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## Supply shortfall sends mango prices up

*However, watermelons, muskmelons and cucumbers available in plenty*



With the dip in the mango harvest this year, the summer fruit is likely to be priced higher. —

CHENNAI: Hot, bothered and thirsty? One way to beat the heat is to bite into a juicy melon or crunch on a crisp cucumber. Fortunately, the city is lavishly dotted with makeshift shops on the platforms and hawkers who make summer tolerable with seasonal fruits.

This year, however, savouring the season's bounty comes at a cost. Plump mangoes, juicy watermelons, muskmelons and crunchy cucumbers have promptly arrived this season but with increased price tags.

Mangoes, especially, are seeing a 50 per cent rise in prices, as the supply to Chennai is not even 20 per cent that of last year. Observes S. Chandran, secretary of Koyambedu Market Licensed Merchants Association: "One tonne costs around Rs.25,000 to Rs.30,000. We primarily source it from Salem and Vijayawada," he said.

Tirupati and Palakkad used to be the major suppliers of Banganapalli, but the supply has shrunk owing to paucity of rain. Arrival of other varieties such as Alphonso has also come down and Rumani is expected only in June.

Watermelons and muskmelons (kirni) compensate for mangoes, with their abundance along roadsides. Watermelons, which come easy on pockets, are first pick for juice lovers and seen as an ideal fruit to combat dehydration during summer.

Slices of watermelons are neatly stacked in many areas, as cut-fruit sellers make a brisk business by drawing commuters who stop by for an immediate sugar fix. "From Rs.5 a piece to Rs.15, watermelons are sold according to their sizes and most melons are juicy and sugary," says Dhanammal, who has put up a makeshift shop near Loyola College.

Juice kiosks such as Selva Fruit Juice Shop in T.Nagar have stocked creamy muskmelons in good numbers, sensing demand. "Kirnis make for the major chunk of the business during summer.

Every day, we dish out at least 50 glasses of kirni juice," says Selvaganapathi, the owner. The unassuming tender coconuts, which began to dominate the market much before the onset of summer, are still arguably one of the seasonal best-sellers. Priced from Rs.15 to Rs.20 each, tender coconuts find good takers on busy stretches such as Arcot Road and G.N.Chetty Road.

Compensating for the lesser arrival of mangoes, apples and sweet lime (saathukudi) manage to get takers during summer.

“Nearly 90 per cent of sweet lime is sourced from Andhra Pradesh. The fruit is available in plenty round the year,” says S.Srinivasan, president, Koyambedu Wholesale Fruits Association.

Nearly 300 tonnes of sweet lime arrive every day, mainly from Hyderabad and sometimes from Maharashtra. Apples from Himachal Pradesh might turn out to be lesser expensive than last year. “Snowfall across the world was good which has led to frequent arrivals of apples,” Mr. Chandran said.

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## SBI focuses on farmers, those in rural areas

*It has adopted 21,000 girl children to meet their educational expenses*



Timely help:D.N. Balodhi, Director, Central Board, State Bank of India (third right), disbursing loans to members of a women self-help group at 'SBI Ka Apna Gaon' programme in Kalikanaickanpalayam in Thondamuthur clock, Coimbatore district, on Monday. —

COIMBATORE: State Bank of India (SBI) has adopted 21,000 girl children so far through its village adoption programme to meet their educational expenses, according to Director of the Central Board of the Bank D.N. Balodhi.

Speaking at "SBI Ka Apna Gaon (namadhu gramam)" programme at Kalikanaickenpalayam here on Monday, he said the bank had 17,500 branches across the country. The Government of India had 60 per cent share in the bank. Apart from implementing various government schemes, the bank was also focusing on financial improvement of farmers and those in rural areas. It had a programme in association with agricultural scientists to encourage farmers to adopt new technologies and get better yield in their farms. Through Hariyali Ganga, another scheme of the bank, youth were encouraged to set up industries in rural areas. The focus in this scheme was on the environment.

Mr. Balodhi said the bank gave crop loan up to Rs. 1 lakh at five per cent interest without collateral security. For loans up to Rs. 3 lakh, the interest was five per cent to farmers who were prompt in repayment. Loans of Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 25 lakh were given at nine per cent interest. The condition here also was prompt repayment.

Under the village adoption programme, two girl children were adopted in every village and their education was supported by the bank for five years. In the villages, the focus was on overall development such as health, education and infrastructure, he said.

According to a release, it adopted 209 villages till March 31, 2009 and in 2009-2010 added another 84, including Kalikanaickenpalayam in Coimbatore District. At the function here on Monday, Rs. 19 lakh loans were disbursed to 11 persons.

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## Expo provides insight into agro techniques



**MUCH TO LEARN:**Visitors looking at one of the stalls at the expo in Madurai.

**MADURAI:** Farmers of four southern districts are set to learn about some of the latest advances in agriculture practices and gain first-hand knowledge about the modern farm equipment from an expo at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

A total of 5,000 farmers drawn in equal numbers from Madurai, Theni, Dindigul and Sivaganga districts have been invited to take part in the five-day 'ATMA Kharif 2010 farmers' conference.' Besides the expo, a series of lectures by agriculture experts from the Government has also been organised during the conference. The expo, which began on Sunday, features 54 stalls put up by various Government departments, cooperatives and private companies dealing with seeds, fertilizers and farming equipment.

Experts from the Government Departments of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Agriculture, Agriculture Marketing and Sericulture would interact with farmers. Scientists from the TNAU would be addressing some of the sessions.

## Mobilise farmers

The main objective of the expo, an Agriculture Department official said, was to mobilise farmers onto a single platform and give them an exposure to the latest developments in the sector. A total of 250 farmers would be brought in from each district on every day of the conference. They will be given food free of cost.

Demonstrations of the farming techniques like drip irrigation and System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and modern farming equipment like the harvesters would be given.

Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), a council comprising various Government agencies and stake holders, is chaired by the Collector of respective districts.

Formed in 2006-07, the Agency receives 90 per cent of its funding from the Central Government with the rest coming from the respective State Governments.

The expo would be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the lecture sessions scheduled between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

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*By IANS*

*03 May 2010 12:12:16 PM IST*

'India can be agricultural superpower'



NEW DELHI: India can become an agricultural superpower and the proposed food security bill is coming at the right time as it has the potential to prevent a backlash from people, says the chief of one of India's largest farming cooperatives.

"Unless the government can provide food security to its people, there will be a terrific backlash," asserted C.V. Ananda Bose, managing director of the the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited.

"Food riots have even thrown away governments in some countries. But India fortunately doesn't have a food crisis," Bose told IANS in an interview.

According to him, India had thought about food security "at the right time" and the bill in this regard was a "proactive step" initiated by the government. A group of ministers is discussing the final points of the food security bill.

Bose, a 1977 batch official from the Indian Administrative Service, said India can also become an agriculture super power if it taps the farming potential to the optimum.

"We have all resources to increase agriculture production and productivity. We only have to tap the infinite potentials of our country particularly eastern India," he said and added that his organisation had many roles to play to ensure food security in the country.

"Food security means providing sufficient, safe and nutritious food to the poor and the marginalised people to meet their dietary needs. We have many roles to play to ensure food security in the country," the civil service official said.

NAFED was established in 1958 to promote cooperative marketing of agricultural produce to benefit the farmers. Agricultural farmers are the main members of NAFED.

In a bid to give a boost to the government's effort to bring food security, NAFED has already taken certain steps, he said.

"We have sought the help of nanoscience and nanotechnology experts like P. Somasundaran who can help India ensure food security by increasing crop yields and reducing consumption."

Somasundaran, who teaches at Columbia University in the US, visited India last month and expressed his willingness to chair a task force being set up by NAFED on use of science and nanotechnology to boost

agricultural production and prevent damage to food grain.

Referring to NAFED's decision to distribute high-yielding seeds developed by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) to farmers, he said "high yielding will stop the decline in agricultural production and can ensure food security".

BARC, under its nuclear agriculture and biotechnology division, developed 38 new seeds by combining mutation and recombination breeding techniques.

These include 20 oil seeds (groundnut-14, mustard-3, soybean-2 and sunflower-1,) 15 pulses (green gram or moong-7, black gram-4, pigeon pea or tur-4) and one each cowpea (chowli), rice and jute seeds.

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Tue, 04 May 2010

## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 03mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 34%

Wind: Normal

### Tuesday, May 4

Max Min

35.8° | 26.8°

Sunrise: 05:48

Sunset: 18:24

Barometer: 1008.1mb

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Tstorm

### Wednesday, May 5

Max Min

35° | 26°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

May 6



35° | 27°

Tstorm

Friday

May 7



35° | 27°

Tstorm

Saturday

May 8



34° | 26°

Tstorm

Sunday

May 9



34° | 27°

Tstorm

Monday

May 10



35° | 27°

Partly Cloudy