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State urged to introduce millets under PDS

It will enlarge food basket in an era of climate change: M. S. Swaminathan

MSSRF chairman M.S. Swaminathan and National Biodiversity Authority Chairman P.L. Gautam at an exhibition on Agro Biodiversity management in Chennai on Monday.

Chennai: The government should introduce millets under the public distribution system, noon-meal scheme and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to promote community agro-biodiversity, said M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

At a State-level consultation, Mr. Swaminathan said the addition of millets to the PDS would enlarge the food basket in an era of climate change, which was changing rainfall patterns that could result in water scarcity and yield problems due to increase in temperatures.

As rain-fed crops such as little millet (samai), kodo millet (varagu), finger millet (kezhvaragu) have a problem of market access, the incorporation of millets into the public distribution system would improve the livelihood of the marginalised sections of society producing the crop in remote, hilly terrains, said V. Arivudai Nambi, Principal Scientist (Biodiversity), MSSRF.

Lack of insurance for millet crops, non-availability of manual processing facilities and loss of knowledge among women about culinary preparations using millets were the other issues, Mr. Nambi said. A change was needed at the policy level as the area under millets had been reduced, he emphasised.

The State should notify indigenous varieties and farmers should have better access to gene banks in universities and research institutions, said Dr.K. Vijayalakshmi of Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems.

A.G. Ponniah, Director, Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, sought a closer look at government regulations on improved aquatic species, drugs from seas and potential commercialisation of traditional knowledge systems for the benefit of indigenous communities.

In his talk on changing scenario of insect pests and natural enemies in agriculture, Madras Christian College Principal Alexander Jesudasan asked farmers to be aware of the various forms of pest attacks and work together to prevent widespread damage.

National Biodiversity Authority Chairman P.L. Gautam, MSSRF Executive Director Ajay Parida, and farmers, livestock keepers and fishermen spoke at the consultation that would recommend steps to be followed by the government.

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Back

Tamil Nadu - Nagercoil

Water released from dam for ‘kannipoo' paddy season

Staff Reporter

“Release to be continued for ‘kumbapoo' season also”

Turning on:Kanyakumari District Collector Rajendra Ratnoo (second from right) releasing water from Pechchiparai dam on Monday for ‘kannippoo' paddy season.

NAGERCOIL: Water for the ‘Kannipoo' paddy season was released from Pechchipaarai dam on Monday, which is expected to irrigate over 79,000 acres of wetland in the district.

District Collector Rajendra Ratnoo released 250 cusecs of water from the dam even as the water level stood at 24.60 feet (1,614 million cubic feet) against the maximum level of 48 feet (4,350 mcft).

Inflow

Inflow of water into the dam at the time of release was only 40 cusecs.

Based on the rainfall in the catchment areas as well as in the district and considering the demand, quantum of water released from the dam will be either increased or decreased.

After the end of the ‘Kannipoo' paddy season, the first crop season of the calendar year, release of water from the dam will be continued for the ‘Kumbapoo' season also (i.e. till February 28, 2011), PWD sources said.

Thiruvattar MLA R. Leema Rose, Executive Engineer, PWD, C. Cyril Christopher, Assistant Executive Engineer A. Jayaganesan and Assistant Engineer L. Aravinth Kumar were present.

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Saplings planted

TIRUCHI: On the occasion of World Environment Day recently, the Principal Secretary, Environment and Forests Department, Debendranath Sarangi and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, A.S. Balanathan, planted saplings of ‘saraca asoka' at the office of the Conservator of Forests here. The Conservator of Forests, Tiruchi, Ramachandrapati, District Forest Officer, D. Mani and Forest Engineer, M. Loganathan were present.

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Tirupattur, Kandili selected for pulses programme

Inputs worth Rs.4,550 per hectare to be provided free to selected farmers for cultivation of red gram

"Subsidy will motivate farmers to cultivate red gram as pure crop" 2,370 farmers have been selected in the two blocks under the programme

VELLORE: Two blocks in Vellore district - Tirupattur and Kandili - have been selected for implementation of the Union government-funded Accelerated Pulses Production Programme (A3P). Inputs worth Rs.4,550 per ha (hectare) would be given free of cost to the selected farmers for cultivation of red gram as a pure crop on 1,000 ha in each of the two blocks. The Centre has allotted Rs.108 lakh for Vellore district at the rate of Rs.54 lakhs per block for the implementation of the programme.

S. Arivumani, Joint Director of Agriculture, Vellore, told The Hindu on Monday that the subsidy-linked A3P, has been introduced to motivate the farmers to raise red gram as a pure crop and increase the production and productivity of the crop. This was in the light of the shortfall in red gram production last year owing to the practice of farmers in cultivating it as an inter-crop with groundnut or cotton. When it was cultivated as inter-crop, farmers did not take special care of the crop and failed to carry out weeding operations or even use fertilizers and pesticides. As a result, the productivity goes down. In order to overcome this situation, the government decided to grant subsidy to motivate the farmers to cultivate red gram as a pure crop.

The Joint Director said that a total of 2,370 farmers have been selected in the two blocks under A3P. Under the programme, each of the selected farmers would be given a combined mini kit containing critical inputs such as gypsum, micro nutrients, Rhizobium culture, phosphorus-soluble bacteria, plant protection chemicals and weedicides, free of cost. Each farmer could implement the programme on a maximum area of two ha. Twenty kg of seeds per ha are required for the cultivation of crop. While the free mini kit would contain four kg of seeds, the remaining 16 kg would be supplied to the farmer at a subsidised rate of Rs.12 per kg.Mr. Arivumani said that the Union government had approved the programme for Vellore district to demonstrate to farmers the cultivation techniques, plant protection techniques and plant management practices aimed at enhancing the productivity of pulses. He urged the farmers to utilise the scheme and increase the production of red gram by contacting the block assistant directors of agriculture concerned.

In reply to a question, the Joint Director said that there has been a serious shortfall in the area under cultivation of various crops in the district this year owing to the absence of sufficient rainfall. As against 10,000 ha which is the normal area under paddy in the Sornavari season, only 1,500 ha were brought under the plough. Under pulses, only 32,000 ha were covered as against a target of 42,000 ha, while in red gram, only 16,700 ha were covered against a target of 24,000 ha.
Mr. Arivumani said that as against a normal area of 17,000 ha in sugar cane, a 596 ha were covered owing to other reasons, mainly the absence of labour. In view of the tendency of workers to go in for more paying jobs, cane farmers faced a shortage of labour for cultivation. This forced many farmers to switch over to other crops, he said. Taking advantage of the recent rains in Vellore district, groundnut farmers are expected to begin the sowing of the crop shortly, he said.

Business Line
Business Daily from THE HINDU group of publications
Tuesday, June 08, 2010

Slide in oilmeal exports continues in May

Shipments of castormeal, rice bran extraction rise.

Slipping shipments

(in lakh tonnes)

	2009-10	2008-09	% change
November	3.47	6.78	-49
December	3.96	7.09	-44
January	3.85	5.70	-32
February	3.29	4.44	-26
March	2.04	2.39	-14
April	1.73	1.78	-3
Total	20.59	31.56	-35

Source: Solvent Extractors Association

Our Bureau

Chennai, June 7

Oilmeal exports declined for the seventh consecutive month in May but the drop was lower than that witnessed in the earlier six months.

Oilmeal exports had almost halved in November last, and in April, the drop was 14 per cent.

According to the Solvent Extractors Association, oilmeal exports in May were 1.73 lakh tonnes (lt) compared with 1.78 lakh tonnes during the year-ago period. For the current fiscal, the exports are 3.77 lt against 4.16 lt a year ago.

"Oilmeal exports have declined continuously due to decreased production of meat and also partly due to lower demand for compound feeds and crisis in the livestock industry," the association said in a release.

Lower crushing and disparity in soyameal prices compared with the bean prices have also affected exports.

The drop in demand for compound feed has, in particular, affected soyabean and other meal exports.

The association, however, saw some revival in the exports due to economic recovery and demand from South-East Asian nations.

The recovery is manifest in shipments of rice bran extraction and castormeal. While rice bran extraction exports increased to 14,300 tonnes compared with 11,700 tonnes in April and 6,560 tonnes during the year-ago period, castormeal exports increased to 22,642 tonnes (14,804 tonnes and 7,300 tonnes).

Groundnut meal also recorded a rise with South Korea buying over 11,000 tonnes. During the same time, a year ago, no shipment of the meal was made.

South Korea, China, Vietnam and Japan were the major importers of Indian oilmeal in April. Exports to South Korea increased 184 per cent to 88,000 tonnes. Shipments to China increased 10.5 per cent to a little over 1.00 lt, while they dropped to Japan and Vietnam by 27.4 per cent and 63.7 per cent respectively.

Exports to west Asia

Exports to West Asia increased in May to over 16,000 tonnes from 7,000 tonnes a year ago. In fact, the region has bought over 28,600 tonnes of oilmeal from India against 19,500 tonnes last year. Realisation in May witnessed a decline. Prices for soyabean meal slipped to $365 a tonne against $377 in April. The prices have further fell to $362 this month. Rapeseed meal realisation dropped to $245 from $257, while groundnut meal slipped to $345 from $367. Rice bran (to $173 from $177) and castorseed meal (to $75 from $77) too declined.

A revival in the fortunes of the domestic poultry sector is likely to cap any sharp fall in the prices of oilmeals.

During 2009-10, oilmeal exports dropped 41 per cent in volume and 34 per cent in value terms.

Soyameal exports, in particular, have been witnessing a declining trend since last year, save September and October.

Related Stories:

Oilmeal exports fall 32% in Jan

Oilmeal exports drop 64% in April

Oilmeal exports drop 60% in March on economic woes

Oilmeal exports fall 42% in February

Deceased farmers' kin yet to receive compensation

K V Kurmanath

Hyderabad, June 7

It is four years since Ms Pushpa's husband committed suicide unable to repay the mounting farm debt and piled up interest.

Mother of two teenaged children, Ms Pushpa is still running from pillar to post for the compensation and other benefits the Andhra Pradesh Government announced, for the kin of farmers who committed suicide.

There are many like her. Ms Kommuri Chandramma (58), Ms Tadla Narasavva (45), Ms Jutolla Laxmi and Ms Ashemaina Narasamma (80) are among the 1,300 women who lost their husbands in the last 10 years in Medak district.

“We have three acres and my husband tried eight times to dig a bore well . He either found a dry well or ones with very little water. He even told his friend that he would not last a single day if the attempt dig to the eighth well was not successful. When it failed, he committed suicide fearing reprisal from the lenders,” Ms Pushpa said.

Many others, who gathered at the office of the Federation of Farmers' Association (FFA) to seek compensation from the Government, share similar stories.

The State Government earlier came out with an order, announcing ex-gratia compensation of Rs one lakh and Rs 50,000 for part-payment of the loans, for the kin of farmers who committed suicide.

A district-level committee comprising the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) or Sub-Collector, Deputy Superintendent of Police and Assistant Director of Agriculture was assigned the task of studying the deaths and sanctioning the ex-gratia payments.

The GO also promised free admission for the deceased's children to social welfare schools, pension to the family and a pucca house. Ms Pushpa said she has not received any of these benefits, despite approaching the authorities repeatedly over the last four years.

“There is the GO and there are the genuine complaints. But the Government and officials are indifferent. The committee has no time to listen to the complaints,” Mr P. Chengal Reddy, Secretary-General of Consortium of Indian Farmers' Associations (CIFA), said.

Israeli help for agri excellence centres in Maharashtra

The Union Budget proposed to set up centres of excellence in major agriculture producing States with an investment of $1 million each.

Our Bureau

Mumbai, June 7

The Israel Export and International Cooperation Institute (IEICI), supported by member firms, private sector bodies and Israel Government to advance business relationship, will provide its expertise to set up three agriculture centres of excellence at Nagpur (for citrus fruits), Rahuri (pomegranates) and Dapoli (mango) in Maharashtra under GroWin, a national project within the bilateral agriculture framework agreement signed by Israel and India.

The Union Budget had proposed to set up centres of excellence in major agriculture producing States with an investment of $1 million each.

Research centre

The institute will also facilitate a tie-up between Israel-based Volcani Institute of Agricultural Research and an Indian institute to set up a world class research institute in Maharashtra to improve post harvest facilities.

Mr Yitzhak Kiriati, Director, IEICI, said Israel's ability to develop agriculture expertise could be gauged from the fact that the six per cent of the country's population which depends on agriculture feeds the entire country and finds 35 per cent surplus produce for exports.

Israel exports about $1.3 billion worth of agricultural produce annually. The exports include development of greenhouse equipment, seed and livestock propagation, fertilisers and pesticides.

Israel has converted the southern desert region into a greenhouse to grow tomato, capsicum, pepper, watermelon and strawberry. “Tomato grown on one hectare using greenhouse technology yields 300 tonnes a year, which is four times higher than the convention method. Moreover, the strawberry grown using this technology ripens ahead of season for exports to Europe,” said Mr Kiriati, who is leading an Israeli delegation comprising representatives from 15 companies.

The visit is part of IEICI's efforts to develop B2B trade with 20 Indian companies, including the Yash Birla Group, Shapoorji Pallonji, Godrej Agrovet, Mahanand Dairy, Central Warehousing Corp, Britinnia, Tata Chemicals and Kaveri Seeds.

Wheat, rice stocks move out of Punjab, Haryana

GRAIN MANAGEMENT.

Our Bureau

Mumbai, June 7

Does anyone in the Government know or even care about what's happening to grain procurement, movement and logistics? Reports suggest unusually large movement of wheat and rice by rail; but surely, there is more than meets the eye.

From April 1 onwards, nearly 35 lakh tonnes (lt) of grains have been moved out of Punjab and Haryana in order to create additional storage space for new wheat crop procured by the Government agency Food Corporation of India. Clearly, there has been acute shortage of grain storage space in the two breadbasket States, and the Government has strained itself to move old cargoes out of the State.

The situation is so grave that large quantities of grains have been stored in the open. Quoting a news report, Mr Tejinder Narang, a trade analyst and former State trading enterprise official, said that in the last two months, the Railways moved a total of 1,399 rakes comprising 990 rakes of wheat and 409 rakes of rice from Punjab and Haryana.

One rake comprises 42 wagons each of which can carry up to 60 tonnes of grains. In other words, one rake carries about 2,500 tonnes of grains. Thus, grains moved so far total 35 lt. Such movement comes at a great cost in terms of freight charges and losses associated with handling. However, that's not the end of the story.

Price differential

Mr Narang asserts that a number of rakes and even trucks have moved wheat from Uttar Pradesh to Punjab, Haryana so that the FCI buys it at the procurement price. It is well known that FCI procurement outside of traditional Punjab and Haryana is weak. Wheat prices in Uttar Pradesh often rule below the minimum support price because of issues associated with procurement.

Taking advantage of the price differential, many traders buy wheat at less than procurement price in U.P., move the goods to Punjab/Haryana, sell the same to FCI and still reap profits.

Currently, FCI has in its inventory as much as 60 million tonnes of wheat and rice. However, the cost of the stored goods is far above the market price; and so, there may be no takers except at highly subsidised rates.

Pepper futures bounce back

G.K. Nair

Kochi, June 7Pepper futures witnessed high volatility and all contracts fell sharply during the course of trading till noon and thereafter, it shot up to the highest level of the day despite sell calls from the expert analysts.

It declined afterwards but ended much above the previous close. A sell call during the day from expert analysts of the brokers said: June NCDEX: Sell in the range 15360 - 390 targeting 15100 then 15000 with stop loss above 15620. This does not seem to have worked as the bulls took over the market. The market has been declining for about five days and today it moved up in correction, market sources told Business Line.

The market is functioning on such “buy and sell calls” and the money power of both bear and bull operators, they said. There was good buying and selling as is evident from the increase in the total turnover. There was switching over and fresh sales in the morning which had driven the prices down.

June contract on NCDEX shot up by Rs 313 to close at Rs 15, 760 a quintal. July and August increased by Rs 322 and Rs 391 respectively to close at Rs 16, 015 and Rs 16, 290 a quintal. Total turnover increased by 1,583 tonnes to close at 8,762 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 240 tonnes to 15,159 tonnes. June open interest dropped by 545 tonnes to 6,991 tonnes. July and August open interest moved up by 275 tonnes and 33 tonnes.

Spot prices

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend increased by Rs 200 to close at Rs 15,200 (ungarbled) and Rs 15,700 (MG 1) a quintal. Inter-state dealers from Tamil Nadu were offering to buy high range pepper at Rs 152 a kg and that of plains at Rs 150 a kg from the primary market dealers, traders said. Indian parity in the international market remained competitive at $3,600 a tonne (c&f), provided the main competitor Indonesia does not resort to undercutting, they said. International market trend would be known by tomorrow.

Spot rubber prices rule firm

Our Correspondent

Kottayam, June 7

Physical rubber prices finished unchanged on Monday. Sharp declines in the leading international indices failed to make any impact there as there were no quantity sellers on any grade fearing short supplies.

Sheet rubber closed steady at Rs 168 a kg as in the previous session. The volumes were dull. The June futures for RSS 4 improved to Rs 168.49 (167.83), July to Rs 164.90 (162.99), August to Rs 158.97 (157.15) and September to Rs 154.99 (153.75) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 declined at its June futures to ¥345.0 / Rs176.66 (¥ 357.9), July to ¥340.7 (¥353.2), August to ¥312.0 (¥326.7), September to ¥284.0 (¥ 299.6), October to ¥ 262.4 (¥ 277.6) and November to ¥ 257.3 (273.9) a kg during the day session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

The June futures recovered partially to ¥ 350.0 (Rs179.22), July to ¥ 341.5, August to ¥ 313.3 September to ¥ 285.4, October to ¥263.7 and November to ¥258.7 a kg on late trades. RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs 168.05 (171.24) a kg at Bangkok.

Spot rates (Rs/kg) were: RSS-4: 168 (168); RSS-5:165 (165); ungraded:163 (163); ISNR 20:151.50 (151.50) and Latex 60 per cent :110.50 (110.50)

Tobacco research body testing hybrid varieties

Ch. R.S. Sarma

Rajahmundry, June 7

The Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI) here is currently working on two hybrid varieties of virginia tobacco. They are still at an experimental stage, according to the institute's Director, Dr V. Krishnamurthy.

In an interview here, he said that till now all the varieties released by the CTRI such as Hema, Siri and Kanchan are doing very well at the field level and the farmers are also happy with the varieties, especially Siri.

"We have released varieties suitable to all soils and regions in Andhra Pradesh - light soils as well as black cotton soils - and also the light soils of Karnataka near Mysore known as the Karnataka light soils (KLS)," he said.

Alternative crops

He said tobacco was fetching good prices for the past two or three seasons and, therefore, it would be difficult to persuade farmers to switch over to other crops.

"But the long-term goal is, of course, to reduce the area under tobacco cultivation and increase the yields. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage alternative crops in tobacco-growing areas with the long-term vision in view.

"There are alternative crops such as maize, soyabean, chick pea and others. But the problem is to make them commercially attractive for the tobacco farmer. Otherwise, the switchover to other crops is not tenable," he said.

Alternative uses

He said the scientists at the CTRI were also working on alternative uses of tobacco and studying its applications in various fields such as pharmaceuticals. Certain substances such as solensol had been extracted from tobacco and commercially viable technologies had also been developed for their use in the pharma industry. "We are working on other such projects," he added.

Seed supply

Dr. Krishnamurthy said that from this year the Tobacco Board was not procuring certified seed from the CTRI and supplying it to farmers and the farmers would have to get it directly from the CTRI. "We have made arrangements for supply of certified seed to the farmers directly. There should be no problem. They can send their indents to the CTRI and get the seed," he said.

Dr Krishnamurthy said the CTRI was also focusing on developing suitable farm implements used in tobacco cultivation and cultivation of other crops and had already obtained patent rights for some of the implements.

Cardamom gains on limited supply

G.K. Nair

Kochi, June 7

Cardamom prices continued their upward run last week with the individual auction average crossing Rs 1,500 a kg and moving up to around Rs 1,600 a kg.

The highest price at the Sunday auction held by the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Cooperative (KCPMC) at Puttady was Rs 1,829.50 a kg and the minimum was Rs 900 a kg. Individual auction average was Rs 1,560 a kg, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told Business Line.

At the Saturday auction where the arrivals were 5 tonnes, he said, the maximum price is said to have touched nearly Rs 2,000 a kg. This may be the highest price in the history of cardamom auctions, he said.

Arrivals continued to shrink. Hardly 25 per cent of arrivals are from the growers while the rest are from traders who are selling when the prices rise. Upcountry buyers are buying but exporters stayed away from the market as the prices were much higher and the material was not of export quality.

Meanwhile, market sources in Bodinayakannur apprehended that certain major players based in Singapore had bought good quantity of cardamom from Guatemala for marketing in the West Asian markets for Ramadan, which will begin early this year.

Arrivals during the week were around 80 tonnes. Arrivals during the season stood at 9,466 tonnes. Of this, 9,295 tonnes were sold. Arrivals and sales in the same period last season were 9,780 tonnes and 9,355 tonnes respectively. Weighted average price as on June 6 was Rs 846.50 a kg, up from Rs 527.45 a kg same day last year.

Prices quoted for graded varieties on Monday in rupees per kg: AGEB1,505-1,515; AGB1,390 -1,405; AGS 1,285-1,290; AGS1- 1,245-1,250.

Prices quoted in the open market in Bodinayakannur were AGEB1,485-1,495; AGB 1,370-1,380; AGS 1,265-1,270 and AGS 1- 1,230-1,245.

EU team to inspect seafood export facilities

Our Correspondent

Madurai, June 7

A delegation from the European Union is expected to visit Tuticorin in September to assess the conditions and infrastructure facilities available at the fishing harbour for seafood export trade, according to Mr. K. Rajendramany, Assistant Director, Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), Sub-regional Office, Tuticorin.

Speaking at Tuticorin recently, he said that Tuticorin has earned a name in the business of seafood exports. The value in 2009-10 touched Rs 9,921 crore through shipment of 6,63,603 tonnes.

Sea freight assistance

To make the seafood export attractive, MPEDA has been offering sea freight assistance for export-import trade, in addition to offering financial assistance to fishermen to enhance the quality and value-addition under many subsidy schemes.

For promotion of ornamental fish breeding units, MPEDA has been providing assistance up to 50 per cent of the infrastructure cost. Awareness camps for fishermen are also being conducted on methods to be adopted on post-harvest and pre-harvest management.

Processing plants

Twenty-two fish processing plants, nine ice plants and two fish meal oil plants are registered with MPEDA.

Five chilled fish exporters, ten dry fish exporters and three live fish exporters are operating from the region covering Ramanathapuram, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Thanjavur districts, he added.

Agri panel meet

Getting down to business:(From left) The Chairman of the Working Group on Agriculture Production and Haryana Chief Minister, Mr Bhupinder Singh Hooda; the Punjab Chief Minister, Mr Prakash Singh Badal; the West Bengal Finance and Excise Minister, Mr Asim Kumar Dasgupta; and the Bihar Agriculture Minister, Dr Renu Kumari Kushwaha, at the first meeting of the working group in Chandigarh on Monday. The group was constituted by the Centre to curb inflation.

express buzz

By Express News Service

08 Jun 2010 03:53:18 AM IST

Genetic gardens need of the hour: MS Swaminathan

CHENNAI: The MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, on Monday, held a State-level meeting on "Community-based management of agro biodiversity in the era of climate change".

"An effective initiative to preserve biodiversity will only happen at the ground level, this is why we have been encouraging the grass root community workers to preserve the agro biodiversity," said P L Gautham, Chairman of the National Biodiversity Authority.

"Agro biodiversity management is all about conservation, sustainable usage and equitable benefit sharing. The major climate change factors in Tamil Nadu to be taken into account are rainfall patterns, scarcity of water, increase in temperature and rise in the sea level," said Professor M S Swaminathan.
It is estimated that wheat production would be reduced by seven million tonnes due to a one degree rise in temperature in the Punjab-Haryana belt. Hence, the government had undertaken multiple tasks to manage the crisis, he said.
There was a need to diversify from the variety of grains supplied by the PDS system; traditionally it supplied only rice and wheat to manage with the situation. The Tamil Nadu government should also form genetic gardens in five ecological zones to protect genetic diversity, he added.

By G Rajasekaran
08 Jun 2010 03:29:12 AM IST

Don't expect Mettur Dam to open on June 12

SALEM: Amidst speculation and concern expressed by farmers over the possibility of opening the Mettur Dam on June 12, the Minister for Agriculture Veerapandi Arumugam said on Monday that he hoped that the dam would be opened for Cauvery delta irrigation on the above date because of the onset of the monsoon.

But, official sources point out that what the minister said was an off-the-cuff remark and the possibility for opening the dam on the customary day of June 12 was indeed bleak. However, if the South-West monsoon intensified and brought in a copious flood, the minister's hopes could be fulfilled, sources indicated.
Inflow into the Mettur dam has been on the rise from 3085 cusecs on June 1 to 6,503 cusecs on Monday but the rate of increase is far lower than what is required for keeping with the irrigation schedules.
The Mettur Dam which is 120 feet high with a storage capacity of 93.5 TMC can be opened only when the level stands at 90 feet or above because of technical reasons.

Customarily the Mettur Dam would be opened for Cauvery Delta irrigation every year on June 12, but this had not been possible always because of the poor storage and insufficient rains. Last year too, the opening was delayed and this year too the possibility was dim.
The level as on Monday stood at 77.840 feet with a storage level of 39.831 TMC. With an inflow of 6,503 cusecs, the water level rose marginally by 0.41 feet in the last 24 hours. "The possibility of the water level going up by 12 feet in five days will be a miraculous event under the present condition," said a senior PWD official.
The inflow from dams in Karnataka is as low as 228 cusecs from Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) Dam and 700 cusecs from Kabini. The level at KRS now stands at 80 feet against the full height of 125 feet while the Kabini's level is 38.84 feet against 65 feet.
The demand from the Cauvery Delta would depend on the storage. Farmers would go for preparatory activities for 'Kuruvai' crop only when they were guaranteed of a steady supply. Officials said a report on the current scenario has been sent to the government.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Jun 08, 2010

Millers seek import duty on raw sugar now

Ajay Modi / New Delhi June 08, 2010, 0:17 IST

Till recently, they were pressing for a 60 per cent duty on refined sugar.

The country's sugar millers will now seek imposition of import duty on raw sugar as well. As of now, the sugar companies had been pressing for a 60 per cent import duty on refined or white sugar only through its apex body Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma).

"A full fledged import duty is required both on white as well as raw sugar. While an import duty may not provide immediate relief to the industry, it will ensure that mills get a price that is commensurate with sugarcane price," said Vivek Saraogi, president, Isma and managing director, Balrampur Chini Mills.

The move is important as till now manufacturers were seeking duty on refined sugar. In fact few mills are increasing refining capacities or are setting up green field refineries for converting raw sugar into white sugar. Sharp fall in domestic sugar prices as well as international market seems to have lead mills to seek higher protection when sugarcane crop is also expected higher in coming season.

Saraogi said that Monday’s price does not reflect the sugarcane price paid by the industry. It is worth mentioning that sugar mills in second biggest producing state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) paid an average sugarcane price of Rs 250 a quintal and the cost of production was Rs 3,300-3,400 a quintal. However, their current realisation is Rs 2,700 a quintal.

“India is fully stocked up with sugar. Domestic output in current season is estimated at 18.5 million tonnes. After accounting for import of 5 million tonnes and carryover of 3 million tonnes, the availability is 26.5 million tonnes. We will begin the next season in October with nearly 4 million tonnes. Even next year’s production outlook is healthy and production will not be lower to consumption of 23 million tonnes. Therefore, imports are now unwanted,” he said. The government had allowed duty-free import of both raw and white sugar last year to tide over the shortfall in domestic output and rising prices.

Ex-mill sugar prices in UP had touched a record high of Rs 4,300 a quintal in January. It softened from February following government initiatives like weekly sale mechanism and stockholding limits, and after a decline in international prices. Prices now rule around Rs 2,700 a quintal. Price outlook for sugar remains depressing.

While the government has restored monthly release mechanism from May and allowed the bulk consumers to stock their consumption requirement of 15 days instead of 10 days, it has not improved sentiments in sugar business.

“Bulk consumers will still prefer to import as imported sugar will land at a price of over Rs 2,400 a quintal while domestic sugar is selling for Rs 2,700 a quintal,” said C B Patodia, advisor, Birla Group of Sugar Companies and president, UP Sugar Mills Association.

Onion exports dip 40% in April-May

Newswire18 / Mumbai June 08, 2010, 0:33 IST

India exported 2,51,000 tonnes of onion in the first two months of the current financial year, down 40% on year, according to an official at the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed).

“In value terms also, exports declined sharply to Rs 258 crore in Apr-May,” the official said.

In Apr-May 2009, the country exported onions worth Rs 391 crore government data showed.

Exports were down due to high minimum export prices (MEP) in the early part of the year that diverted demand to other countries in general and Pakistan in particular, the official said.

To curtail rising domestic prices of onion, the government increased onion MEP to above $500 a tonne early March from around $200 in November.

However, MEP was cut in phases from mid-March to around $200 for the current month, due to ample stocks of the crop.

“The exports may pick up again in the coming months in volume terms, but the realization is unlikely to match last year’s data due to likely higher output this year,” the official added. The export realization in the first two months, however, was better than last year at Rs 11.70 a kg in April and Rs 9.20 in May, as against Rs 10 in April 2009 and Rs 8 in May 2009, the government data showed.

Refusal to diversify may cost shrimp farmers dear

George Joseph / Kochi June 08, 2010, 0:31 IST

India’s major export markets for shrimp in the West are being lost to our East Asian competitors, due to a refusal to diversify in line with demand.

Indian shrimp specialities are costly, sea-based or aqua-cultured varieties such as the Black Tiger. This is about 60 per cent costlier to produce than the Vannamie variety being increasingly supplied by Taiwan, Vietnam and China, which supply the same markets in the US and Europe.

Vannamie is entirely produced through aqua-culture; it retails for about half the price in the West as our costlier species. In the US, about 70 per cent of the market has been taken by the Vannamie over the past decade, from almost scratch; the figure is comparable in Europe. The East Asians have been cultivating Vannamie in a big way for several years.

By contrast, it was only in May last year that the the Indian government finally gave permission for importing the seed to begin cultivation of Vannamie. Barely 1,170 hectares are being presently used for this.

Meanwhile, we are being displaced from the Western market. The rise in shrimp exports has been less than five per cent annually by value in the past five years to the US; in 2009-10, it rose by just three per cent. By volume, it dropped by nearly 10 per cent. To Japan, it rose by barely 0,7 per cent.

Some quarters in the Marine Products Export Development Agency say the problem is high anti-dumping duty in markets like the US. However, other shrimp exporters seem to perform very well there, despite similar duties. They switched, clearly, in time to Vannamie.

Palm oil posts biggest drop in 8 days as crude falls

Bloomberg / June 8, 2010, 0:29 IST

Palm oil futures posted the biggest drop in eight days as crude oil extended a slump, hurting the viability of biodiesel.

Crude oil fell for a second day on concern that the government debt crisis in Europe will widen and after the US added fewer jobs than forecast last month, slowing a recovery in fuel demand.

Palm oil for August-delivery dropped 1 per cent to 2,449 ringgit ($738) a tonne on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange, erasing gains from last week, when investors speculated that higher Malaysian exports last month may have reduced stockpiles for a fifth consecutive month.

“Short-term, it remains uncertain,” said Leow Huey Chuen, a plantation analyst at UOB Kay Hian Malaysian Holdings Sdn. Palm oil, used in food and biofuels, lost 4.8 per cent in May as crude fell 14 per cent. Crude oil slipped to less than $70 a barrel on Monday, losing as much as 2.8 per cent to $69.51 a barrel before trading at $71.37 at 6:13 pm Singapore time.

Crude oil needs to be at more than $70 a barrel to make biodiesel viable, said Nirgunan Tiruchelvam, an analyst at Royal Bank of Scotland Asia Securities (Singapore) Pte.

Under the European Union's Renewable Energy Directive, issued in June 2009, the 27 member states are obliged to meet 5.75 percent of their road-transport fuel needs using renewable energy, including biofuels, this year, rising to 10 percent by 2020. The EU is the second-largest buyer of Malaysian palm oil.

Palm oil gained 0.7 per cent last week after May export estimates pointed to higher demand and a drop in inventory.

Export data

CME Group Inc.'s September-delivery palm oil contract, which is pegged to the Malaysian benchmark price, fell a third day, sliding 0.6 per cent to $727.50 a tonne.

On the Dalian Commodity Exchange, January-delivery palm oil slumped 2.8 per cent to 6,442 yuan ($943) a ton after falling to the lowest since November 17 earlier. Dalian soybean oil declined 2.1 per cent to 7,434 yuan a tonne.

The country's official palm oil export and stockpile data for May are due to be released on June 10. Preliminary estimates from two independent surveyors, Intertek and Societe Generale de Surveillance, showed that exports from the second-largest producer expanded in May, led by purchases from India and China, the biggest users.

Shipments increased 13 per cent from the previous month to 1.33 million tonnes, Intertek said on May 31. SGS estimated that there was an 8.6 per cent gain to 1.32 million tonnes.

Still, Chinese orders may slow in June, the China National Grain & Oils Information Center said on Monday. China may import 241,000 tonnes of palm oil this month, down from an estimated 362,000 tonnes in May, it said.

No hurry

"Medium and long term, it's still back to demand and supply," Leow said, adding that she anticipates prices to hold "firm" because "producers are not in a hurry to sell."

Palm oil could trade between 2,600 and 2,700 ringgit by August and September, she said. That's when demand typically picks up as annual festivals in China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia, the most populous Asian countries, trigger higher cooking oil use.

Pakistan, the third-biggest importer of palm oil, may double its purchases of crude product after the government reduced an import duty in its federal budget announcement on June 5. "As crude imports double because of the duty reduction, the import of refined palm oil and refined oilseed will fall by the same amount because of an increase in sales tax," Ikram Chaudhry, secretary of the Pakistan Edible Oil Refiners Association, said on Monday.

Cotton export licences for 100,000 bales issued

Newswire18 / Mumbai June 08, 2010, 0:26 IST

The government has started issuing licences for exporting cotton to Pakistan and Bangladesh, trade sources have revealed..

Initially, licenses to export around 100,000 bales had been issued to around a dozen exporters, the sources said. Cotton export will be subject to export duty at a flat rate of Rs 2,500 a tonne for all varieties.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has received export license applications for some 1.3 million bales, which were registered earlier pending shipments.

In May, the government had put cotton, cotton waste, and carded/combed cotton under restricted export items list, with every shipment requiring license from DGFT.

The norm is aimed at improving domestic cotton supply to bring down prices. After fresh registration process was suspended from April 19, exporters were asked to get previous registrations re-validated by the textile commissioner.

If the government issues export licenses for all pending orders, India's exports for 2009-10 (October-September) season will rise to over eight million bales from 3.5 million bales the previous season, the sources said.

The Cotton Advisory Board had estimated 2009-10 exports at eight million bales, before curbs like export duty, suspension of export registration, and mandatory export license regime were introduced.

Maharashtra sugar output may jump 18% in 2010-11

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi June 08, 2010, 0:27 IST

On the back of higher cane output, sugar production in Maharashtra was likely to increase by 18 per cent to 8.5 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year, a cooperative body has said.

In the current crop year ending September, Maharashtra—the country's largest producer—is estimated to produce 7.2 million tonnes of sweetener as against 4.6 million tonnes in the previous year. The sugar year runs from October to September.

"Sugar output may rise to 8.5 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year (October-September)," Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation (MSCSFF) Managing Director Prakash Naiknavare said. He said the sugar output would rise in 2010-11 as sugarcane production was expected to jump significantly after farmers received a record price for their cane in the 2009-10 crop year.

"Cane production is expected to increase to 72.5 million tonnes in the forthcoming crop year against 62 million tonnes this year," Naiknavare said. Apart from the rise in area, he said yields would also go up by over six per cent, as farmers were likely to opt for the high-yielding '265 Phule' cane variety.

The area under cane-cultivation is likely to expand by two lakh hectares to 10 lakh hectares in the 2010-11 crop year. Similarly, yields are expected to improve to 83 tonnes per hectare from 78 tonnes per hectare in the review period.

Naiknavare added, "This particular cane variety, '265 Phule' is quite popular in the state because of the high yield of 90 tonnes per hectare. Many are expected to go for this."

According to official data, cane had been planted in 8.86 lakh hectares of land as on June 3 in Maharashtra. Sugarcane, a very long duration crop, is planted thrice a year in India.

hindustantimes
Tue,08 Jun 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Cloudy

Tuesday, Jun 8

Max | Min
34.4o | 26.7o

Rain: Trace
Humidity: 63%
Wind: Normal
Sunrise: 05:41
Sunset: 18:33
Barometer: 1005.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Jun 9

Max | Min
37o | 27o

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Jun 10	**Jun 11**	**Jun 12**	**Jun 13**	**Jun 14**
38o | 26o	38o | 27o	38o | 29o	38o | 30o	38o | 28o
Tstorm	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy