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Pesticide overdose in pineapple farming

K.S. Sudhi

KFRI study finds serious health and environmental hazards in some districts



Lurking danger: A study by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board finds deviation from the prescribed pesticide usage patterns.

KOCHI: Overuse of pesticides in pineapple farming is feared to have caused serious health and environmental hazards in some districts in the State.

Overuse of pesticides, herbicides and weedicides has been reported from Kuttikanam in Idukki and the Mundakkayam and Erumeli areas in Kottayam, where pineapple is grown in rubber estates as an intercrop.

A field verification study by the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), Peechi, says there

have been reported instances of farm workers deployed to peel pineapple losing nails following exposure to the toxic fruit. As the local workforce withdrew from the farm job citing health hazards, migrant labourers are being deployed in estates, the report says.

It has also been reported that the aquatic fauna of numerous rivulets, which flow through farmlands, are wiped off as the poisonous runoff gets mixed in the streams. "Not a single fish or amphibian or any other living organism can be found in these waters even though the water looked crystal clear. This fact speaks for itself about the rampant chemical contamination happening in the area. Nobody from the locality uses the pineapple produced in the area and the product is also not available in the local market," the report says.

A study, carried out for the Kerala State Biodiversity Board, reveals that a combination of ethyphone, calcium carbonate and urea has been used in farming, deviating from the prescribed pesticide usage patterns.

"The wide usage of broad spectrum weedicides in heavy dose has been reported during the clearing of the land and growth stages of pineapple saplings for nearly three years. After the final harvest, the pineapple plants are uprooted and sprayed with systemic weedicides too," the report says.

The use of chemicals is being intensified in large plantations extending thousands of acres, it says.

Minister apprised

R.V. Varma, Chairman of the Kerala State Biodiversity Board, has written a letter to Agriculture Minister Mullakkara Ratnakaran urging him to take steps for assessing the health impact of labourers in pineapple plantations.

"The up-scaling of pineapple cultivation and its detachment from the local market has resulted in rampant use of pesticides and weedicides, which are being leached to the water body completely devastating the aquatic flora and fauna. The maintenance of the aquatic biodiversity should be taken as the indicator of sustainable cultivation of pineapple and the plantation owners should be made responsible for sustaining the aquatic

biodiversity,” the letter says.

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Advocacy group says Bt brinjal report plagiarised

New Delhi: Six top science academies have favoured “limited release” of genetically modified brinjal, a report an advocacy group alleged was plagiarised.

The allegations have been dubbed as “ridiculous” by senior scientist P.S. Goel, who was part of the study commissioned by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh after the controversy over commercialisation of Bt Brinjal.

“It is appropriate now to release Bt Brinjal for cultivation in specific farmers' fields in identified states,” said the report, submitted to the government recently.

Indian Academy of Sciences, Indian National Academy of Engineering, Indian National Science Academy, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, National Academy of Medical Sciences and National Academy of Sciences (India) were asked by Mr. Ramesh and K Kasturirangan, Member of Planning Commission, to submit a report on GM crops.

Advocacy group ‘Coalition for GM Free India’ has levelled charge of plagiarism against the academies accusing them of copying views of leading scientist P. Anand Kumar. “It is a biased, political position paper. Rather than a rigorous scientific review, it is absolutely scandalous that the six top science academies used plagiarised material to promote Bt Brinjal,” said Kavita Kuruganti on behalf of the Coalition.

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Call for strengthening cultivation of medicinal plants

PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN



Going natural:H.P. Singh, Deputy Director General (Horticulture), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (second right), releasing a souvenir at the seminar on medicinal crops at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore on Friday. P. Murugesha Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor of the university (second left), is in the picture. —

COIMBATORE: Production of disease-free quality planting materials and breeding for identification of new and high yielding varieties are the need of the hour to enhance cultivation of medicinal plants, H.P. Singh, Deputy Director General (Horticulture), Indian Council for Agricultural Research, said here on Friday.

He was inaugurating a three-day seminar on “Technological Interventions for Sustaining the Production of Commercially Viable Medicinal Crops in India” at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, jointly organised by the university and South Indian Horticultural Association.

Technology

“Importance should be given to medicinal plants under large-scale cultivation specific to the regions and to develop high-tech production technology which will be immensely useful to farmers. Balanced nutrient applications, well-breeding strategies, effective processing and value-addition, are the important focus areas that have to be looked into to develop medicinal plants to the maximum extent,” Mr. Singh said.

He also lamented that over-exploitation of medicinal plants from forest and local areas led to extinction of valuable green resources from the natural eco-system.

Networking

For this, effective conservation networking should be strengthened to enrich the green environment in the forest and rural areas, he added.

P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor of the university, said India required nearly 1.77 lakh tonnes of medicinal plants every year for the domestic herbal industry.

“Though the market for allopathic medicines has grown substantially, the search for cures for certain diseases through herbal sources are also on the rise in the recent years. At present, about 50 species are largely cultivated on account of its high volume of requirement in India,” Mr. Boopathi said.

Six books and one compact disc on medicinal plants were released on the occasion.

S.B. Dandin, Vice-Chancellor, University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot, Karnataka, called for mapping of medicinal plants, their documentation, product development, marketing strategies and partnership approaches involving private industries and non-governmental organisations.

N. Kumar, Dean, Horticulture, and K. Rajamani, Head, Department of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, spoke.

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SICA seeks efforts to increase cotton production

Special Correspondent

COIMBATORE: The South India Cotton Association has appealed to the State Government to take efforts for increasing cotton production in the State.

Speaking at the annual general meeting of the association here on Sunday, its president C. Soundara Raj said the annual cotton crop in the State was stagnating at five lakh bales. The association had suggested to the State Cotton Council that production should be increased to 15 lakh bales.

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) started godowns in Coimbatore and Rajapalayam to sell cotton to the textile mills in the State. "The scheme should be enlarged and refined."

Procurement

The corporation should stock about 50 per cent of its procurement in these godowns as the State had 50 per cent of the country's spindleage. The mills in Tamil Nadu usually purchased cotton through the local agents and brokers. This system should be strengthened to ensure availability of cotton to the mills even at the end of the season, he said.

According to the secretary of the association K.N. Viswanathan, Karnataka's cotton production now was 12 lakh bales and it was targeting 35 lakh bales. Textile mills in Tamil Nadu were the largest consumers of cotton and hence the State Government should come forward and form a sub-committee to increase cotton production in the State.

Projects should be prepared to increase the production in a couple of years.

He added the CCI should increase its cotton supply to the mills in the State through the godowns started in Coimbatore and Rajapalayam. The mills' incurred huge transportation costs when they purchased cotton from States such as Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The CCI would be able to get concessions in freight costs from the railways and would be able to transport cotton by rail to the consuming mills here. This would bring down the cost of transportation.

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Cooperative banks extend loans to farmers in Erode

Staff Reporter

For installation of micro irrigation systems

State Government encouraging farmers to follow effective water management practices

Farmers being asked to install drip irrigation even for cash crops like sugarcane

ERODE: The Co-operative banks in the district have extended over Rs. 1.35 crore as loans to more than 220 farmers to install micro irrigation systems including drip irrigation, Joint Registrar of Co-operative Societies S. Babu said.

Participating in a loan mela held at the Nichampalayam Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Society premises in Perundurai block recently, the Joint Registrar said that the State government was encouraging farmers to follow effective water management practices such as installing micro irrigation systems (drip and sprinkler).

The government provides 65 percent of the total cost as subsidy for this purpose.

Farmers are now encouraged to install drip irrigation system even for cash crops such as sugar cane, turmeric and banana, and for vegetable cultivation.

The primary agricultural co-operative credit societies in the district were advised to provide liberal credit to the farmers to install drip irrigation systems, he said.

Special officer of the District Central Co-operative Bank P. Loganathan, speaking on the occasion, said that the Nichampalayam co-operative society had extended loans to the tune of Rs. 1.03 crore during the last six months of the current fiscal.

During the previous year, the society had extended Rs. 35 lakh as loans to its members.

Deputy Registrar G. Gandhinathan, in his speech, said that a new building was constructed at a cost of Rs. 7.16 lakh for the Nichampalayam society.

Disbursed

Earlier, Mr. Babu disbursed a sum of Rs. 8.23 lakh as loans to 49 beneficiaries.

Senior officials from the co-operative department participated in the programme. A team of doctors from Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital conducted a free eye camp.

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Organic manure protects soil fertility

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: Usage of organic manure will protect and enrich soil fertility and the agricultural produce raised through organic manure will have more nutrient contents, said G.Nammalvar, organic farming expert, in Tiruchi recently. Addressing the youth development programme 'Kanavu Meipada' conducted at SRV Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Samayapuram, Mr. Nammalvar said heavy use of chemical fertilizers had affected the soil fertility and advised the farmers to switch over to organic farming. Dr.Nammalvar said everyone should strive hard to prevent global warming

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Shimla, September 26, 2010

Himachal apple crop at all time high of 3.8 crore boxes



The Hindu Despite mudslides holding up trucks, the bountiful apple harvest has flooded

markets across India such as bazaar in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

The juicy apple from tribal Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti districts is yet to hit the market and this year the production in twin tribal districts is expected to cross 40 lakh boxes as compared to 20 to 25 lakh boxes during the previous years.

Apple crop is set to break all past records in Himachal Pradesh with production crossing 3.85 crore boxes during the current marketing season of June to October, officials said on Sunday.

The production was about 90 lakh boxes more than the highest production of 2.67 crore standard boxes (each box comprising 20 kg) in 2007 and almost three times more than the 1.30 crore boxes produced in 2009.

About three crore boxes had already been sent to various markets across the country while 90 lakh to one crore boxes were yet to be sent to the market.

About 40 lakh boxes were stranded in Jubbal-Kotkhai areas due to a massive landslide on Shimla-Jubbal road near Gumma, 50 km from Shimla. The road was closed on Saturday evening as a 200-metre stretch of the road was washed away and hundreds of apple-laden trucks got stuck en route.

The juicy apple from tribal Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti districts was yet to hit the market and this year the production in twin tribal districts was expected to cross 40 lakh boxes as compared to 20 to 25 lakh boxes during the previous years.

The government agencies sent about 70,000 tonnes of apple under Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for processing but due to lack of storage capacity, a large quantity of apple was rotting, sources said.

A record apple crop coupled with heavy rains causing numerous road breaches in the apple belt, especially in Shimla district, hampered transportation of the fruit.

However, the disruption in transportation helped in avoiding glut in the markets and the prices, though less than last year, were more or less stable. The row over charging of

commission from the growers at Azadpur market also made the growers apprehensive.

While substantial quantity of apple was sent to hitherto unexplored markets in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, some big agri-business companies like Adani and Reliance also directly purchased apple from the growers.

The timely rains helped in improving the colour and size of apple and it was one of the reasons that the crop completely surpassed the earlier production estimates pegged at around 3 crore boxes.

The growers from Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti and other high-altitude areas were hoping for a bonanza during the Commonwealth Games as the late varieties of apple are juicy and bigger in size, said a grower from Lahaul.

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Panaji, September 27, 2010

Rains hit areca nut crop in Goa



The Hindu Workers shelling areca nus at a stock yard in Kerala's Wayanad district. File Photo: K.K. Mustafah

The areca nut cultivation in Goa has been affected up to 30 per cent in the wake of

ceaseless rains that has continued hitting the state this month.

The farmers say that the losses are extreme. The crop suffers from Koleroga disease and fungicide spraying proves ineffective as the rain washes it down.

“The situation is really grim. We have decided to approach the state government seeking compensation,” said Narendra Sawaikar, Chairman, Goa Bagayatdar Sahakari Kharedi Vikri Sanstha Maryadit, state’s largest cooperative society.

The society, operating from Ponda town, looks after the welfare of areca nut growers in the state.

Goa has around 3,500 to 4,000 farmers growing areca nuts in their farms.

Sawaikar said that the destruction of crop is around 30 per cent and the state Agriculture department has blamed the rainfall for the loss.

“We have been receiving complaints from the farmers across the state about droppings,” S A Tendulkar, state Agriculture Director, told PTI adding that usually seasonal dropping is to the tune of 10 per cent but this time around, it has increased drastically.

“Government is providing them the support price which will be continued even this time,” he said. The western state has 2,000 hectares of land under areca nut cultivation producing around 2,000 tones of nuts annually, which is sent outside the state for processing.

Goa’s rural regions like Ponda, Sattari and Sanguem has the crop, which is usually mixed with other plantations like coconuts. Goa has received above average rainfall this monsoon. According to Indian Meteorological department’s Goa office incharge K V Singh, the state has received more than 132 inches rainfall. He said that this monsoon is likely to be decade’s highest ever rainfall surpassing the record of 2007.

Business Standard

Monday, Sep 27, 2010

Experts see 15% more rabi crop

BS Reporter / Mumbai September 26, 2010, 0:28 IST

The excessive monsoon rainfall towards the end of the kharif sowing season is likely to provide a better soil moisture for rabi sowing, which may translate into a higher output of the winter-sown crop this year, according to experts.

Total area under kharif oilseed sowing had marginally declined to 16.41 million hectares (ha) this year against 16.75 million ha in the last season due to a paucity of monsoon in the early part of the season in northern and eastern states. However, overall output is set to rise on improved yields due to late season rainfall.

According to an analysis by industry veteran Govindbhai Patel, managing partner of Dipak Enterprises, total oilseed output during the current kharif season is estimated at 14.08 million tonnes compared to 12.28 million tonnes last year — a rise of nearly 15 per cent this year.

In early September, excessive rainfalls were witnessed throughout India, especially in states like Gujarat and Punjab where the major crop grown is oilseed and wheat — the two major rabi crops which are now expected to benefit. As a consequence, experts have revised upwards their forecasts for kharif crop output.

The June-September monsoon season is important for India's farm sector as it accounts for nearly 65 per cent of India's total agricultural output. Rabi accounts for nearly 35 per cent of oilseeds, 100 per cent of India's wheat output and nearly 15 per cent of rice production. The season, if it had become adverse, would have affected the entire food grain and edible oil availability in the country.

“The additional soil moisture due to the late rainfall is also good news for rabi crop farmers,” said Dorab Mistry, director of Godrej International, on the sidelines of ‘Globoil 2010’, an annual seminar held in Mumbai on Saturday.

This year, it is likely to remain favourable for rabi crop growers due to the extended rainfall in September, said Atul Chaturvedi, CEO of Adani Wilmar, a leading edible oil producer under the ‘Fortune’ brand name. After a deficient rainfall last year, the country received over four per cent excess rainfall this year, which is good news for policy-makers as nearly 60 per cent of all farmland in the country is rain-fed.

Also, the decreased kharif output last year had thrown up a major challenge on the inflation front.

In fact, food inflation continued to pose a threat for the government as it stayed in the 12-15 per cent range since last year.

Despite adverse climatic conditions in some parts of the world, especially in Russia, Brazil and Argentina, global oilseed production is forecast at 432 million tonnes in the 2010-2011 season — that’s little changed from a year earlier, according to Dinesh Shahra, managing director of Ruchi Soya Industries.

Cotton production to touch 35 million bales

Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot September 27, 2010, 0:06 IST

Cotton ginners across the country expect cotton production to hover around 35.5 million bales (1 bale=170 kg) in 2010-11, which would be an increase of 4 million bales as compared to 31.5 million bales in 2009-10.

The cotton production estimate was arrived at after a meeting of ginners from across the country in Rajkot today. The meeting was organised by the Saurashtra Ginners Association (SGA) to discuss the crop condition, production and industry scenario in the country.

The ginning industry representatives also discussed crop condition in top cotton-producing states. “Cotton output in Gujarat is likely to be around 13.5-14 million bales for the new season

as against 10.5 million bales last year. Opening stock in Gujarat is about 300,000-400,000 bales,” said Bharatbhai Vala, president, SGA.

Punjab Ginners Association’s president Bhagavan Bansal said, “Monsoon has been favourable so far this year and we are expecting about 1.8-2 million bales of cotton production in Punjab.”

Haryana is also likely to see a rise in cotton output. According to Sushil Mittal, president, Haryana Ginning Association, cotton production in the state will be about 1.8-2 million bales for the next season. The total production of cotton in North India is predicted to be about 4-4.5 million bales for the next season.

“We are expecting about 4.6 million bales of cotton production in Andhra Pradesh,” said Chandrakant Gujarati, secretary, Andhra Pradesh Ginners Association.

Maharashtra-based Khandesh Ginners and Pressing Mills Association estimates cotton production of 100 million bales in Maharashtra on the back of good monsoon and rise in cotton acreage.

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Back KCMA to boost raw cashew nut production

To enter non-traditional areas for cultivation.

A J Vinayak

Mangalore, Sept. 26

The newly-elected President of the Karnataka Cashew Manufacturers' Association

(KCMA), Mr Kiran Kumar Kodgi of the Amasebail-based Kumar Agro Products, has said his focus will be on increasing raw cashew nut production in the State with the help of the Government.

Speaking to Business Line after his election as the KCMA President for 2010-11 at the 55th annual general meeting of the association here on Friday, Mr Kodgi said he would focus efforts on increasing raw cashew nut production in the State.

Steps will be taken to enter non-traditional areas for cashew cultivation in the State. As of now, cashew is predominantly grown in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada and Kolar districts.

Stating that the Karnataka Cashew Development Corporation (KCDC) has plantations in different parts of the State, he said the yield is very low. Efforts will be made to improve yields in those plantations, and go in for rejuvenation of those plantations, if needed. All these issues would be discussed with the Government, he added.

Office-bearers

The other office-bearers of KCMA for 2010-11 are: Mr K. Sudhakar Kamath of KSA Kamath and Sons, Jalsoor (Vice-President); Mr Krishnananth Mallar of Mallar Cashew Exports, Udupi (Treasurer); Mr K. Pramod Kamath of KSA Kamath and Sons, Kasaragod (Secretary); and Mr Santhosh D'Silva of Santhosh Cashews, Karkala (Joint-Secretary).

The following are committee members : Mr B. Rahul Kamath, Mr P. Subraya Pai, Mr D. Gopinath Kamath, Mr H. Satish Pai, Mr K. Ganesh Kamath, Mr M. Tukaram Prabhu, Mr H. Santhosh Kamath, Mr M. Dinesh Pai, Mr Umesh Rao, Mr Krishna K.N., Mr B. Rajendra Kini, and Mr J.K. Nair.

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Back Poultry industry looking at exports to hatch gains

Egg shipments during April-August down at 4.3 cr/month.



M. R. Subramani

Chennai, Sept 26

After rebounding from the slowdown it witnessed last two years, the poultry industry, especially the layer bird sector, is looking at improving exports to further its prospects.

Exports have taken a hit after West Asian countries banned Indian eggs following outbreak of bird flu in western and eastern parts. However, exports to North Africa and countries such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan continue.

“Egg exports have been affected badly in the last two years mainly due to incidence of bird flu in the eastern parts of our country. In June, the Centre had declared the country free of bird flu. Buyers will usually wait for six months after such declaration to begin purchases again. We hope the export market will open up again in West Asia once the Governments there lift the ban,” said Mr A. Shivakumar, Managing Director of the Coimbatore-based VKS Farms Pvt. Ltd.

Shipments down

According to the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), exports during April-August in the current fiscal have dropped to an average 4.3 crore a month from 8.74 crore a month last fiscal.

“Currently, exports to Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are nearly 150 containers (1 container – 4.75 lakh eggs) a month. If the West Asian market opens up, we could export an additional 250 containers,” said Mr Shivakumar.

Iran could buy nearly 100 containers a month, while the United Arab Emirates could buy another 60, while Kuwait and Qatar could buy 40 containers each.

According to Mr B. Soundararajan, Managing Director of Suguna Poultry Farms Ltd, the poultry sector shrank 17 per cent in 2008, while 2009 witnessed dormant growth. “Since November-December, the poultry sector seems to be doing well,” he said.

He estimates the daily production of eggs in the country at over Rs 10,000 crore, assuming there are 20-21 crore hens at a given time, and of which at least 15 crore would be laying eggs.

West Asian market

Dr P. Selvaraj, Chairman of the Namakkal region, NECC, is not hopeful of a big rebound in egg exports. “I doubt if we will get back the West Asian market as before. The domestic poultry sector has come up nicely in those countries in these couple of years and their Government would try to encourage them,” he said.

But the Indian poultry industry is pushing its case through missions abroad, he said.

“We have asked our Government to tell our missions to impress upon the countries in West Asia to lift the ban on our eggs,” said Mr Shivakumar.

One of the reasons why the poultry sector is hopeful of doing better if the ban on Indian eggs goes in West Asia is that it is the most competitive among the exporting nations.

Competition from Brazil

A carton of 360 eggs from India costs \$21-22 in West Asia against over \$30 for eggs from countries such as Brazil. Eggs from Brazil and other western nations cost higher because they are found to be uniform in size and in better condition.

However, Mr Shivakumar says that even if Indian eggs were to match the quality of the Brazilian ones, buyers wouldn't be ready to pay higher prices.

Currently, an egg costs Rs 2.35 in Namakkal, the hub of the poultry sector in the country. The prices have been ruling at this level for over a week now.

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Back 'Adopt new methods to raise cotton output'



Cotton crop in Tamil Nadu has stagnated at around five lakh bales.

Our Bureau

Coimbatore, Sept. 26

There is a need to understand the ground realities and work together for the benefit of all sectors of the textile industry in larger national interest, Mr C. Soundara Raj, President, South India Cotton Association (SICA) said.

Addressing SICA members at its 31st Annual General Meeting here today, Mr Soundara Raj conceded that the most disturbing area for the textile industry has been the spiralling

cotton price levels. "And farmers have not been benefited by the steep increase in the price of cotton, but exporters lobby dominated by multinational companies operating in India," he said.

The exporters lobby has estimated the 2010-11 cotton production figure at 350 lakh bales, though the CAB's (Cotton Advisory Board) has put it at 325 lakh bales against 295 lakh bales in 2009-2010.

"It is a paradox, that prices should record increases of up to 75 per cent when the cotton production is actually on the rise. We see no logic behind this, with exporters pushing for more and more exports, leaving the domestic industry in the lurch. Unless the interest of the domestic industry is protected, and export of cotton calibrated, we foresee no improvement in the situation," he said.

The association has emphasised the need for taking a long-term view of the situation by focusing on achieving a cotton production target of 450 lakh bales by 2013. "This target is achievable if only the annual production rate is enhanced by 15 per cent with adoption of new technologies of water use, increase in acreage and with improved marketing strategies."

Tamil Nadu incidentally, is not receiving the much-needed attention as the cotton crop here has stagnated at around five lakh bales.

Innovative scheme

With changes that have taken place in cotton marketing, the Cotton Corporation of India has launched an innovative scheme of stocking cotton in Coimbatore and Rajapalayam and selling them to the needy mills in Tamil Nadu on spot basis. While hailing this scheme, the SICA President said that the CCI should stock about 50 per cent of their procurement in these godowns as the State accounted for about 50 per cent of the national spindleage.

CAB has estimated an increase in both cotton production and acreage in 2010-11 compared to 2009-10. The area is expected to increase from 103.29 lakh hectares to 110 lakh hectares, with the Central and South zone inching up the area to 72.60 lakh hectares (67.32 lakh hectares) and 23.36 lakh hectares (20.24 lakh hectares) respectively.

The increased acreage is expected to increase cotton production from 295 lakh bales in 2009-10 to 325.48 lakh bales in 2010-11.

A glance at the cotton balance sheet showed that despite the increase in cotton production during 2010-11, the (estimated) supply would drop to 370.50 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) against 373.50 lakh bales in 2009-10.

“There has been a steep decline in the opening stock from 71.50 lakh bales in 2009-10, it has fallen to 40.50 lakh bales in 2010-11,” a SICA member said.

The steep increase in price levels could lead to a drop in domestic demand for the fibre. “Mills may not have the wherewithal to buy and stock cotton at the current levels. The estimated total off-take could be around 315 lakh bales compared to 333 lakh bales in 2009-10,” the source said.

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Back Volatility continues in pepper market

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Sept. 26

Pepper market was not different this week also. It remained the platform for the usual “tug of war” between the bull and bear operators. The prices were being pushed up and down. Citing lack of demand from overseas markets on the one hand and increased availability on the other the bears were pulling the market down while the bulls were pushing it up using the opposite strategy.

Caught in between were the small and medium traders and growers. Some who wanted to cover frantically were trying all out to depress prices, while some were pushing it up, market sources told Business Line.

But, during the week some business has taken place with selected pockets in the overseas markets such as Japan, Australia, Canada, Germany etc., where consumers

preferred the Malabar Garbled 1 at a premium of \$150-200 a tonne over other origins. Transactions were concluded at \$4,450 a tonne (c&f) when other origins were offering Asta grade at \$4,300-4,350 a tonne (c&f).

“For every decline some new business is taking place,” they said. The domestic market continued to remain slow during the week due to heavy rains and floods in the north Indian states. Add to this was the Ganeshotsav and reports of pronouncement of Allahabad High Court judgment on Ayodhya. All these factors kept consumers away from the market and hence no demand was forthcoming. Since there has been an improvement in weather conditions domestic demand for the festival/wedding season and the winter would start picking up probably from next week.

In fact, to sustain the Indian pepper prices, the huge domestic market, which absorbs somewhere around 50,000 tonnes of pepper a year is enough, they said. This is because the Indian total output has not shown any significant growth or rather it has been stagnant at around 55,000 tonnes for some time now, growers said.

In the international market also there has not been a corresponding increase in output and, therefore, there existed a mismatch between demand and supply.

It is evident from the price trend in the world market where the prices of Asta grade has not dropped to below \$4,200 tonnes even after the beginning of Indonesian new crop harvesting and that is about to be over by now.

Availability of physical pepper in India is limited and much of it is with the exchange platform. There has not been any selling pressure on spot, trade sources said.

There were buyers for quality pepper but its availability was limited whatever farm grade pepper available with the investors including the national level co-operatives, who showing interest to sell, were allegedly qualitatively inferior, they said. Lack of selling pressure and buying support pushed the market up on Saturday.

However, all contracts dropped during the week. October, November and December fell by Rs 548, Rs 579 and Rs 531 respectively to close at Rs 19,523, Rs 19,727 and Rs 19,972 a quintal.

Total turnover dropped by 17,714 tonnes to 84,942 tonnes. Total open interest fell by 543 tonnes to 16,280 tonnes.

Spot prices during the week dropped by Rs 300 a quintal to end at Rs 19,100 (ungarbled) and Rs 19,600 at the weekend close. Trading was sluggish during the week and prices decreased at most of the origins with the exception of Sri Lanka, the International Pepper Community (IPC) report for the week said.

In India, slight improvement in trading activity was indicated in the Commodity Exchange, particularly for November contract. Prices however marginally decreased in spot, fob as well as in futures prices, by around 1 per cent. A slight drop was also observed in Lampung and Sarawak. In Belem, local prices were relatively stable, white fob prices decreased by 1 per cent.

In Bangka, white pepper price decreased, by 3 per cent after experiencing an increase during the last week. In Sarawak, prices were stable both in local as well as fob. In dollar terms, the local price increased by 1 per cent. In Vietnam, local price was stable, while fob prices increased by 4 per cent. A slight increase was also reported in Brazil.

India was the second main supplier of ground pepper to Germany during the first half of 2010. Netherlands topped with 22 per cent, India (18 per cent), Indonesia (17 per cent) and Vietnam (14 per cent). During January–June 2010, Germany has imported 14,484 tonnes of pepper. Of this 13,611 tonnes were of whole and 873 tonnes of ground pepper, recording an increase of 15 per cent, compared with imports of 12,561 tonnes (11,886 tonnes of whole and 675 tonnes of ground pepper) in the corresponding period of the last year. Vietnam, Brazil and Indonesia were the main suppliers of whole pepper, the IPC report said.

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[Back](#) Coonor tea prices drop on low demand

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Sept. 26

Prices dropped Rs 3 a kg at Sale No: 38 of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions on Friday as demand was inadequate to absorb at high prices the year's lowest offer of 11.64 lakh kg. Teas worth Rs 1.27 crore remained unsold because 18 per cent of the offer was withdrawn.

In all, 68 marks of CTC teas fetched Rs 100 and more. Darmona Tea Industry topped the market. "Our Pekoe Dust (PD) fetched Rs 146 a kg, the highest of all leaf and dust. Our Broken Orange Pekoe (BOP) topped leaf market at Rs 126. In all, our four grades got Rs 118 and more," Darmona Managing Partner, Mr Dinesh Raju, told Business Line. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 135, Homedale Estate (Rs 134), Hittakkal Estate (Rs 125.50), Blue Mont Estate (Rs 121) and Shanthi Supreme (Rs 120).

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 224, Curzon (Rs 194), Kairbetta (Rs 171), Coonoor Tea, Highfield Estate, Katary and Quinshola clonal Rs 167 each, Sutton (Rs 165), Corsley (Rs 163), Tiger Hill clonal (Rs 162) and Erinkadu (Rs 160). In all, 36 marks got Rs 100 and more.

"Whole leaf orthodox teas lost significantly Rs 10-15 a kg, but others gained Rs 1-2. High-priced CTC leaf lost Rs 2-5, better mediums Rs 2-3 and plainers, Rs 2-4. Primary orthodox dusts gained up to Rs 10. High-priced CTC dusts eased Rs 2-4, better mediums Rs 1-2 and plainers Rs 2-3," an auctioneer said.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 37-42 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-125 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 42-50 for plain dusts and Rs 90-120 for brighter liquoring dusts. On the export front, Pakistan bought in a wide range of Rs 38-65 a kg and the CIS, Rs 35-47. Egypt bought selectively for Rs 45-56.

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[Back](#) Sikkim launches 'Rabi Campaign'

Gangtok, Sept. 25

The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr Pawan Chamling, has called upon farmers to work towards transforming cash crop agriculture farming into a lucrative profession. He was addressing a huge congregation of farmers in the launching ceremony of Rabi Campaign 2010 here on Saturday. The campaign has been launched by the State Food Security and Agriculture Development Department and the Horticulture and Cash Crop Development Department to motivate farmers to take up wheat, mustard and buck wheat cultivation in the ensuing rabi season. – Karma Samten Yangzom

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Rice production may go up 6%, pulses 33% this season

NEW DELHI: The farm ministry's first advance crop estimates for this kharif have projected a bumper output, which should help cool food inflation running at over 15%.

Good rainfall across the country, barring a few states in the east, has led to a sharp increase in cropping that is expected to yield a substantially higher production of nearly all food items.

The production of rice is projected to go up 6% to 80.4 million tonne while output of pulses is expected to rise 33% to six million tonne, data released by government has showed.

Sugarcane production growth has also been pegged at 17%, spurring hopes of lower sugar prices.

The country has so far received 4% more rainfall than the long-term average and the good soil moisture is expected to help the rabi crop as well. The planning commission expects the farm sector to grow 5-6% in the current year.

However, food and farm minister Sharad Pawar said on Thursday that despite the expected bumper crop, the Centre was unlikely to rush into taking decisions on removing export restrictions on several crops, including sugar, rice and wheat, at this stage. The first advance estimates for the year is based largely on the sowing estimates and tends to overestimate production. A reasonable idea is available by the third estimates of the year.

Besides, the erratic monsoon has caused heavy floods in the north, which could also affect production if water does not clear quickly and replanting is not done soon.

About 78 districts countrywide are also affected by drought. With food inflation at 15.46% for the week ended September 11, the government the government is reluctant to take any decision that could push up prices.

At 114.63 million tonne, the expected kharif production in the current year is about 15 million tonne more than the first advance estimates and an increase of 11 mt over the 4th estimates of 2009-10.

Cotton production, too, is bumper at an estimated 335 lakh bales, 96 lakh bales more than the fourth estimates for last year and sugarcane is pegged at 324.91mt.