

Date:18/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/18/stories/2010051859580300.htm>

Officials undergo training in vermicompost production



Useful:Officials of Agriculture Department at a training programme in vermicompost production technology.

PERAMBALR: The Cotton Research Station of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University at Veppanthattai in Perambalur district recently conducted a training programme for the officials of the Agriculture Department in Ariyalur and Perambalur districts on TNAU's Silpaulin vermicompost production technology to emphasise on the importance of organic manure and its production. R. Kavimani, Professor and Head of the Cotton Research Station, Veppanthattai, said that the process of vermicomposting included the decomposition of plant and animal wastes by earthworms of epigeic nature.

He pointed out that earthworms were important in converting the unavailable form of nutrients into available form and they maintained the organic carbon status of the soil as well as the infiltration capacity of the soil. Dr. Kavimani said that the application of vermicompost enhanced the production of agriculturally important microorganisms. Vermicompost also contains growth stimulants like indole acetic acid and gibberlic acid. The programme on Silpaulin vermicompost encourages the small and marginal farmers to produce vermicompost in their own farm itself.

He pointed out that it would cost Rs.3,300 for converting one tonne of farm wastes into vermicompost and the net profit would be around Rs.6,000. R. Baskaran Assistant Professor demonstrated the vermicompost production technology.

Date:18/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/18/stories/2010051861920600.htm>

Milk producers begin indefinite strike in T.N.

CHENNAI: The indefinite strike from Monday by milk producers in support of their demand for higher procurement price had little impact on milk supply in Tamil Nadu.

The Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation said normal supply was maintained throughout the State, though there was a shortfall of one lakh litres in procurement.

As against the normal procurement of 21 lakh litres, the federation could procure 20 lakh litres. In Chennai city, normal supply of 10.5 lakh litres was reported, according to a Federation official.

The producers have been demanding an increase of Rs.5 per litre for both cow's and buffalo's milk.

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Paddy in 50,500 hectares

MADURAI: Despite poor rainfall, paddy was grown in 50,500 hectares of land in the district last year, said Madurai Collector C. Kamaraj.

At a recent review meeting, the Agricultural department officials said that under normal circumstances (of rainfall) water for irrigation would be released during June for kuruvai crop.

Since the combined water credit at Periyar and Vaigai reservoirs had not reached the 4000 mcft level, water could not be released on time last year. Hence, farmers' were provided with water for carrying out single crop in the last season.

By adopting effective water management and with the support of the ryots', 50,500 ha was covered under paddy, 7,564 ha under pulses and 2,589 ha of plantain.

Further, fertilizers adequately stocked and sold through primary agricultural cooperative banks.

A total of 44,760 metric tonnes of urea, 11,400 tonnes of DAP, 17,500 tonnes of potash and 17,000 tonnes of NPK and about 700 tonnes of seeds including paddy, cotton among others was sold through the outlets.

The officials clarified that there were no problems experienced by farmers' who relied on rainfed crop last season.

Date:18/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/18/stories/2010051860620300.htm>

Raise milk procurement prices, says association

MADURAI: Members of the Tamil Nadu Milk Producer's Association went on a strike and staged a demonstration at Usilampatti in the district on Monday demanding an increase of Rs. 5 per litre of cow milk in procurement price from the present Rs. 16 a litre.

Impact minimal

Officials of the Madurai Aavin, which also includes Theni district, said that the impact of the strike on milk procurement was minimal. While it declined by 1,160 litres in Madurai, procurement went up in Theni by a marginal 300 litres.

The procurement levels in Madurai district is usually around 80,000 litres of milk a day with Theni district accounting for 1.16 lakh litres, the officials said.

The last revision of Rs. 2 in milk procurement was done in September, 2009.

Date:18/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/18/stories/2010051860300300.htm>

Cucumber cultivation is picking up in Ramnad

Thanks to prevailing condition, which is perfect for farming

— Photo: L. Balachandar.



YIELD:A woman collecting cucumbers at Sakkarakottai kanmoi in Ramanathapuram.

RAMANATHAPURAM: The cultivation of cucumber, which is mostly done in dried-up area in kanmois (tanks) and waterways of the Public Works Department in the district, has gained momentum, thanks to the prevailing condition, which is perfect for the farming.

Though there is no real season for the plant , it is generally raised during the summer.

The farmers of Ramanathapuram prefer to cultivate it during the summer, as this is the period when kanmois and waterways and other water bodies are dried up.

The available moisture content in the soil surface is good enough to cultivate cucumber. There is no need for persistent showers.

As per the practice followed for several years, the farmers living around kanmois and water bodies have converted them into the field of cucumber cultivation.

Though it is legally wrong to occupy the land of kanmois and village ponds, cucumber farming thrives there as the officials concerned do not bother to stop the practice, thinking that they can cultivate the plant only till the start of monsoon season. As the plant period has entered the 4 to 6 weeks, the farmers have started harvesting cucumber.

Though there are a few farmers who express disappointment over the yield, it seems that the yield is relatively better than the last year. According to farmers, an acre of cucumber cultivation would fetch Rs.25,000 to 30,000.

But this year they say that yield may cross Rs.25,000.

P. Lakshmanan of Amman Koil said that the yield had not disappointed the farmers. They could earn something, as the overhead cost was comparatively less than many other crops. If the temperature was down a bit, the production could be better.

For M. Muniandi of Veeran Valasai, cucumber plant was a failure attempt this year.

He said that the plant was largely hit by pest that ultimately resulted in poor yield.

He had failed to sow seeds by giving proper space. It paved the way for pest occupying the plant.

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By Reema Narendran

18 May 2010 03:11:00 AM IST

Farming worth EMU-lating

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The yelping turkeys, quacking ducks and clucking hens at Ajitha's poultry farm at Enikkara, now has two newcomers in their midst - two emus from Hyderabad. It's just about two weeks since their arrival, but the duo seem to have already made friends with their feathered friends, perfectly at ease in the large cages that has been specially built for them.

Ajitha, who works at the Karakulam post-office, must be one among the very first city residents to go in for emu-farming. "It was out of pure curiosity that I decided to buy a pair.

They were quite tired when they had come in, but some glucose water and starter fowl feed got them back on their feet,” said Ajitha, who first came to know about these birds from newspapers and books.

What is written about emus is simply amazing stuff - that one litre of emu oil, famed for being marvellous for the skin, costs Rs 4,000 per litre in the international market; that one emu egg, which costs around Rs 500, can give 25 delicious omelettes and that one kilogram of emu meat will fetch Rs 250-300. Imagine, how much income a fully-grown 50-kg adult emu bird can generate!

Buying a pair is just as expensive. Ajitha had to shell out a five-figure sum to buy a two-month old pair. It takes 18-20 months for the emus to become fully mature, when they yield up to 50 eggs per year.

“Actually, I have not thought about the profit part as such. I love birds in general and I wanted to have emus at my farm. I would like to breed them and keep 2-3 pairs for myself and then think of selling. An adult bird weighing 50 kg is as good as a buffalo and I can get back my investment just by selling the meat of one,” said Ajitha, who has over 30 hens, including fancy hens like Onagodory, Millie Fluer and Silver-laced, 13 ducks and 7 turkeys. What is common between emus and turkeys is that they both lay eggs in the evening. The emu eggs are huge, shining blue and the shells are used for making beautiful art pieces.

“The skin is supposed to be very soft and hence used for manufacturing hand gloves, while the feathers are used to make handbags,” said Dr J. Mohan, principal training officer at the Livestock Management and Training Centre, Kudappanakkunnu, who has made a short documentary on emu farming, which could be very useful for beginners.

The female emu is larger and taller than the male. Though they are the largest birds after Ostriches, Ajitha did not have much of a problem taming them. “They are harmless. All that they do is peck around anything that is shiny or metallic and often on our footwear,” she said.

Ajitha had to be especially cautious because with construction of the sheds still going on, there are bits of iron scrap lying around. Until the construction is over, the emus will have to be confined to the sheds.

There are no known predators as such and what is surprising is the fact this bird, with its three little toes, can easily stamp a snake to death. “Their legs are very strong since they carry the whole body weights and killing a snake is no big deal for them,” said Mohan.

Unlike common hens, emus are generally resistant to almost all the diseases that attack

poultry and hence are becoming very popular in North India, though they are yet to catch up in the south.reema_narendran@expressbuzz.com

By Express News Service

18 May 2010 12:12:00 AM IST

Milking the consumer dry

KOCHI: Is the 'milk man of Kerala' cheating his customers? No, says the Ernakulam Regional Cooperative Milk Producers Union (ERCMPU). Yes, says the Ernakulam District Committee of Kerala Karshaka Sangham (KKS). The latter is at loggerheads with Milma for selling pasteurised toned milk Jersey Superior with 3 percent fat and 8.5 percent saturated natural fat (SNF) at Rs 22 per litre.

"The ERCMPU is cheating its consumers and dairy farmers by violating the government directive regarding the cost of milk," alleged Karshaka Sangham president P M Ismail and secretary T K Mohanan.

Says ERCMPU chairman M T Jayan, "These are day-to-day developments. The fat content was about three percent a few days ago but it is 3.2 percent now," he says.

Mohanan said that Milma was selling toned milk with 3 percent fat and 8.5 percent SNF in blue colour packets for Rs 20. The rate of toned milk with 3.2 percent fat and 8.5 percent SNF in pink colour packets with the brand name Jersey Milk was Rs 22. It was increased to Rs 24 by Milma unilaterally but reduced to Rs 22 per litre due to protest. Ismail said that Milma has withdrawn milk in blue colour packets. "It is supplying milk in pink colour packets in the guise of jersey milk having the content of 3.2 percent fat and 8.5 percent SNF.

A laboratory test conducted by the Quality Control Officer of Dairy Development Department in Ernakulam showed that milk in pink colour packets under the brand Jersey Superior had only 3 percent fat and 8.5 percent SNF which should be sold at Rs 20 per litre but is being sold at Rs 22 per litre. P M Ismail and T K Mohanan alleged that the ERCMPU is cheating dairy farmers and consumers by charging Rs 2 extra for a litre of milk. Coir and Cooperation Minister G Sudhakaran assured that the matter would be looked into and action would be initiated against Milma if found guilty.

Jayan said that homogenised milk is a value-added product.

This depends on the availability of fat in the market. "This is not cheating. It is not a preplanned action. One doesn't understand why the Karshaka Sangham is making such charges," he said.

kochi@expressbuzz.com

By Express News Service

17 May 2010 04:18:00 AM IST

Sudhakaran wants probe into NABARD functioning

MALAPPURAM: Cooperati on Minister G Sudhakaran has said the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) should be disbanded for its unproductive role in supporting the developmental causes and the growth of cooperative sector in the state. While inaugurating the district-level distribution of the Cooperative Risk Fund, allotted by the Kerala Cooperative Development and Welfare Fund Board, in Malappuram on Sunday, the minister said NABARD was discharging its duty depending on bribery. He asked the Centre to order a CBI probe into the functioning of NABARD accusing it of being anti-farmer and anti-cooperative. He alleged that the headquarters of the bank i n Thiruvananthapuram was constructed with the tears and blood of poor people in the state. Sudhakaran affirmed that no cooperative firms in the state would be allowed to attach the houses of persons who fail to repay the obtained financial aid. Other than opting for a sudden recovery, the cooperative firms should follow the custom of giving timely notices to their beneficiaries for ensuring fairness in the field, he said.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Tuesday, May 18

Max Min

38.4° | 29.2°

Rain: 00mm in24hrs Sunrise: 05:43

Humidity: 60% Sunset: 18:27

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

Tomorrow's Forecast



Tstorm

Wednesday, May 19

Max Min

34° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

May 20



34° | 28°

Tstorm

Friday

May 21



31° | 27°

Tstorm

Saturday

May 22



32° | 27°

Tstorm

Sunday

May 23



33° | 27°

Tstorm

Monday

May 24



34° | 28°

Tstorm