

Date:22/03/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032260950200.htm>

Training in banana products

COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) will organise a training in “value added products from banana” on March 23 and 24 at the university.

According to a release, training will be given in the following processing technologies: banana flour, noodles, milk shake powder, jam, beverage, pseudo-stem candy and fig.

Those interested can attend the course by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000. For details, contact Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, TNAU, Coimbatore – 641003; or call 0422-6611268.

Date:22/03/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032251600300.htm>

Concern over withering crops

DINDIGUL: Scorching summer and acute shortage of water for irrigation and drinking water needs haunt both residents and farmers of Sirumalai hill, forecasting slump in yield and shrink in cultivation areas. Cash crops such as pepper and coffee and vegetables and fruits like lemon, jack fruit and chow-chow are dying.

Already, lemon fruits have started withering before attaining the required growth at Velanpannai area. The size of lemon has dwindled to a third of its original size owing to poor irrigation, said a lemon grower. Equally affected are chow-chow growers.

With no water, chow-chow plants are drooping with dead leaves, lifeless stem and shrunk vegetable. Water shortage affects colour, size, quality and quantity of vegetables and fruits. “If there was no rain in April, all standing crops on

the hill will wither. Farmers will face huge loss,” said Sesu Raj, a chow-chow grower. Condition of both short term and perennial crops is in danger, he added.

Now, prices of lemon rule high at Rs.3,000 per one 80-kg bag and chow-chow stands at Rs.300 per 30-kg bag. Demand for these produces is growing day by day at Dindigul, Madurai and Oddanchatram wholesale markets. Farmers could not meet the growing demand owing to poor yield.

Pepper and jack fruit cultivators will have adverse impact in July. At lease one shower is essential for pepper plants which are at their flowering stages now. If summer rain fails, flowers will wither and hit yield. Jackfruit too needs water now to maintain yield in July or August. Coffee plants survive because of tree shades in farms. Hot climate affects size of coffee fruits.

Drinking water crisis too makes the situation worse. Already, people in Sirumalai Pudhur have started running on streets for a pot of drinking water.

Rampant denudation of forests, massive felling of trees in both reserve forests and patta lands, rampant expansion of uni-crops and unbridled withdrawal of ground water have led to the sharp slump in average rain on Sirumalai for a long time. After 2008, Sirumalai has been witnessing only scanty rain.

The Madurai Bench of Madras High Court had directed the Forest Department to demark Reserve Forest lands and patta lands to restrict tree felling on the hill.

Date:22/03/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032258200200.htm>

'Extinction of insects and plants, a cause for concern'



HEALTHY ECOSYSEM: Anne Walter, faculty, Department of Biology, St. Olaf College, Minnesota, the U.S. (right) handing over a can of bio-pesticide to P. Thirumalvalavan, Registrar of Bharathiar University, at the university in Coimbatore.

COIMBATORE: Insects and plants are becoming extinct because of habitat loss, pollution, over population and threat of climate change. The effects of climate change and habitat destruction are likely to be the worst challenges to animal and plant conservation in the 21st century, P. Thirumalvalavan, Registrar, Bharathiar University, said here recently.

Inaugurating a conference on "Impact of Climate Change on Bio-diversity of Insects and Environment" at the university, he said the world was facing its greatest ever bio-diversity of insects. "Climate change is having a significant impact on hundreds of plant and animal species across the world and also on the ecosystem," the Registrar said.

N. Krishnakumar, Director, Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, said organic biodiversity and integrated pest management were the only ways for fighting against pests and diseases in the face of climate change. Entomologists, ecologists and environmentalists should work for finding solutions, he added.

Referring to faunal and insect biodiversity, he said many more species of insects had bio-pesticide and organic formulations. "They play an important role in influencing the abiotic, biotic, and forest configuration. Hence, a strong knowledge base is required to understand about insects and their habitats," he added.

"There is a need for forest health monitoring, eco-system monitoring and bench marking the threats to the forest ecosystem. Students of zoology, biology, and botany, have a great role to play in understanding the threats. They should be able to monitor such factors intensively," Mr. Krishnakumar said.

He called for an annual census of life forms within the forest. Anne Walter, Department of Biology, St. Olaf College, Minnesota, the U.S., released some newly-developed bio-pesticides.

Date:22/03/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032261270300.htm>

World Forestry Day observed



TOWARDS GREENERY: Forest officials led by District Forest Officer I. Anwardeen (second left) on a sapling planting drive in the city to mark the World Forestry Day on Sunday.

Coimbatore: Distribution of saplings and planting them in and around the city marked the celebration of World Forestry Day by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department on Sunday.

Distributed

As many as 1,000 saplings were distributed free of cost to the public and farmers in Singanallur and R.S. Puram Uzhavar Sandhai.

Saplings planted

Tree planting programme in Sungam bypass road was done by District Forest Officer I. Anwardeen, Assistant Conservator of Forest J. Ramanan, Forest Range Officer G. Rajeswaran and others.

Our Staff Reporter from Tirupur adds: The Forest Department organised a sapling planting campaign and awareness programmes on importance of wildlife in Tirupur to mark the World Forestry Day celebrations on Sunday.

Conservator of Forests H. Basvaraju told The Hindu that the drive was conducted in nine places, including the Sainik School campus at Amaravathinagar, with the participation of non-governmental organisations and different stakeholders involved in the protection of forests.

The concept of World Forestry Day celebrations originated at the 23rd General Assembly of the European Confederation of Agriculture in 1971.

Awareness

“Our aim is to spread the message that forest is not just trees alone but a complex living community,” Mr. Basvaraju said. He said that during the programmes, public were told how different species dwell beneath the forest canopy.

Date:22/03/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032261600300.htm>

Agro Chamber welcomes tax exemptions in budget

CM hailed for not introducing any new tax proposals

Agricultural sector will benefit from moves such as increase in procurement price

Tax exemption provided to powders made from already tax-exempted pepper, cumin seed was a positive move

MADURAI: The Agro Food Chamber of Commerce and Industry has welcomed the State Budget for 2010-11, hailing the move to provide tax exemptions/deductions to agriculture and food products.

Association president S. Rethinavelu praised the Finance Minister K. Anbazhagan and Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi for not introducing any new tax proposals and announcing welfare measures. The tax exemption provided to powders made from already tax-exempted pepper, cumin seed and aniseed and the purchase tax exemption to manufacturers of such powders were a positive move, said Mr. Rethinavelu.

He welcomed the announcement on the new 'samadhan' scheme up to the period of value added tax (VAT) implementation in the State for the benefit of dealers with Tamil Nadu Government Sales Tax (TNGST) arrears.

Agricultural sector would benefit from the moves such as the increase in the procurement price for sugarcane, neera, and paddy, besides the extension of System of Rice Intensification (SRI), enhanced horticulture productivity through precision farming, incentives to promote organics farming using natural fertilizers, forming additional 10,000 farmers self-help groups in the fiscal, extending interest-free crop loans and allotting additional funds for crop insurance will also be beneficial.

Mr. Rethinavelu lauded the announcement of the Chief Minister to henceforth call 'physically handicapped' persons as 'differently-abled' and the move to form a separate department under his direct supervision for executing welfare scheme for them.

The Chamber expressed hope that an announcement would be made by the Government during the Grant for Commercial Tax Department regarding the constitution of a High Level Committee that would also comprise traders and farmers. This committee should recommend changes and amendments to solve the procedural hurdles and problems faced by them in the collection of Market Committee Cess under the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act 1987, a press release said.

Date:22/03/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032259540700.htm>

Madurai Aavin records profit of Rs. 10 crore

Wipes out all its accumulated losses of Rs. 22 crore



SURGING AHEAD:Milk production in progress at the Madurai District Cooperative Milk Producers Union.

MADURAI: The Madurai Aavin Union has posted a net profit of Rs. 10 crore for the 2009-10 financial year, which is its highest profit since its inception in 1967. This figure is more than double the union's last year profit of Rs. 4.14 crore.

Official sources told The Hindu here on Sunday that the record profits has enabled the union, formally known as Madurai District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, to wipe out its accumulated losses of Rs. 22 crore between 1982 and 2002.

In view of the prevailing lean season that is seeing declining milk procurement levels, a policy decision had been taken to invest the profits back into the sector to motivate dairy farmers. A decision was taken during a meeting of top Madurai Aavin officials with Dairy Commissioner Apurva Varma in Chennai on Friday.

All the dairy farmers under the Madurai Aavin would be given an incentive of 50 paise for every one litre supplied. A sum of Rs. 3.60 crore would be allotted for the purpose. Further, all milk producing cooperative societies would be given a minimum of two 40-litre milk cans free of cost. Around 3,000 cans would be purchased at a cost of Rs. 2,000 each with some societies that supply higher quantities getting more than two, sources said.

Aggressive marketing

Officials attribute the surge in profit mainly to the aggressive marketing efforts and increased milk sales. The sales average of milk for 2009-10 was 1.95 lakh litres a day on an average with the last fiscal's levels being 1.82 lakh litres. The average procurement for 2009-10 is 2.10 lakh litres a day.

The Madurai Union is the only surviving one of the four mega dairies established across the country in 1967 with UNICEF aid. The other dairies at Bangalore, Kolkata and Delhi are not functioning.

Pollution



Neglected: Untreated effluent from dyeing units are being let into the Sunnambu Odai, a water carrying channel in Erode, polluting it.

New Delhi, March 20, 2010

First Published: 00:01 IST(22/3/2010)

Here's why you should have cinnamon



Cinnamon or *dalchini* is a spice that has many wonderful qualities. Cinnamon is the sweet bark of the Cinnamon tree. Not only does it add flavour to food, it is also considered medicinally beneficial.

1. Cinnamon is a great mouth freshener. If you have dental caries, you can chew a small piece of cinnamon to act upon the bacteria and control infections. Plus, it freshens your breath.
2. It is good for diabetics because it stabilises blood sugar thanks to its effects on the hormone insulin. Boil 2gm of cinnamon powder or its equivalent in a stick in 300ml water. Reduce this decoction till it's about 200ml. Drink this early in the morning on an empty stomach and repeat at 4 in the afternoon.
3. Taken as a decoction, cinnamon controls gas production and build-up in the intestines. Drink the decoction while it is warm.
4. It controls nausea among pregnant women and children. It's mild, so it can be used frequently, but should be taken in moderation in the hot season.
5. Breads baked with cinnamon have a longer shelf life and the same applies to other foods.

6. Urinary tract infections are very common among women and cinnamon can help prevent and control them. Take it as a decoction or use it in food.

7. Add cinnamon powder to your face pack to control acne infections.

8. If you suffer from arthritis with inflammation, take cinnamon as a decoction and in your food. The application of oils with added cinnamon can be useful.

9. It has anti-clotting properties, so it's beneficial if you have deep vein thrombosis. Take it in your food.

10. It also controls cholesterol build-up.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/521028.aspx>

© Copyright 2009 Hindustan Times

India better prepared to tackle drought: Farm secy

First Published: 21:05 IST(19/3/2010)

Last Updated: 21:06 IST(19/3/2010)

As the country enters yet another scorching summer, the farm ministry today said the various government agencies are better prepared to tackle the vagaries of the monsoons in the coming Kharif season.

"I am confident that if there is a drought, we are much better prepared. The states were caught unawares last year. This time, this should not be the case," agriculture secretary PK Basu told reporters in New Delhi on Friday. Chances are there for a normal monsoon this time, he added.

Last year, the country was affected by the worst drought in 37 years, and kharif production in as many as 317 districts was impacted badly.

Basu, who handled the crisis as the drought commissioner, said the states have been directed to take preemptive measures to gear up for any kind of situation that may affect crop yield.

Citing the instance of Rajasthan, where the rainfall was uneven in many parts, Basu said the states have also been asked to prepare contingency plans to provide solutions for similar situation. The overall crop production, however, was largely compensated by a better-than-expected Rabi crop, mainly with patronisation of the states, he said.

"In fact, in Rabi crop, we may have some good surprises as well," he said hinting at higher wheat production this time than the record of 80.68 million tonnes last year.

Speaking after the conclusion of the two-day deliberation of 'National Conference on Agriculture for Kharif Campaign', an annual affair, Basu said states have been asked to take steps to provide quality seeds, ample fertilisers and water during the season.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/520996.aspx>

© Copyright 2009 Hindustan Times

DECCAN Chronicle

Farmers not happy with provisions in TN budget

Mar 22 2010

March 21: Tamil Nadu is in for a major crisis as farmers are mulling over giving up farming or committing suicide, according to leading agriculturists. "There is nothing worthwhile for farmers in the 2010-11 state budget. It looks more like an election budget," Mr A.M. Raja, veteran DMK leader and Consortium of Indian Farmers Association (TN) president, told Deccan Chronicle. He said the government was yet to understand the intensity of the cost escalation in agricultural operations.

Kattumannarkoil Kannan, vice-president, Cauvery Delta Farmers Association, said there was nothing to be overjoyed about the Rs 2,000 per tonne minimum support price announced for sugarcane. "This is well below the expectations of the farmers. The price will be effective only from the next cropping season and by then cultivation cost would have gone through the roof," said Mr Kannan, a BJP leader. He said the indifferent attitude of the state may force farmers to go for crop holiday. "This is going to be detrimental to the state's economy as rice and sugarcane will disappear from Tamil Nadu. What else do you expect the farmers to do?" he asked.

Mr Raja said though the government had announced a minimum support price of Rs 1,000 per tonne of sugarcane a couple of years back, farmers were given hardly Rs 800 per tonne. Says Mr Kannan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh already pay Rs 2,000 per tonne for sugarcane.

Arupathy Kalyanam, another CIFA leader, said the state was morally responsible to pay farmers as per the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan-led National Farmers' Commission. "The commission had recommended that farmers be paid the cost of production and an additional 50 per cent as minimum support price. If that rule is applied, sugarcane farmers should be given Rs 3,000 per tonne as MSP," he said.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/farmers-not-happy-provisions-tn-budget-011>