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Turmeric prices soar in Erode district

ERODE: Turmeric farmers in Erode district have two reasons to celebrate this year - turmeric prices have touched a new high and the farmers had a bumper harvest. The prices on Tuesday crossed Rs. 15,500 a quintal in the regulated market here. They are expected go up further following a huge demand for turmeric in the domestic and export markets this year, Erode Marketing Committee sources say.

Turmeric prices stood a little over Rs. 14,000 a quintal in April in the Erode market, which is the second largest in the country after Sangli in Maharashtra. The highest price registered in the market during the last fiscal is Rs. 13,500 a quintal.

“Turmeric has fetched a good income for farmers during the last and the current fiscal. Earlier, the prices stood only at Rs. 5,500 a quintal,” the committee sources said.

The committee, which had earned over Rs. 2.14 crore as cess on the turmeric trade during the last year, is expecting to increase the revenue to many folds in the current fiscal. Over 30,000 tonnes of turmeric were traded through the regulated market in 2009-2010. In 2008-09 the market earned Rs. 1.28 crore from cess levied on 19,194 metric tonnes of turmeric.

Market sources said the prices started showing an upward trend since November last year and touched a new high during this month.

Currently the market gets over 2,000 bags of turmeric.

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Water level in Sothuparai dam crosses 100 feet

THENI: For the first time, water level in Sothuparai dam in Periakulam taluk crossed 100 feet during peak summer, thanks to torrential showers in Kodaikanal hill last week. The dam has remained dry during summer in the past five years. Its level stood at 100.6 feet on Wednesday. (Total height of the dam is 126 feet.)

Farmers in the district are jubilant as storage level in several tanks and reservoirs has gone up substantially. Storage is comfortable in 13 out of 36 irrigation tanks under the control of Public Works Department and major reservoirs like Periyar and Vaigai. Water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.3 feet with an inflow of 185 cusecs. The discharge was nil. Storage was 959 mcft.

Vaigai dam had 31.92 foot of water. Inflow into the dam was 94 cusecs and the discharge was 41 cusecs for drinking water purpose. Storage was 451 mcft.

Manjalar dam had water up to 32 feet.

Rainfall was nil in the district and also in the catchments of Periyar and Vaigai reservoirs in the last 24 hours. But strong wind blew across the district.

Dindigul

Residents of Dindigul, Chinnalapatti and 17 wayside villages heaved a sigh of relief as storage level shot up to 14 feet in Athoor dam, the lifeline of Dindigul.

It will help in solving the drinking water crisis to a large extent.

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Co-operative institutions to lend Rs. 160 crore for agriculture

COIMBATORE: Cooperative institutions in the district will lend around Rs. 160 crore for agriculture in the current financial year.

Special officer, Coimbatore District Central Cooperative Bank, R. Indumathi said 263 primary agriculture cooperative societies in Coimbatore and Tirupur districts would achieve the target by the end of the financial year.

The money the institutions lend constitutes between 8 and 10 per cent of the total loans given for agriculture.

A considerable chunk of the loan will go to coconut farmers, who have been allotted around Rs. 60 crore. Banana farmers will get about Rs. 50 crore, sugarcane farmers, including those who have registered with mills, Rs. 19.11 crore. This year's target is at least Rs. 30 crore more than last year's. Last year the cooperative societies lent Rs. 130.30 crore. Farmers who cultivate paddy, maize, groundnut, turmeric, mulberry and vegetables will also be covered under the loan.

This year, the quantum of loan has also been increased. Paddy farmers will get Rs. 12,000 for an acre and this includes fertilizers and pesticides. This is Rs. 1,000 more than last year's. Coconut farmers will get Rs. 12,000 as maintenance, which is Rs. 2,000 more than last year's. Banana farmers will be given Rs. 32,500, an increase of Rs. 4,500. There is also a similar increase for sugarcane.

The scale of finance was decided after the bankers, farmers and district agriculture officials met to decide the cost of cultivation and the quantum of loan for each crop. Ms. Indumathi says all primary agriculture cooperative societies have been geared

up for the purpose.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Food security depends on small and marginal dryland farmers

About 40 villages in Tirunelveli have stopped using chemical fertilizers

— Photo: M.J. Prabu



New beginning: A banana farmer tying a

Vilathikulam, in Tuticorin district, being drought prone most of the year, forced many farmers till a few years ago to either sell their lands or leave them barren.

But today more than 600 farmers in the region are successfully growing different crops ranging from sunflower to chillies, using low cost input technologies called

Panchagavya (PG) for raising their crops.

Few years back

“Till a few years back, due to drought, many of the lands in our village lay fallow and unploughed. We walked several kilometres every day in search of potable water. The situation turned even worse during summer. Though a few big farmers continued to carry on with some farming activity, severe shortage of fertilizers forced them also to give up,” says Mr. T. Antony a farmer in the region.

“Today, inspite of acute water scarcity and power cut problems, we are growing different crops such as sunflower, plantains, paddy, chilli, and groundnut successfully. Some farmers in our area earned nearly a lakh of rupees from growing small onions as intercrops in chilli fields,” adds Mrs. S. Jayalaxmi another farmer.

Key role

The Suviseshapuram and Neighbourhood Development Society, or SANDS, and Prof. R. Venkatraman (retd), Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore played a key role in educating the farmers on the benefits of using low cost input technologies. Though several farmers initially refused to accept PG as they doubted its potential in increasing yield, they accepted it later after hearing about its benefits from others using it.

Procedure

Explaining how to manufacture PG, Prof. Venkatraman says:

Take about five kg of fresh cow dung, three litres of cow's urine, two litres of cow's milk, 500 gm cow's ghee, three tender coconuts' water, a dozen bananas, two litres of sour buttermilk, handful of calcium powder (called Chunambu in Tamil) and some

living soil (soil taken from the field in which crops grow).

Mix the dung and ghee well in a plastic drum using a neem tree stick and cover with a lid. For three days the mixture should be stirred well once during the morning and evening. On the fourth day all the other inputs are to be added and stirring continued for 20 days.

On the 21st day, PG solution can be used either as a spray (after filtering) or along with irrigation water or poured in small plastic bags and tied to crops such as plantain. PG made by this method can be stored for nearly six months.

Existing belief

“For the past four decades there exists a belief that fertilizers and manures improve soil fertility. It is not true. Crops do not need fertilizers. The nutrients for crop during field life are absorbed from the soil only.

“Fertilizers and manures stimulate a plant to grow well and remain inert in the soil. They are regulators and not exactly nutrients. The soil is the only source of plant nutrition,” explains Prof. Venkatraman.

“Proper seed treatment before sowing ensures good yield. When seeds are treated properly followed by right irrigation practice and PG sprayed 5-6 times a farmer gets a bountiful harvest.

“This is being proved in all the 40 villages in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin being drought prone. It is not magic but mere logic. I spent many years doing research on this and the outcome seen in the villages,” he explains.

Says SANDS president J.H.S. Ponnaya:

“The government keeps on harping on increasing food security and production. But they do not seem to know how to achieve. Merely issueing statements and

conducting meetings cannot solve the problem, unless small and marginal farmers are encouraged.

Proactive role must

“Already hundreds of farmers are suffering due to so many problems on the agriculture front. It is high time the government played a proactive role in bringing awareness to farmers on benefits of using low cost technologies such as PG in drylands.”

For visits and more information readers can contact Sands, Suviseshapuram (via) Ittamozhi-627652, email: sands_suviseshapuram@yahoo.com, phone: 04637-278173, mobile: 9444582911 and Prof. Venkatraman at 9488418719.

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New method for raising mulberry in nursery

In sericulture, mulberry saplings are commercially produced from cuttings under raised or flat bed system.

The success of sprouting and vigour of the sapling are greatly influenced by competing weeds, soil moisture, and soil temperature.

Since water and labour availability/expenditure on weeding are the hurdles nowadays, a new method of raising mulberry saplings using polythene sheets is developed to overcome these difficulties, which practically proved very effective for successful production of quality mulberry saplings for commercial purpose.

Method

After ploughing the land to 30 to 40 cm depth and application of 8 to 10 metric tonnes of farm yard manure, the land is to be levelled. Nursery beds are prepared with an irrigation channel three fourth common for both sides of beds.

Black polythene sheets cut to the size of 15 feet x 5 feet are to be placed on the bed and 6 to 8 months old disease-free mulberry cuttings (15 to 20 cm length with 3 buds) are to be inserted into the polythene-covered nursery bed soil at the spacing of 10 cm x 10 cm.

Channel irrigation is to be done over the polythene itself once in a week or 10 days depending upon the soil texture of the area.

Benefits

By this method weeds can be totally arrested, as they do not get sunlight. Thus, no weeding is required throughout the nursery period (four months), which saves huge expenditure on manual weeding.

Since there are no weeds to compete with the growing mulberry saplings, they get the maximum soil nutrients, resulting in high vigour and growth, producing quality saplings. Unlike other methods, irrigation can be reduced to 50 per cent, as the polythene cover over the soil significantly reduces the soil temperature and prevents water evaporation, thus conserving soil moisture.

Income

By this method, about 2.30 to 2.40 lakhs saplings can be produced per acre in four months period with an increased average income of Rs. 50,000 over the other methods.

B.Mohan,N.Sakthivel& R.Balakrishna Research Extension Centre, Central Silk Board Srivilliputtur

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Farm Query

Kissan call centre

I would like to have the phone number of Kissan call centre.

A. Malhotra, Goa

The Kissan Call Centres can be accessed by farmers all over the country on a common toll free number 1800-180-1551. Since 10th June, 2004, the call centres service has been made available right from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. except on Sundays and gazetted holidays. Beyond these hours and days, the calls are attended in the voice recording mode.

For more details one can log on to the website:

http://www.manage.gov.in/kisan/DAC_dir.html

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Strawberry variety meets the requirements for a space crop

Astronauts could one day tend their own crops on long space missions, and Purdue University researchers have found a healthy candidate to help satisfy a sweet tooth — a strawberry that requires little maintenance and energy.

Cary Mitchell, professor of horticulture, and Gioia Massa, a horticulture research scientist, tested several cultivars of strawberries and found one variety, named

Seascape, which seems to meet the requirements for becoming a space crop.

“What we're trying to do is grow our plants and minimize all of our inputs,” Massa said. “We can grow these strawberries under shorter photoperiods than we thought and still get pretty much the same amount of yield.”

Seascape strawberries are day-neutral, meaning they aren't sensitive to the length of available daylight to flower. Seascape was tested with as much as 20 hours of daylight and as little as 10 hours. While there were fewer strawberries with less light, each berry was larger and the volume of the yields was statistically the same.

“I was astounded that even with a day-neutral cultivar we were able to get basically the same amount of fruit with half the light,” Mitchell said.

The findings, which were reported online early in the journal *Advances in Space Research*, showed that the Seascape strawberry cultivar is a good candidate for a space crop because it meets several guidelines set by NASA. Strawberry plants are relatively small, meeting mass and volume restrictions. Since Seascape provides fewer, but larger, berries under short days, there is less labour required of crew members who would have to pollinate and harvest the plants by hand. Needing less light cuts down energy requirements not only for lamps, but also for systems that would have to remove heat created by those lights. “We're trying to think of the whole system — growing food, preparing it and getting rid of the waste,” Massa said. “Strawberries are easy to prepare and there's little waste.” Seascape also had less cycling, meaning it steadily supplied fruit throughout the test period, according to a Purdue University press release. It produced fruit for about six months after start of flowering. — Our Bureau

'More wheat, rice to be sold through PDS'

TNN, May 6, 2010, 04.06am IST

NEW DELHI: Concerned over the rising food inflation, the government on Wednesday announced that it will sell additional quantity of wheat and rice through ration shops at concessional rates — a move that will cost the exchequer Rs 2,000 crore.

Announcing the decision to provide additional wheat and rice for six months till November 2010, food and agriculture minister Sharad Pawar said wheat would be sold at Rs 8.42 per kg while rice at Rs 11.85.

However, this price is slightly more than what Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) families pay for the regular quota. BPL families get wheat at Rs 4.15 per kg and rice at Rs 5.65 per kg under the regular quota.

A total of 30 lakh tonnes of wheat and rice would be sold to ration card holders at a price lower than the MSP, at which the government buys the grains from the market, he added.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, May 6

Max Min

36.0° | 25.8°

Rain: 0.1 mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 05:46

Humidity: 71% Sunset: 18:24

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1004.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, May 7

Max Min

36° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

May 8



36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

May 9



34° | 28°

Tstorm

Monday

May 10



36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday

May 11



37° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday

May 12



38° | 28°

Partly Cloudy