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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/20/stories/2010052057190100.htm>

Milk producers' stir withdrawn

SALEM: Milk producers, who have been on an indefinite State-wide strike demanding a hike in the procurement price for the past three days, have withdrawn their stir temporarily.

The decision was taken on Wednesday here at the executive committee meeting of the Tamil Nadu Milk Producers Welfare Association, which spearheaded the agitation.

The association asked its producers to resume supply immediately to the respective village milk producers' co-operative unions.

CPI (M) blamed

Dairy Development Minister U. Mathivanan on Wednesday blamed the Communist Party of India (Marxist) for instigating milk producers to go on strike. In a statement, he said that as on Wednesday procurement was affected to some extent only in 250 societies.

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TNCSC to procure black gram

PUDUKOTTAI: The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) will procure

black gram (Ulundu) in Pudukottai district from the farmers who produced under the Pulses Mission and distribute the commodity through public distribution system.

230 hectares

According to the Collector, A. Suganthi, black gram pulses were raised in about 230 hectares in various parts of Pudukottai district under the Pulses Mission. She pointed out that about 150 tonnes of black gram would be procured by the TNCSC from the district agricultural marketing society by offering Rs. two more per kg of black gram of the prevailing procurement price. The TNCSC will follow the procurement norms and guidelines of the Centre for purchasing the black gram.

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Rain triggers agriculture activities in rain-fed areas

Sowing is over in several places in the district: officials

Efforts on to distribute high yielding seeds

Plans to encourage farmers to raise pulses as pure crop

THENI: Agriculture activities are in full swing in rain-fed areas of the district, thanks to the early onset of summer rain and heavy down pour in the last week of April and in the first week May.

With the rainfall, farmers have started preparing the field in several areas. Sowing

is over in several places in the district, said agriculture officials.

After a gap of five years, farmers in the rain-fed areas are jubilant. Normally, maximum summer rainfall of the district is 27 per cent of the total rainfall. (In 2005, the district had recorded actual rainfall of 278.7 mm during summer, 26 per cent of total rainfall of the year. In that year, the district had received 1,084.5 mm of rain.)

Cholam, maize, bajra, ragi, samai, pulses, cotton, groundnut, gingili, castor and cashew are some major crops of rain-fed areas.

With sharp slump in cotton cultivation area, cashew becomes a prominent crop to farmers in these areas. But heavy summer shower is an enemy to cashew.

But it is ideal for pulses.

So, many farmers have abandoned cashew this year and have taken up pulses cultivation. Agriculture officials strongly believe that areas under pulses cultivation will go up sharply as this rain is ideal for it.

Officials hope that over 80 per cent of the total area under rain-fed areas will be brought under cultivation this year of which mostly under pulses.

The Agriculture Department has plans to encourage farmers to raise pulses as pure crop instead of inter-crop to other crops like ground nut.

They will develop demonstration plots to motivate farmers to raise pulses in large scale.

Efforts are on to distribute high yielding seed varieties to farmers to expand pulses cultivation areas, said agriculture officials.

Farming activities for the first crop of double cropping area in Cumbum valley will normally commence in June only after release of water from Periyar dam.

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Three-day training on advanced farm practices begins

Tirupur: To enhance efficiency of cultivation and thereby improve productivity of various crops, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has started a three-day training programme for farmers on various advanced farm practices at Udumalpet on Wednesday.

Sugarcane

The participants were being taught 'ultra high density planting' techniques for raising mango, cashew and guava crops and sub-soil irrigation methods for the cultivation of sugarcane and tissue culture banana.

During the event, the farmers would be taken out on a field trip to few progressive farms at Theni.

NABARD Assistant General Manager G. Santhanam said that ultra high density planting method would enable the farmers to deviate from the conventional planting distance of 10 m X 10 m in the case of orchards like mango and raise it at 3 m. X 2 m or even at a 3 m X 1m spacing.

“Special pruning technology will be followed while adopting the innovative spacing pattern, thus, helping the farmers to considerably reduce the gestation period and thereby help the farmers an early income generation,” he added.

Mr. Santhanam pointed out that the farmers who utilise the ultra high density planting methodology could very easily prepare a bankable proposal to obtain credit since the scheme assures high early returns.

Similarly, sub-soil irrigation techniques would help the farmers to utilise water and nutrients efficiently.

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Sell small onions immediately

Price likely to be around Rs. 12 a kg

Storage not an option

COIMBATORE: The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has asked small onion farmers to sell the crop without resorting to storage.

According to a release, the fluctuations in price created panic among small onion farmers and the doubt whether they had to sell the harvested crop immediately or store the bulbs.

To facilitate the farmers in taking a decision, the DEMIC analysed the past 10 years' price that prevailed in Dindigul market.

Trade surveys were also conducted in Dindigul and Ottanchathiram markets.

Trade sources reported that arrivals from Karnataka had come to an end in April. According to National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation the Minimum Export Price (MEP) had declined to \$ 415 for a tonne in April.

Summer showers

Reduced MEP and summer showers during the harvest season in some parts of Tamil Nadu helped the price to move in the upward direction. Based on this, DEMIC confirmed the price of small onion to rule around Rs. 13 – Rs. 15 a kg at the farm level during May-June for better quality bulbs.

The average quality bulbs would cost around Rs. 10 – Rs. 12 a kg.

Bigger bulbs with good colour and less moisture content would come under the better quality group.

If there was continued heavy rainfall in Palladam, Tirupur, Udumalpet, and Coimbatore, in the harvesting season, there was a likelihood of the price to move beyond Rs. 15 a kg.

Trade sources also reported that the crop harvested would not be suited for storage because of the high temperature and low air flow. Since storage was not a feasible option, farmers could immediately sell the crop.

It is also recommended to sow small onion in May-June to get a better price in August-September.

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Farmers oriented on pulse production

THANJAVUR: Thirty five selected farmers of Thiruvaiyaru block participated in a three-day training programme on “Pulse productivity enhancement and stabilisation in Cauvery delta zone” organised by the Soil and Water Management Research Institute (SWMRI) with the assistance of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural

Development (NABARD) recently. The training was held in the fields.

B. Chandrasekaran, Professor and Head, SWMRI inaugurated the programme. He said that the increase in production of pulses in the past is relatively at a slower rate than the growing demand of the nation. Low productivity may be due to non-usage of quality seed, cultivation in poor and marginal lands and non adoption of production technologies etc.

Considering the importance of pulses for its sustainability in various cropping systems and their role in nutrition security, efforts are required to enhance domestic production substantially. Keeping this in mind, the programme has been organised under cluster approach by NABARD.

Scientists demonstrated various aspects of technologies like characteristics and special features of the various pulses varieties available for cultivation, technologies for higher productivity, strategies for weed and water management, need of usage and quality seeds, seed production strategies, nutrient management practices and soil analysis techniques in pulses during the training. The farmers inter-acted with the scientists and got their doubts clarified.

S.T. Ravikumar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, V. Palaniappan, Adviser for Dr.M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation spoke. The participants were taken to National Pulses Research Centre at Vamban as an exposure visit on the third day, said a press release issued here by SWMRI on Wednesday.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Easy-to-apply bio-fertilizers, the answer to farmers' yield problems

The unit produces nearly 30,000 litres of liquid bio-fertilizers a month

PHOTO: M.J. PRABU



Giant step: The farmer R. Kulandaisamy at his production unit in Thanjavur.

“If one goes through the agricultural production history in the last six decades, the number of farmers opting out of agriculture, suicides of hundreds of farmers in the past 10 years, and shrinking cultivation lands are ample proof that our agriculture policy is totally wrong,” says Mr. R. Kulandaisamy a progressive farmer and liquid bio-fertilizer producer called Tari Biotech in Thanjavur.

“Though policy makers and certain sections of the scientific fraternity say that yields are increasing and farmers prospering, a visit to any nearby village proves that many of these claims are far from true,” he adds.

The bio-fertilizer unit, set up at a cost of nearly rupees one crore produces nearly 30,000 litres of liquid bio-fertilizers a month, and the farmer claims it to be “the production unit of its first of its kind in Tamil Nadu.”

Insoluble form

Normally, plants need nitrogen, phosphorus, and calcium — commonly referred to as N, P, K — for their good growth.

All the three are available in the soil and atmosphere in an insoluble form that cannot be absorbed by plants directly.

Micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungi, algae, and viruses in the soil convert these three nutrients into soluble forms, for easy absorption by the crops.

The farmers argue that mindless and excess application of chemical fertilizers, during the green revolution, destroyed many of these beneficial micro-organisms and yields started decreasing slowly or became static even after more application of fertilizers.

Beneficial organisms

Due to excess chemical application these beneficial organisms get destroyed due to the non-availability of food (organic matter).

“Another important fact is that use of fertilizers resulted in accumulation of chemical residues in the harvested food leading to health problems in humans. Farmers must realise the danger in using excessive chemicals that spoil both their land and health, and should try to multiply the beneficial micro-organisms in the soil again by using natural methods and bio-liquid formulations in their practice,” says Mr. R. Kulandaisamy.

He explains:

“The bio-formulations produced at our unit can be used for nearly two years, compared to the local vermi-compost (solid bio-fertilizers) and other ingeniously manufactured bio inputs that possess a shelf life of only six months.”

"Our formulations are tolerant to UV rays and can stand high temperature

fluctuations (50 degrees celsius). The application of one ml of our product is equivalent to 100 grams of solid bio-fertilizers from the date of manufacture (about 100 times),” he explains.

Basal manure

The liquid bio-fertilizers are easy to apply using a hand or power sprayer and through fertigation tanks and as basal manure mixed along with farm yard manure.

Separate rooms for culturing and inoculations make sure that there is zero per cent contamination in our products, benefiting farmers.

There are several formulations available for different crops being produced in the unit and priced between Rs.600-900 a litre.

Organic nursery

In addition to the production plant, the farmer also maintains an organic nursery approved by the Government for cashew, vanilla, citrus, guava, sapota, amla (gooseberry), banana, and mango saplings, apart from medicinal and ornamental plants. The nursery supplies close to 12 lakh plantings annually and is home to nearly 50 mango varieties.

The State government's Industries and Commerce Department conferred the Best Entrepreneur Award on the farmer recently.

For more details readers can contact Mr. R. Kulandaisamy at email:tari_hitech@yahoo.com, mobile: 98430-59117 and 98434-39909.

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Technologies to induce regular bearing in mango

The flowering phenomenon in mango is a complex one. Normally, it crops heavily in one year (on year) and bears less or no crop the following year (off year). Again, it yields heavily the next year.

Thus the rhythm of bearing in mango is not strictly 'alternate' but 'irregular' or 'erratic'. Research findings have clearly indicated that this phenomenon is mostly due to varietal as well as environmental factors in addition to the orchard management practices including pruning, nutrition, irrigation and plant protection.

Regular bearers

Among the most important commercial varieties of the South, Neelum (Kazaladdu), Banganapalli (Sappatai) Bangalora (Kizhimooku, Totapuri) Kalepad and Senthura (Chinnaswarnarekha) are moderate to heavy bearers and are considered to be fairly regular.

Choice varieties such as Alphonso (Gundu), Imam Pasand (Himayuddin), Mulgoa, Peter (Pai, Nadusalai) etc., are mostly erratic in bearing.

Though mango is a hardy tree an adverse weather condition can convert an 'on year' into an 'off-year'. It is quite evident during this mango season when almost all the varieties failed to flower. It is mainly due to the deficit rainfall which was about 300 mm less than that of the previous year's average annual rainfall of Tamil Nadu.

Adverse affect

Further, if frequent showers occur during the period of fruit-bud differentiation

(October – November) and flowering (January) with cloudy weather and excessive dew, both flowering and fruit set would be adversely affected.

Dry and cool weather with a day /night temperature around 20 {+0} / 150 {+0} C during winter season trigger flowering induction. Following recommended management practices help to induce regular bearing in mango.

— Regular pruning is very essential.

— Need based fertilizer application based on the soil test report has to be followed.

— Spraying of Potassium nitrate at 2 per cent + NAA 40 ppm (or) Potassium dihydrogen phosphate at 1 per cent + Potassium nitrate at 1 per cent during October.

— Spraying of 0.5 per cent urea, if the trees do not flower up to January.

— In the irrigated orchards, soil drenching of Paclobutrazol at 1 ml /m {+2} of canopy area.

M. SELVARAJAN, S. PARTHIBAN , & V. PONNUSWAMI

Horticultural College and Research Institute Periyakulam, TNAU

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<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/05/20/stories/2010052050781600.htm>

FARM QUERY

Ornamental fish rearing

Which department and who should I contact to get information on ornamental fish rearing farmers in Karnataka?

Ramoji Rao

Bangalore

You can contact Dr.D.Seenappa Chief Scientific Officer, Inland Fisheries Division, Main Research Station, University of Agricultural Sciences(B), Hebbal, Bangalore, email: drdseenappa@yahoo.co.in, phone and fax 080-23515644 for your details.

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Global warming affects Lake Tanganyika's unique ecosystem

Surface waters in Lake Tanganyika, the second-oldest and second-deepest lake in the world, are currently warmer than at any time in the previous 1,500 years, according to a study published recently online issue of the journal Nature Geoscience.

“This result is in addition to those from other African lakes showing that changes in regional climate have a significant impact on the lakes, and on the human populations that depend on the lakes' resources,” said Paul Filmer, program director in the U.S. National Science Foundation's Division of Earth Sciences, which funded the research.

The scientists took core samples from the lakebed that laid out a 1,500-year history of the lake's surface temperature.

The resulting data showed that the lake's surface temperature, 26 degrees Celsius (78.8 F), last measured in 2003, is the warmest the lake has been for a millennium and a half.

The team also documented that Lake Tanganyika experienced its largest

temperature change in the 20th century. The change has affected its unique ecosystem, which relies upon nutrients from the depths to jumpstart the food chain on which fish survive.

“Our data show a consistent relationship between lake surface temperature and productivity such as that of fish stocks,” said Jessica Tierney of Brown University, the paper's lead author.

Decline in productivity

“As the lake gets warmer, we expect productivity to decline, and we expect that it will affect the fishing industry.” The lake, one of the richest freshwater ecosystems in the world, is divided into two levels.

Most of the animal species live in the upper 100 meters, including valuable sardines. Below that, the lake holds less and less oxygen, and at certain depths, it has no oxygen.

The lake depends on wind to churn its waters and send nutrients from the depths toward the surface.

These nutrients are food for algae, which supports the lake's entire food web. But as Lake Tanganyika warms, the mixing of waters is lessened; fewer nutrients are funneled from the depths to the surface.

More warming at the surface magnifies the difference between the two lake levels; even more wind is needed to churn the waters enough to ferry nutrients toward the upper layer.

The researchers' data show that during the last 1,500 years, intervals of prolonged warming and cooling are linked with low and high algal productivity, respectively, indicating a clear link between past temperature changes and biological productivity in the lake, an important

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Studying microbes' beneficial role in plants



To find out what makes microbe-plant interactions tick, scientists decoded the genome of a plant-dwelling microbe shown to raise plant growth by 40 per cent. The work may effect improved farming and biofuel production.

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Drumstick delight

A simple dish with drumstick



POWERHOUSE OF NUTRITION Make drumstick part of your diet

Drumstick is one of the most common trees in India. The green-skinned, tough, 1-2 feet long, stick-like vegetable, is soft and fleshy inside.

The opaque white flesh, embedded with pea-like seeds, covered in layers of skin, is sweetish, fragrant and tasty, when cooked.

The hard ridges of drumsticks are generally lightly scraped with a peeler, but care should be taken to not over peel it, as the vegetable tends to become difficult to cook and stir.

The skin should also be intact to enable eating the fleshy part, when cooked.

Ayurveda says the leaves of the Moringa tree can prevent 300 diseases. Scientific research has proven that these humble leaves are, in fact, a powerhouse of nutrition.

Gram for gram, the drumstick contains seven times the vitamin C in oranges, four times the calcium and 2 times the protein in milk, 4 times the vitamin A in carrot,

and 3 times the potassium in bananas.

The drumstick is valued as a vegetable. All parts of the tree — the bark, root, fruit, flowers, leaves, seeds and even the gum — have medicinal value and are used in the treatment of rheumatism and venomous bites as an antiseptic and as cardiac and circulatory stimulants.

It also acts like a diuretic. Externally, it is applied as a plaster or poultice to swellings.

Its seeds are acrid and stimulant. The leaves are rich in vitamins A and C and are useful in treating catarrhal infections.

Drumstick's another miraculous quality is its ability to purify water and it has been used by households for centuries. But it has only recently been tested commercially.

Powdered drumstick seeds, when added to murky, bacteria-laden water, act as a coagulant, binding to the bacteria and silt and falling to the bottom of the vessel. The clean water can then be poured out.

Now, for a recipe.

Drumstick with onions

Ingredients

Drumstick: 4

Onions, finely chopped: 2-3

Tamarind extract (or 1 tomato chopped): 1 tbsp

Curry leaves: 1 sprig

Salt to taste

Mustard seeds: half tsp

Whole red chillies, broken into pieces: 3

Cooking oil: 2 tbsp

Method: Peel and cut the drumsticks into one-and-a-half-inch long pieces. Heat oil in a pan and add the mustard and the whole chillies. When the mustard seeds stop spluttering, add all the chopped vegetables, except tomato, and saute. Add the salt and the turmeric powder. Cover and allow it to cook on a low flame. Keep stirring in between till done. Add chilli powder and tamarind extract/chopped tomato. Cook for some more time. Serve hot with rice.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Cattle manure to help power internet giants?

NYT News Service, May 20, 2010, 12.15am IST

Hey diddle diddle. Guess what the cow has done this time? America's dairy farmers could soon find themselves in the computer business, with the manure from their cows possibly powering the vast data centers of companies like Google and Microsoft.

While not immediately intuitive, the idea plays on two trends: the building of computing centers in more rural locales, and dairy farmers' efforts to deal with cattle waste by turning it into fuel. With the right skills, a dairy farmer could rent out

land and power to technology companies and recoup an investment in the waste-to-fuel systems within two years, Hewlett-Packard engineers say in a new research paper.

The rise of higher-speed data transfer networks has given technology companies a chance to move farther from large populations and still be able to get information to them as quickly as they need it. So companies like Google, Yahoo and Microsoft have been engaged in a mad dash to find spots in the US that have plenty of electricity and land. If those locations are near dairy farms, so much the better. Rather than being an alternative energy convenience, this approach could benefit companies operating in countries like China and India that need to find an economical way to power their computing centers. "The average cow makes enough waste per day to power a 100-watt light bulb," said Michael Kanellos, editor in chief at Greentech Media, a research and publishing firm. According to HP's calculations, 10,000 cows could fuel a 1MW data center, the equivalent of a computing center used by a bank.



Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Thursday, May 20

Max Min
25.7° | 22.6°

Rain: Trace
Humidity: 89%
Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 05:42
Sunset: 18:28
Barometer: 1000.0

Tomorrow's Forecast








Tstorm

Friday, May 21

Max Min
33° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday May 22	Sunday May 23	Monday May 24	Tuesday May 25	Wednesday May 26
				
35° 28° Tstorm	35° 29° Cloudy	36° 29° Cloudy	37° 29° Cloudy	37° 29° Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

 Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 05:28
 Humidity: 23 % Sunset: 19:07
 Wind: Normal Barometer: 1002

