) 175, Roller flour mill 650-670 (50 kg), Maida 740-770 (50 kilos) and Sooji 780-800 (50 kg).

Basmati rice (Lal Quila) 9,300, Shri Lal Mahal 9,300, Super basmati rice 9,000, Basmati common 5,250-5,350, rice Pusa-(1121) 4,550-5,050, Permal raw 1,725-1,775, Permal wand 1,825-1,975, Sela 2,025-2,075 and Rice IR-8-1,550-1,575, Bajra 940-950, Jowar yellow 1,100-1,175, white 1,600-1,650, Maize 970-980, Barley (UP) 1,000-1,020 and Rajasthan 1,080-1,090.

## Select edible oils maintains upward trend as demand picks up

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 5, 2010, 14:07 IST

Prices of select edible oils continued their upward trend this week at the wholesale oils and oilseeds market here on increased buying by vanaspati millers and retailers. A few oils in the non-edible section, also showed some strength on the back of pick up in industrial demand.

Sentiments remained strong in edible oils as vanaspati millers continued their buying activity to meet ongoing marriage season demand. Reports of rising trend at producing regions and firm trend in Malaysian palm oil too had a positive impact, traders said.

Palm oil futures ended the week with gains in Malaysia as crude oil surged after investors speculated that higher exports during last month may have cut the stockpiles.

Palm oil futures for the August-delivery contract strengthened to \$755 a metric tonne on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange.

In the National Capital, mustard expeller oil, which remained steady for the major part of week, found fresh local support at the fag-end and ended Rs 30 higher at Rs 4,700 per quintal. Crude palm oil (ex-kandla) and palmolein (rbd) oils also moved up by Rs 20 and Rs 10 to Rs 3,770 and Rs 4,250 per quintal on higher overseas advices.

However, soyabean refined mill delivery (Indore) and soyabean degum (Delhi) lacked necessary buying support and declined by Rs 50 and Rs 40 to Rs 4,500 and Rs 4,360 per quintal. Meanwhile, groundnut mill delivery (Gujarat) and cottonseed mill delivery (Haryana) remained steady at Rs 7,100 and Rs 4,100 per quintal in restricted buying activity.

In the non-edible section, castor oil gained Rs 50 to Rs 6,850-6,950 per quintal on pick up industrial demand. Neem oil also traded higher by Rs 50 to Rs 3,650-3,750 per quintal on fresh enquiries from soap industries.



**GRAINS:** Wheat prices rose smartly on the wholesale market here during the week on increased buying from flour mills against slow down in arrivals from producing belts. Reports of a fall in procurement of wheat by government agencies partly supported the uptrend in prices.

Barley and maize also gained on pick up in demand from consuming industries such as beer and cattle-feed producers.

Marketmen said increased buying of wheat by flour mills in view of ongoing marriage season and a decline in procurement by the government this season so far, mainly influenced the trading sentiment.

Wheat procurement has dropped nearly six per cent to 22.41 million tonnes so far in the current marketing year that commenced on April 1, despite record production, according to the government data.

Wheat dara for flour mills remained in demand and shot by further by Rs 35 to Rs 1,240-1,245 while wheat deshi held steady at Rs 1750-1850 per quintal.

### **Linseed oil rises on good demand**

Press Trust of India / Mumbai June 5, 2010, 16:49 IST

Prices of linseed oil moved up in the oils and oilseeds market here today on good demand from the paint industry. Refined palmolein edged up on mild buying support coupled with higher Malaysian advices.

Meanwhile, castorseeds futures fell due to poor export enquiries. However, groundnut oil, castorseeds bold and castoroil commercial closed unchanged in the absence of market-moving factors.

In the non-edible oils section, linseed oil rose by Rs 5 to Rs 510 per 10 kg from yesterday's closing level of Rs 505.

Castorseeds bold and castoroil commercial both held steady at Rs 3,285 per quintal and Rs 687 per 10 kg respectively.

In the futures section, castorseed's August contract resumed lower at Rs 3,275 per quintal and declined further to Rs 3,250 before settling at Rs 3,257 from Rs 3,281 previously, translating into a loss of Rs 24.

In the edible oils section, refined palmolein inched upward to Rs 407 per 10 kg from Rs 406. Groundnut oil closed unchanged at Rs 705 per 10 kg.

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### Mills not keen to contract fresh raw sugar imports

*Uncertainty in price outlook seen as the main factor.*

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*According to trade sources, "in a falling market, nobody wants to enter into new contracts in expectation of a further fall"*

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Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, June 6

Mills are hardly contracting any fresh raw sugar imports despite the apparently favourable economics of their processing at present price levels.

July raws in New York are now trading at around 14.5 cents a pound or \$320 a tonne. Adding \$90 towards freight and other charges would take the landed cost to \$ 410 or Rs 19,150 a tonne at Rs 46.7-to-the-dollar.

For a coast-based mill, the cost of port handling, transport and refining this sugar would be around Rs 4,000, while being Rs 5,000-plus in the case of inland factories. If the six per cent-odd losses on conversion of the raws into white sugar are also factored in, the ex-factory cost of the processed product would range between Rs 24,400 and Rs 25,400 a tonne.

As against this, mills are currently realising Rs 26,000-27,000 a tonne on domestic white sugar sales.

“There is positive price parity now in favour of processing imported raws. It could turn further positive if global raws fall to 12 cents or lower (as forecast by some) and domestic prices rise in the event of a 30-40 per cent import duty being levied on white sugar. But there are too many uncertainties and nobody would want to really gamble on these,” trade sources noted.

Price factor

The main uncertainty, of course, concerns price outlook. Since hitting a 29-year peak of 30.4 cents a pound in February, global raw sugar prices have more than halved and “in a falling market, nobody wants to enter into new contracts in expectation of a further fall”.

Compounding this is the uncertainty on the domestic price front. "Everybody knows production during the 2010-11 season (October-September) will be higher than the 185 lakh tonnes (lt) ; but how much higher is something still unclear as that would depend on the monsoon and other factors. Given that, nobody knows how low prices are going to be once crushing for new season begins," the sources pointed out.

While the cost of processing raw sugar is lower during the season – as bagasse from cane, which is a cheaper fuel compared to coal, is available – "it is still not really worth the risk to contract imports now for material to be processed 5-6 months down the line".

#### Import contracts

According to the sources, whatever arrivals are now taking place or scheduled for the next few weeks are mainly of past import contracts. "There is roughly 7-8 lt of imports still to come in, of which half were contracted at 18-22 cents and the rest at 16-17 cents. Fresh contracts are few and far between," the sources added.

The country has since the 2008-09 season imported an estimated 51 lt of raw sugar. Of this, 23 lt came during 2008-09, with 28 lt arriving so far this season. In addition, 2.25 lt of whites were imported in 2008-09 and 8.25 lt till now in the current season.

The 2009-10 season is reckoned to have opened with stocks of 39 lt, including 25 lt of domestic cane-based sugar and 14 lt of carried-over imports.

Along with domestic production of 185 lt, already arrived imports of 34 lt (white equivalent) and 15 lt of contracted-and-yet-to-arrive imports (raws plus whites), the total availability of sugar would be close to 275 lt, against consumption of 230-235 lt.

The ensuing season will, thus, have opening stocks of 40-45 lt. And if production

turns out to be 230-240 lt, there is not much scope left for imports, the sources added.

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## **Cashew market steady on slack demand**

G. K. Nair, Kochi, June 6

The cashew market continued to remain quiet on slack demand, but with some stray sales to various markets in small quantities. W320 drifted few cents lower to \$2.90-2.95 range. There was no change in other grades.

W240 was in \$3.15-3.20 range, W450 was at around \$2.80, SW320 was at around \$2.80, FB/FS at around \$2.50 (f.o.b).

“There is absolutely no change in fundamentals in the last few weeks,” Mr Pankaj N. Sampat, a Mumbai-based trader told Business Line. He said supplies will be slightly lower than last year.

“Consumption so far has been slightly higher than last year but could be adversely affected in second half due to reduced availability and higher prices,” he said.

According to him, Asian demand from July will provide a floor to the market. Trend of limited activity for near-bys is likely to continue until there is any major contracting by roasters.

“There is still a lot of business to be done for second half deliveries. Timing of the

selling and buying needs will determine the price movement," he said.

For the time being, there is nothing on the horizon to warrant a breakout from current range of \$2.80-3 (f.o.b).

But any change in sentiment – fundamental or external – could tip the cart, he said. RCN market was also quiet, trading sources said.

Prices dip marginally

Price rise has stopped and there has been a slight decline in prices because the lots still available with origin sellers have lower kernel yields.

Higher prices have been paid during May for the better quality goods. Some of this will be available for re-sale after shipment or even after arrival in India and Vietnam.

Lot of money is blocked in goods at origin ports due to logistic problems which will also affect timing of conversion to kernels, they said.

Prices quoted on Saturday for different grades (Rs/lb): W240: \$3.15; W320: \$2.90-2.95; W450: \$2.80; SW320: \$2.80; SW360: \$2.70; SSW: \$2.25.

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## **Coonor tea prices continue to decline**

P.S. Sundar, Coonor, June 6

Teas worth Rs 2.14 crore remained unsold at Sale No: 22 of the Coonor Tea Trade Association's auctions on Friday as 29 per cent of the 10-week low volume of 13.09 lakh kg on offer had to be withdrawn for want of buyers.

As much as 31 per cent of the dust and 27 per cent of the leaf on offer remained unsold.

“Orthodox whole leaf and brokens eased by Rs 2-3 a kg. High-priced CTC leaf eased Rs 2-4 and medium Rs 2-5. Secondary dusts eased Rs 1-2 while primary dusts managed to be steady. High priced CTC dusts gained Rs 2-3, but better liquoring eased Rs 2 and mediums Rs 2-4. Substantial volume of plainers remained unsold. Generally, dust market suffered from reduced demand,” an auctioneer told Business Line.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 43-46 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-118 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 40-44 for plain dusts and Rs 90-130 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Among CTC teas from bought leaf factories, Sree Lakshmi Estate Speciality got Rs 152 a kg, Sree Ram Supreme Speciality Rs 151, Darmona Estate Rs 140, Homedale Estate Rs 136, Professor Rs 132, Hittakkal Estate and Kannavarai Estate Rs 130 each, Vigneshwar Estate Rs 128 and Shanthi Supreme Rs 126. In all, 73 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Curzon got Rs 166, Chamraj Rs 165, Glendale Rs 162, Sree Lakshmi Estate Speciality Rs 152, Kairbetta Rs 147, Sutton Rs 132 and Prammas Rs 130. In all, 22 marks got Rs 100 and more.

On the export front, the CIS bought for Rs 45-52 a kg and Pakistan Rs 46-55.

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**Agrocel Ind: A social enterprise in agriculture**



Advocating organic farming: A file picture of an organic cotton crop. Agrocel is a leading proponent of organic cotton. -

Ajay Desai

Agrocel Industries Ltd (Agrocel) is a unique social enterprise operating in the agri-business space since 1988. Promoted by the Kutch-rooted Shroff family, Agrocel focuses on the twin objectives of commercial viability and social/environmental benefits of providing gainful employment to the local populace and to check migration from Kutch. Agrocel operates agro service centres that provide expert technical guidance free-of-cost; offers high quality inputs at reasonable price and takes care of output marketing with value additions.

Genesis

Agrocel started as a partnership venture of the Shroff family and Gujarat Agro Industries Corporation (GAIC) with the objective of providing farmers with the right kind of inputs, at the right time, along with education on their use and buying back the produce at remunerative prices. The primary target at the time of inception was small farmers working in the harsh agro-climatic conditions of Kutch. The company is fully owned by the Shroff family and the operations have expanded to 21 centres in eight States, but the focus still remains on helping small farmers grow and market cash crop in a sustainable manner.



Historically, the Shroff family had a strong nationalist outlook and social commitment, which is reflected even in the mainstream companies promoted by the family such as Excel Industries and Excel Cropcare.

These companies have promoted social development at every place of the organisation's operations, which focus on participatory resolution of local issues under the supervision of an appointed management committee. The various developmental organisations promoted /supported by the family in its native Kutch region like Shroff Foundation, Vivekanand Research and Training Institute, Krish Vigyan Kendra Mundra, Gramodyog Society and Shrujan have contributed to the socio-economic development of Kutch, which is agro-climatically the most challenging terrain in India. Though Shrujan is founded as a trust, it has evolved a self-sustainable business model by harnessing the traditional embroidery skills of Kutch women, and blending it into artefacts preferred by the urban upper class market.

To add a purely commercial capital driven dimension to these efforts, Mr K.C. Shroff and (late) Mr C.C. Shroff decided to set up an industry wherein the raw material, which is readily available in this region, can be utilised to manufacture quality products, thereby, generating local employment and providing alternate sources of revenue for rural people. Thus, Agrocel started the marine division to extract valuable chemicals from abundantly available sea water and the Agro Service Division to promote value addition of local agro produce.

## Business Model

The business model of the agro service division is based on the provision of integrated services to farmers, both on the input and output sides.

### Input side interventions

#### Crop improvement

Supply of good quality inputs, including seeds of improved varieties and hybrids

Organise crop loans for farmers

Promotion of integrated crop management (ICM) and organic farming

Land and water management

Drip irrigation systems

Soil structure and fertility management

Soil reclamation - for salinity or acidity

Nutrient management

Crops and cropping systems

Soil and water testing

Use of organic manures

Proper and balanced use of fertilisers

Pest and disease management

Identification of pests and diseases

Forecasting of pest and disease problems

Prevention and cure of pests and diseases

Proper and rational use of bio-pesticides and chemical pesticides

Use of integrated pest management (IPM) and integrated crop management

(ICM) technologies

General

Repairs and maintenance of bore wells, electric motors and pumps by promoting local entrepreneurs as independent profit centres

Artificial insemination for cattle breeding in association with the NGOs

Help farmers to avail themselves of Government schemes, subsidies, crop insurance, schemes of other NGO's /donors by acting as an intermediary

Organise education tours

Though some of these interventions are offered free-of-cost, Agrocel considers them not as charity but as an investment in building livelihood for farmers, and fostering the relationship with Agrocel.

Output side interventions

The objective of output side interventions is to provide an alternate market (with better revenues) to farmers, and to meet their demand for a reliable organic and fair-trade produce. Agrocel, in alliance with Vericott Ltd of the UK and Traidcraft Exchange of the UK, has defined and launched its own brand – Agrocel – pure and fair Indian organic produce.

Agrocel is the pioneer and leading proponent of organic cotton in India. Through its 17 ASCs, spread across India, it co-ordinates organic fibre cultivation with a select group of local farmers. A team of agronomists based at every ASC, remains involved in the entire process of cultivation – right from field preparation, providing planting material and agri-inputs, crop care, harvesting to post-harvest management – ensuring compliance to stringent international certification standards.

Agrocel offers a wide range of products under the Agrocel brand. The main focus is on certified fair trade and/or organic products in cotton, paddy, sesame, groundnut, cashew, wheat, mustard and gram.

### Social Impact

The farmers associated with Agrocel benefit in a variety of ways. First and foremost benefit is continued access to reliable knowledge and quality inputs which help the farmer in reducing the cost of cultivation and improving the soil health, thereby, long-term productivity of his farmland. Agrocel offers to buy farmers' produce at a price better than the prevailing market price, thereby, upfront transferring some benefits of premium earned on organic / fair trade produce. Agrocel also invests in organising farmers in community groups and support them in conducting activities of communal benefit by provide monetary contribution as a “social premium” for growing fair-trade products.

Different farmer groups have used this “social premium” for a different type of locally desirable purposes. For example, the basmati farmers group in Haryana has bought a level operated paddy field leveller which has further boosted their paddy productivity and farmers from Kutch have used the premium to arrange drinking water for a village. In areas facing soil salinity problem, the social premium has been used for soil reclamation. Thus, about 45,000 farming families and villagers around them are benefiting from this unique social enterprise.

(The author is Chief Financial Inclusion Officer, YES Bank Ltd)

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### **A versatile crop**

*Focus Mango.*

The ovoid fruit of a tropical Asian evergreen tree, *Mangifera Indica*, widely cultivated for its edible fruit with a smooth rind and sweet, juicy yellow-orange flesh, mango is known as the king of fruits. Although India is home to several hundred varieties, only limited numbers are commercially favoured. The fruit is cultivated throughout the country, but there are region-specific popular varieties.

Most of the varieties perform well under specific agro-climatic conditions.

The fruit is grown on a large scale in Andhra Pradesh (the country's largest producer), Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. Maharashtra's Alphonso, Gujarat's Kesar and Uttar Pradesh's Dashehari are some of the best known varieties.

One of the most popular fruits of the country, mangoes are available for only 4-5 months (usually March to July), but are in demand throughout the year.

The fruit is rich in micro-nutrients. Mango processing has emerged as a major food processing activity in the country. Some of the traditional uses are pickles, chutneys and thick sweet syrup like murabba. In recent years, mango juice, mango jam and mango pulp with considerable shelf-life have hit the market. The Agriculture Ministry statistics show that mango cultivation occupies approximately a third of total cultivated area under fruits and mango production accounts for a-fifth of total fruits production.

While the area has been rising gradually and stood at 23.5 lakh hectares in 2009-10 (23.1 lakh hectares in 2008-09 and 22.0 lakh hectares in 2007-08), production has been fluctuating. From nearly 140 lakh tonnes in 2007-08, production declined to 127.5 lakh tonnes in 2008-09. In 2009-10, the output recovered to 131 lakh tonnes.

One of the focus crops under the National Horticulture Mission, mangoes are also being promoted by the National Horticulture Board under a scheme on

“development of commercial horticulture through production and post-harvest management”. In addition to expanding domestic demand, export markets are growing, not only for the fresh fruit but also processed and valued-added products.

According to the Commerce Ministry, India's mango pulp exports fetched about Rs 750 crore in 2008-09, up from Rs 510 crore in the previous year.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is the export promotion agency. Rising incomes and demographic pressure create a huge demand for processed foods in the domestic market. Export markets are growing too.

To service the growing demand, huge investments have been made for setting up several fruit processing units across the country. With growing consciousness about food quality, hygiene and safety in the domestic market, and exacting demands of the export markets, mango production and processing are modernising.

#### Maintaining quality

For maintaining the highest quality standards, modern pack-houses have been set up in major production zones. To meet the varying requirements of countries, internationally recognised treatment facilities such as hot-water treatment, vapour-heat treatment and irradiation facilities have also been set up at various locations across the production belt.

Unique product identification system, compliant to the traceability networking and residue monitoring plan has been developed for the consumer safety and readiness to a product recall in case of any emergency. (Responses are invited from the readers. The responses can be sent to [agribiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:agribiz@thehindu.co.in))

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## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 40%

Wind: Normal

### Monday, Jun 7

Max Min  
39.4° | 27.7°

Sunrise: 05:41

Sunset: 18:31

Barometer: 1004.0

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

### Tuesday, Jun 8

Max Min  
39° | 29°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday  
Jun 9



39° | 29°  
Partly Cloudy

Thursday  
Jun 10



40° | 29°  
Partly Cloudy

Friday  
Jun 11



40° | 29°  
Partly Cloudy

Saturday  
Jun 12



40° | 29°  
Partly Cloudy

Sunday  
Jun 13



39° | 29°  
Partly Cloudy