

# THE HINDU

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## **Five-day programme organised on techniques to ensure seed quality**

TIRUCHI: The Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute (AEC and RI), Kumalur of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University organised a five-day national training programme on pre and post harvest management techniques for seed quality assurance recently.

K. Ramamoorthy, special officer (seeds), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, inaugurated programme and released the training manual.

A. Tajudeen, Dean, AEC and RI, emphasised the importance of farm mechanization in seed production.

The main objective of mechanization is to increase the production by timely operation and effective work, he said. T. Jayaraj, Director, Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute, Aduthurai, delivered the valedictory address and distributed certificates to the participants.

P. Masilamani, organising secretary, presented training report. K. Kannappan, professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Sciences, J. Karamathullah, Professor (Agronomy), K. Annadurai, coorganising secretary, offered felicitations.

Agricultural officers, seed certification and testing officers from different parts of the country participated.

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## **Rs.4.69-crore loan disbursed in Pudukottai**

*Autorickshaw drivers given a loan of Rs. 1 lakh each without collateral security:  
Executive Director*



**HELPFUL: IOB Executive Director Nupur Mitra (fourth from left), Collector A. Suganthi and Superintendent of Police P. Murthy giving away a cheque to a beneficiary in Pudukottai.**

PUDUKOTTAI: Loans to the tune of Rs. 4.69 crore were disbursed at a function got up by Indian Overseas Bank here on Wednesday.

Members of 229 self-help groups got Rs.3.41 crore; 82 auto-rickshaw drivers got a loan of Rs. 1 lakh each for the purchase of auto-rickshaws; farmers were sanctioned agricultural loans totalling Rs.25.54 lakh under the IOB – Green Credit Yojana scheme; a sum of Rs.20 lakh was sanctioned under the IOB-Urban Horticulture Yojana scheme. This apart, six students got loans for purchase of lap-top.

Speaking after distributing the loans, Nupur Mitra, Executive Director of Indian Overseas Bank, said that the loans for the purchase of auto-rickshaws was sanctioned without any collateral security. The bank had entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Balaji Auto and TVS Motors in Pudukottai.

The loans were sanctioned under the Credit Guarantee Trust scheme for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Unique scheme

She also said that the IOB-Urban Horticulture Yojana scheme was a unique scheme being implemented all over the country to promote horticultural activities. It has been attracting an overwhelming support from the borrowers, she added.

A. Suganthi, Collector, who presided over the function, spoke on the importance of credit flow for the economic uplift of masses below the poverty line.

Pat for SHGs

She appreciated the hard work by the women members of self-help groups in the district for prompt repayment

of loans.

P. Moorthy, Superintendent of Police, offered felicitations.

M. Manivel, IOB Chief Manager, Pudukottai branch, said that a special exhibition was organised for providing marketing avenues to the products made by the self-help groups.

ATM inaugurated

Later, Ms. Mitra, declared open automated teller machine services at Sudharsan Engineering College at Sathyamangalam, near here. Speaking on the occasion,

18 more ATMs

M. Ramadoss, IBO Chief Regional Manager, Karaikudi, said that it has been planned to start 18 ATM services in Sivagangai, Pudukottai and Ramanathapuram – the three districts where it is the lead bank.

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### **Sugar prices crash on higher yields**

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March 11: The bitterness of rising prices has come down just a little bit as sugar prices have crashed over the past three weeks. Sugar prices have fallen to Rs 31 a kg at the factory gate from an earlier level of Rs 41 a kg. Higher sugar cane production compared to the last year has led to the fall.

Meanwhile, the drop in sugar prices has seen shares of sugar mills drop up to five per cent on the exchange. In a note on the subject, brokerage house Morgan Stanley has sharply cut its price targets for sugar firms as it sees the carnage continuing.

“Sugar prices have come down dramatically, more than what the economic fundamentals would warrant,” says Mr Dhruv M. Sawhney, the chairman and managing director of Triveni Engineering, a sugar producer. “The factory prices of sugar have fallen to Rs 31-32 a kg from a level of Rs 41 a kg earlier. At the retail level, prices have fallen by Rs 5-8 a kg as well,” he says.

The drop in prices has come as the sugar manufacturers association has revised upwards India's expected sugar production. Mr Narendra Murkumbi, managing director of Renuka Sugars, said, "Prices have corrected on revised upward estimates of sugar production in India."

India's sugar production for the current year is now expected to be 16.5-17 million tons, up from the figure of 14.5-15 million tonnes earlier. "Production for the coming year is likely to be 22 million tonne," says Mr Sawhney. The government's order that a specified sugar quota has to be lifted every week has had a salutary effect on sugar prices as more stocks are offloaded into the market. Added to this is the drop in international prices.

On Thursday, shares of sugar firms were amongst the major losers on the indices. Brokers too have turned negative. Morgan Stanley has cut down the ratings of Shree Renuka Sugar and Balrampur Chini from overweight to underweight. It has also slashed the price targets for the two shares by 28 per cent and 55 per cent. Given the strong harvest expected for the next season, markets may remain cool on sugar.

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Food inflation slides to 17.8%

**Express news service** Posted online: Friday , Mar 12, 2010 at 0135 hrs

**New Delhi :** Hovering around the 18 per cent mark, food inflation slid marginally for the week ending February 27 and stood at 17.81 per cent compared with 17.87 per cent during the previous week. Even though food prices have started showing some signs of easing, inflationary pressures are spilling over to the broader economy and are likely to pull the overall inflation figure to double digits by the end of this fiscal.

Two components — fuel and manufacturing — are showing signs of high inflation. Food prices, on the other hand, are expected to ease a little after April when the rabi produce is out in the market.

"Food prices have remained sticky for sometime due to supply side constraints and substantial growth in demand. While prospects for food articles will improve April onwards, inflation will be driven largely by rise in

fuel and manufacturing,” said DK Joshi, principle economist, Crisil.

Food inflation declined by 0.06 percentage points during the week ended February 27 from 17.87 per cent in the previous week. Though a range of essential items still continue to be expensive, the rate of price rise has fallen in the past few weeks. On year-on-year pulses were dearer by 33.38 per cent, while potatoes turned costlier by 22.46 per cent.



### **Sunflower finds takers among Erode farmers**

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ERODE: The rise in price of sunflower seeds is increasingly luring farmers here into sunflower cultivation. According to assistant director of agriculture R C Thambi, with sunflower oil nowadays being used in the manufacture of toilet soaps, there are more takers for the crop.

“Sunflower oil has more vitamin-e content than any other vegetable oil. It is a combination of mono and polyunsaturated fats with low saturated fat levels. People prefer it for its less cholesterol, light taste and health benefits,” he said.

The crop is suitable for all types of soil with irrigation facility. “On an average, 15 kg of seed is required per hectare,” Thambi said, adding that “the harvested plants are also used as cattle feed”.

In the district, sunflower is cultivated mainly in Kodumudi, Perundurai, Gobi, Nambiyur, and Banglapudhur and in Tirupur in Kangayam, Dharapuram and Vellakoil areas.

Many government regulated market committees are receiving sunflower seeds regularly.

Muthur and Vellakoil have become major auction centres of sunflower seeds.

Last month, the seed was sold at Rs 2,000 per quintal and this month, it has risen to Rs 2,150.

The farmers in droughtprone areas cultivate it and get nearly Rs 10,000 as profit per acre.

“A major problem faced by the cultivators is parrot and peacock menace. The birds eat away the seeds during the harvest stage,” said a farmer.

The harvest season has begun in Gobi, Kallipatti, Kurumandhur, Saminathapuram, Kolappalur and Siruvalur.

With sugarcane cultivation yielding lesser profit, many cane farmers too are switching over to sunflower cultivation, which is less labour exploitative.