

Date:05/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/05/stories/2010050562730200.htm>

Farmers go on a Kerala tour

MADURAI: In a bid to acquaint themselves with various techniques used in growing horticulture crops, about 200 farmers from Madurai district left for Kerala on a week-long tour on Tuesday.

Flagging off the convoy, Collector C. Kamaraj said that under the national horticulture programme, farmers were being taken on a tour for an on-the-spot study. They would be visiting horticultural gardens, model farms; horticultural research centres and interact with successful farmers in the region.

The Horticulture Department would bear the entire cost of the tour. Last year, the farmers visited places in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, a press release said. Besides other States, the farmers were also being taken to other districts every year.

During the present tour, the farmers would visit farms at Udumalpet and learn about drip irrigation system, visit the Kerala Agricultural University, Trichur, besides Thiruvananthapuram and learn about techniques adopted in growing orchids, cocoa and coconut varieties.

Horticulture Deputy Director S. Krishnasamy and Assistant Director G. Boopathi among others accompanied the farmers, the release added.

Date:05/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/05/stories/2010050560340300.htm>

Electric fish cart introduced

It can carry one tonne of goods and costs Rs. 1.30 lakh



POLLUTION-FREE:Collector T. Soundiah, centre, having a look at the electrically operated goods rickshaw in Tiruchi. —

TIRUCHI: An economically viable and pollution free electrically operated rickshaw, popularly known as fish cart or thattu rickshaw was introduced in the city on Monday.

Collector T.Soundiah flagged off at the Collectorate campus the first electric fish cart launched by Punjab Trading Centre, its distributors. The distributors told media persons that the electric rickshaw would be a boon to small vendors and traders. The rickshaw had rechargeable battery back-up for about seven hours and consumed only 10 to 15 units of power.

They pointed out that even though the fish cart had the capacity to carry one tonne of weight the Government gave permission to carry only 450 kg. It has several facilities including good seating space for the loadman and a maximum speed of 20 km per hour. The rickshaw is priced from Rs.1.30 lakh to Rs.2.50 lakh.

Date:05/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/05/stories/2010050552710300.htm>

Move to boost organic tea cultivation

Tea Board to help SHGs and Tea Growers' Societies



Workshop:The Executive Director, Tea Board, R.D. Nazeem (second left), releasing a publication on Organic Tea in Coonoor on Monday.

Udhagamandalam: The Tea Board will help Self-Help Groups and Tea Growers Societies take up cultivation of organic tea, said the Executive Director, Tea Board. R.D. Nazeem at Coonoor on Monday.

Inaugurating a workshop on organic tea organised by the United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI) and Tea Board under the aegis of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Programme, he said that help in various forms would be extended to the SHGs and societies. Organic certification would be obtained for them through accredited agencies. Their cultivation methods would be monitored for three years. The Tea Board would facilitate signing of MoUs with manufacturers of organic tea.

Stating that eight workshops would be conducted in various parts of South India to promote cultivation of organic tea among the farmers, Mr. Nazeem said that the Tea Board had already helped bring about 100 hectares belonging to estates and small growers under organic tea in Munnar. Twenty acres belonging to small growers in the Nilgiris would be converted to organic gardens.

Pointing out that only three per cent was under organic tea in South India, he said that the demand worldwide was huge and was growing rapidly. It commanded a premium of 20 per cent over ordinary tea.

The Advisor, UPASI Tea Research Foundation, Muralidharan, lamented that dependence on chemicals was increasing in tea gardens. It was leading to degradation of the soil.

The Secretary General, UPASI, Ullas Menon, said that the aim of the programme was to bring about an organic revolution.

The President, Nilgiris Small Tea Growers Association, T. Rangaiah, also spoke. The Director, UPASI-TRF, Mohan Kumar, welcomed the gathering. Scientist ,UPASI-TRF, Radhakrishnan proposed a vote of thanks.

Date:05/05/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/05/05/stories/2010050553150300.htm>

Goats handed over to Irulars

KRISHNAGIRI: One hundred goats were given to Irulars under the special fund allocated for tribals by the Union Government.

Twenty goats were distributed to Irulars from Luxmipuram village in Achupalam panchayat on Monday.

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Food processing FDI seen at Rs 1,200 cr

Agencies Posted online: Tuesday , May 04, 2010 at 1532 hrs

New Delhi : Foreign direct investment in food processing is likely to rise 27 per cent to Rs 1,200 crore this fiscal in light of immense untapped potential in the sector, Union Food Processing Minister said today.

"This year, foreign direct investment (FDI) is expected to cross Rs 1,000 crore and touch Rs 1,200 crore," Food Processing Minister Subodh Kant Sahai said on the sidelines of the second national conference of the National Meat and Poultry Processing Board (NMPPB).

"The FDI is expected from many Mauritius-based companies, who are looking at tapping the Indian market," a senior ministry official said.

US-based producer and marketer of food Cargill is also expected to invest in the sector this fiscal, he added.

The government has allowed 100 per cent FDI in food processing.

Of the total FDI in food processing last fiscal, PepsiCo--a global player in convenient snacks, foods and beverages--constituted about 40 per cent, the official said.

In 2009-10 fiscal, FDI in food processing industry rose by over 200 per cent to Rs 945 crore, against Rs 400 crore in the previous year, he mentioned.

The official said that FDI from PepsiCo in the sector increased substantially during the last fiscal.

The company has invested in food segment and not beverages, he added.

Sahai further said that the government is soon expecting the detailed project reports (DPR) on four mega food parks in Karnataka, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

He also said that the government will soon send the proposal to the Cabinet for approval of the rest of the 20 mega food parks.

The government has targeted to set up 30 mega food parks in the 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-12), of which 10 have already been approved.

The parks are being set up under the Mega Food Park Scheme of the government that aims to encourage Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for creating rural infrastructure in the food processing sector.

Of the total cost of over Rs 300 crore for each park, Rs 50 crore will be funded by the government.

Farmers face price heat over wheat

Virendra Nath Bhatt Posted online: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 at 0244 hrs



Centre has reduced the minimum support price (MSP) for the wheat shrivelled by the heat wave condition during March and the first half of April. Against the MSP of Rs 1,100 per quintal for wheat announced by the Centre for the 2009-10 Rabi season, the price has been reduced to Rs 1,050-Rs 1,083 per quintal of the wheat shrivelled by heat.

Lucknow : In a blow to the wheat farmers in Uttar Pradesh, the Centre has reduced the minimum support price (MSP) for the wheat shrivelled by the heat wave condition during March and the first half of April. Against the MSP of Rs 1,100 per quintal for wheat announced by the Centre for the 2009-10 Rabi season, the price has been reduced to Rs 1,050-Rs 1,083 per quintal of the wheat shrivelled by heat.

According to the standards of the Union Agriculture Ministry, only seven per cent shrivelling is allowed for wheat. As per the estimates of the state Agriculture department, the Rabi crop has shrivelled by 50-60 per cent on an average. In extreme cases like in the Bundelkhand region, it is as high as 70 to 80 per cent.

“The UP government had requested the Centre to relax the norms of shrivelling by 7 to 20 per cent.

The Centre did accede to our request and relaxed the norms from 7-15 per cent, but at the same time, it has also imposed value cut for the damaged wheat,” said Rajiv Agarwal, Food Commissioner of Uttar Pradesh.

For 10 per cent shriveling, the MSP has been reduced to Rs 1,083 and for 10-15 per cent — it will be Rs 1,050 per quintal. The wheat shrivelled by over 20 per cent shall not be purchased at the procurement centres set up by the UP government, he added.

“The problem of shrivelling of wheat is confined only to Uttar Pradesh in north India. For the first time it has occurred on this scale and is the prime reason for the low procurement of wheat during the current Rabi season,” said Agarwal.

Big farmers are holding the wheat stocks to the extent possible in the hope of getting a better price in the next two months, as the state government has lifted the stock limit of wheat, he added.

While eight agencies of the state government have set up 4,360 wheat procurement centres across Uttar Pradesh, the Centre’s agency — Food Corporation of India (FCI) — has set up 43 units in UP. As per the target, while agencies of the state government will procure 39 lakh MT of wheat from farmers, the FCI will purchase 1 lakh MT. So far, the agencies of the UP government have purchased 8 lakh MT of wheat and the FCI has purchased only 7,000 MT. The procurement by the state’s agencies during the same period in 2009 was 13 lakh MT.

“The central, western and Bundelkhand region are the region worst affected by the heat wave,” said Agarwal.

Besides the shrivelled wheat, storage of the Rabi crop is another challenge faced by the state agencies. Against the wheat procurement target of 40 lakh MT for the current season, the total warehousing capacity in the state is 24 lakh MT — 12 lakh MT in state warehousing corporation, 2 lakh MT with the Central warehousing corporation and 10 lakh MT with the FCI. Wheat production in UP is estimated to be around 30 million MT in 2009-10. In 2009 and 2008, the production stood at 28.5 MT and 25.5 MT respectively.

This is the first procurement season in UP after the abolition of the “state pool” of foodgrain in 2009. Earlier, the state was categorised as DCP (decentralised procurement) state where UP government agencies directly purchased wheat from farmers. This was done as per the MSP announced by the Centre to meet foodgrain requirements of the PDS and other schemes like the mid-day meal. They were also responsible for its storage.

After the abolition of the state pool, the agencies will procure the wheat and paddy as usual but hand over the food stock to the FCI.



 Wed, 05 May 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, May 5

Max Min
36.4° | 28.0°

Rain: 00mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 05:47
Humidity: 34% Sunset: 18:25
Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

Tomorrow's Forecast



Tstorm

Thursday, May 6

Max Min
36° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
May 7	May 8	May 9	May 10	May 11
				
36° 28°	36° 28°	36° 28°	37° 29°	38° 29°
Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy