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Water released from KRP Dam for second crop

Staff Reporter

A total of 9,012 acres of farm land to be irrigated for 120 days

— Photo: N. Bashkaran

District Collector V. Arun Roy (right) opening the sluice gates of the left and right main canals of the KRP dam on Monday.

KRISHNAGIRI: Water from the Krishnagiri Reservoir Project (KRP) Dam was released for the second crop from the right and left main canals on Monday by Collector V. Arun Roy in the presence of Krishnagiri MP E.G. Sugavanam, MLAs T. Senguttuvan, and T.A. Magenathan. A total of 9,012 acres of agriculture land in 16 villages will benefit for the next

120 days.

A total of 4,287 acres in the ayacut of right main canal and the small lakes on the way and 4,725 acres in the ayacut of left main canal and the small lakes on its way will be irrigated.

Periyamuthur, Sundekuppam, Thimmapuram, Soutaalli, Thalialli, Kalvealli, Kundalapatti, Mittaalli, Erraalli, Penneswaramadam, Kaveripattinam, Palekuli, Marichettihalli, Nagojanaalli, Janapparuralli and Paiyur will benefit from the dam water.

"The time frame for water release will not be extended beyond 120 days. Hence, farmers should use water judiciously," the Collector said.

The present water level in the KRP Dam was 51.80 ft as against its full height of 52 ft. Water storage was 1643.55 cft.

Earlier, water from the dam was released for the first crop from July 1 this year for 150 days i.e. from July 1 to November 27 this year.

Farmers were asked to undertake Rajarajan 1000 method of cultivation which consumes 30 per cent less water and increase the productivity 30 per cent than the normal methods of cultivation.

TahsildharP.M. Rajagopal, Executive EngineerM. Ramamurthy, Assistant Executive Engineer R. Gouthaman, Water Resource Organisation of the PWD and presidents of Water Users Association participated.

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Programme to take farm technology to the masses

Staff Reporter

Kasaragod: A 'technology week' will be hosted by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) under the Central Plantation Crops and Research Institute (CPCRI) here from December 14.

P. Karunakaran, MP, will inaugurate the programme, 'Akshaya-2010', at the KVK at 10.30 p.m., CPCRI Director George V. Thomas told the media here on Monday.

For awareness

The programme is aimed at creating awareness among the farming community about technological innovations and improved farming techniques, Mr. Thomas said.

Officials from the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), Zonal Project Directorate, Bangalore, Kerala Agricultural University, Department of Agriculture, Department of Animal Husbandry, State Horticulture Mission and farmer representatives would take part.

During the five-day event, seminars on organic farming, paddy cultivation and food security, coconut-based multiple cropping and mixed farming for higher income, integration of dairy, poultry and fisheries, integrated farming with spices, post-harvest technology of plantation crops would be held.

Seminars planned

Besides, seminars on scientific cultivation of fruit crops, plant protection in paddy, vegetables and banana, modern trends in animal husbandry, mechanisation in paddy cultivation, spraying and farm machineries, agriculture and banking sectors would be held.Agriculture Minister Mullakkara Ratnakaran will open a 'plant health clinic' at the KVK funded by the Kerala State Horticulture Mission on December 18.

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Input subsidy not yet paid to farmers

VIZIANAGARAM: The allegation of Opposition parties that the government is indifferent to farmers' woes seems to be true if the non-release of input subsidy pending since kharif-2009 is any indication. The government had then declared some 26 mandals, in two spells, as drought-hit and sent a report that crop in 18012.84 hectares suffered damage affecting 53,227 farmers.

The loss was then put at Rs. 806.79 lakhs and of which the administration received Rs.472lakhs only for disbursement. In the cyclone in November last year crop in 7,623.156 ha was damaged affecting 26,234 farmers and the estimated loss was Rs.343.04lakhs.

In the rains in February and March this year the crop loss was in 541.36 ha and 677.63 ha affecting 1942 farmers and 2184 farmers respectively.

The loss was put at Rs. 20.30 lakhs and Rs. 25.334 lakhs. Again, in the rains in August the crop was damaged in 765.16 ha affecting 3351 farmers and the input subsidy proposed was Rs.34.43 lakhs. Summing up, of the Rs.1229.894 lakh estimates sent for compensation by the Agriculture Department, Rs. 472 lakhs only was received and the balance amount of Rs. 857.894 lakhs was still pending from the government.

Meanwhile, Jal cyclone in October and subsequent heavy rains in the middle of November and early this month the total crop loss, according to official figures, was in over 41,000 hectares.

Still, final enumeration by joint village-level and mandal-level committees is going on.

Preliminary report put the loss at Rs. 92.2crores as 92,250 metric tonnes of matured paddy grains either germinated or decomposed in some areas due to waterlogging. In the other extent of area grains discoloured. The crop area of paddy during kharif-2010 was 1.24lakh ha.

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CM urged to provide free power for horticulture crops

Some farmers charged with theft and slapped hefty fines

‘A committee should be constituted to examine the issue' Farmers associations threaten to launch an agitation

TIRUCHI: The Tiruchi District Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association has urged Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi to ensure supply of free power to all farmers, including those raising horticulture crops.

There was much confusion among farmers and lack of clarity among officials on the issue. Mr.Karunanidhi's recent statement that free power has never been given to horticulture crops and the scheme was implemented only for paddy and sugarcane has agitated the minds of farmers.

Several farmers were raising horticulture crops in their farms even while cultivating paddy or sugarcane. Many had obtained farm power connections to irrigate horticulture crops such as banana even before power was made free for agricultural connections, the association said.

The Chief Minister, if necessary, should constitute a committee to examine the issue thoroughly and come out with an appropriate order in this regard, observed a resolution adopted at an urgent meeting of the association held here on Sunday with G.Kanagasabai, president, in the chair.

Some farmers in Tiruchi district have been charged with power theft and slapped with hefty fines by anti-power theft squads for using the free power for irrigating horticulture crops. A few of them have approached the High Court and obtained an interim injunction against the action, the resolution claimed.

However, all farmers would be not able to do so and farmers associations would be forced to launch an agitation on the issue. Farmers should not be humiliated with charges of power theft.

The government should set up a committee to go into the issue and direct it to submit a report within three months. Based on the report, the government should come out with an order, without affecting the interests of any section of the farming community.

Till such time, the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation should not initiate any action against farmers using free power to irrigate horticulture crops, the resolution said.

The association also urged the government to ensure that all farmers whose crops were damaged due to the recent heavy rain be provided adequate compensation.

A thorough enumeration should be conducted to identify all affected farmers. The relief should also be distributed quickly without any delay, another resolution adopted at the meeting said.

Mahadahanapuram Rajaram, working president of the association, Puliyur Nagarajan, president, Horticulture Crop Growers Association, and others participated.

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Intensive Farm Credit campaign

Staff Reporter

KRISHNAGIRI: The Indian Bank, lead bank in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts, has begun Intensive Farm Credit Campaign from the third week of November. The campaign will last till the first week of January 2011, said S. Sadagopan, Zonal Manager, Dharmapuri Circle on Monday.

Mr. Sadagopan informed this while welcoming the gathering at the inaugural function of the Mathur branch's new office at Raja Street. The intensive campaign is organised in all its branches in two districts. During the campaign period, thrust will be given for sanctioning crop loans especially for new farmers and micro irrigation. .

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Rain takes its toll on tobacco crop in Godavari districts

BVS Bhaskar

RAJAHMUNDRY: Untimely rain that lashed the region recently is going to affect the growth and production of tobacco this season. In East and West Godavari districts, the situation is grim, with the crop getting inundated in 32,000 hectares. Threat of black shank and fusarium wilt diseases – which damage roots of tobacco plants and consequently their growth – looms large. This in turn will affect production this year. Scientists from the Central Tobacco Research Institute are of the view that the production of FCV variety may not cross 170 million kg this season as against last season's 220 million kg. “Though farmers may get good price, drop in production will be about 20 to 25 p.c.,” said V. Krishna Murthy, Director, CTRI.

He along with other senior scientists gave some suggestions to farmers to save their standing crop. He said while the actual loss would be assessed by the Tobacco Board, preliminary estimates put it at it 5,000 hectares in East Godavari and 25,000 to 27,000 hectares in West Godavari. The CTRI scientists advised farmers to drain out water from the fields at the earliest by inter-cultures or making holes around the root zone to provide aeration.

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21,000 hectares of paddy damaged in Pudukottai

PUDUKOTTAI: Paddy raised on an area of 21,000 hectares in the district has been damaged extensively following sharp showers in the district during November.The damage was caused due to inundation of paddy fields for several days and also due to the incidence of blast disease in the fields, said G.S. Ramadasu, District Revenue Officer.

Presiding over the Farmers' Grievances Day meeting held here on Friday, he said uneven distribution of rainfall for a fortnight between November 20 and December 5 had resulted in increase in the humidity of the climate, a factor favourable for the incidence of blast disease.Agriculture Department officials clarified that under normal conditions, the blast disease could be controlled through crop protection techniques. But excess humidity had caused extensive damage to the standing crop.Mr. Ramadasu said realisation of water in the tanks had stabilised following the showers.

Water in as many as 100 out of the total 168 system tanks in the Cauvery Mettur Project area can be utilised for irrigation for the next three months; another 50 tanks for two months while 18 tanks could irrigate the fields throughout December. A maximum of 8,000 hectares was damaged in Avudaiyarkovil area followed by 7,400 hectares in Manalmelkudi area; 900 hectares in Arimalam and 300 hectares in Aranthangi.When a number of farmers complained of heavy damage to the standing crops and urged the district administration to take steps for relief from the state government, the official replied that a crop-wise and field-wise survey was being conducted in the district.

Published: December 13, 2010 20:42 IST | Updated: December 13, 2010 20:42 IST New Delhi, December 13, 2010

Climate-smart agriculture to eradicate world hunger: FAO

AP With climate change, ozone depletion and droughts in Australia and California's Central Valley, some farmers are coating wallnuts with sunscreen to alleviate sun damage. File photo

Adopting "climate-smart" agricultural practises would be key to eradicate hunger from the world, a UN body has said.

Climate smart agricultural practises could address the twin problems of food security and climate change, FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation) Director-General Jacques Diouf said.

“By climate smart, we mean agriculture that sustainably increases productivity and resilience to environmental pressures, while at the same time reduces greenhouse gas emissions or removes them from the atmosphere, because we cannot ignore the fact that agriculture is itself a large emitter of greenhouse gases,” he said.

Drawing gloomy picture, he said the world's population is expected to surpass 9 billion people by 2050, which will require an estimated 70 per cent increase in global agricultural production.

At the same time, climate change is expected to have multiple impacts on agricultural productivity and rural

incomes in areas that are already experiencing high levels of food insecurity, the FAO DG added.

The FAO head stressed that a variety of climate-smart practices already exist and are being used in some places, providing examples that could be more widely implemented in developing countries, as highlighted in an FAO report prepared in advance of the Cancun conference.

He also stressed on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

“Forestry and agro-forestry, sectors that hundreds of millions of rural people depend on for their livelihoods, also hold great potential for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing carbon sinks, stabilising rural livelihoods and strengthening household food security,” added Mr. Diouf.

“The biophysical mitigation potential of forests is estimated at about 64 per cent of the emissions from forestry, while agriculture could provide an estimated technical mitigation potential that could reach 83-90 per cent of that sectors’ total emissions,” he said.

The FAO chief referred to developed countries offsetting their own emissions by investing in “REDD projects” in the developing world.

The term “REDD+” is used to describe efforts to move this beyond just deforestation and forest degradation and include conservation, sustainable forest management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in such exchanges.

REDD+ could generate an estimated $ 30 to $ 100 billion worth of investment for developing countries per year, he said.

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TIRUCHI, December 14, 2010

Bananas the apple of eye at exhibition

The Hindu WEIGHING THEIR OPTIONS: Visitors at the Banana Exhibition at the Global Conference on Banana in Tiruchi on Friday. Photo:M.Moorthy

For horticulture farmers with an eye for technology, the exhibition organised as part of the four-day Global Conference on Banana, currently underway in the city, should serve as a one-stop shop to glean all the latest scientific information and best agricultural practices.

Banana, as to be expected, hogs centre stage at the exhibition. As one enters the exhibition, a couple of giant size banana bunches strike the eye. Grown by G.Nathar Meeran, a progressive farmer and agro entrepreneur from Theni, the huge bunches stand nearly six feet in height and weigh 81 and 83 kg respectively.

The genial Mr.Meeran, who has previously bagged the best progressive farmer award from the NRCB, explains how he has successfully adopted the tissue culture technique and other technical inputs given by NRCB and other institutes to raise the Grand Naine variety banana bunches, which have 16 hands and over 300 fruits each. “All farmers can adopt these practices if only they show interest in adopting latest technologies and farm practices,” he observes. Despite his ability to absorb the scientific inputs, he concedes to facing difficulties in post harvest handling of the fruits. ‘We are midway, we got to move to the next stage with the help of research institutions,” he says.

Rich and diverse information is on store at the other stalls covering various aspects of banana cultivation, including micro irrigation systems, post harvest handling, storage and value added products derived from banana. The various stages of post harvest handling and storage including the process of ripening cold storage, which could help extend the shelf life of banana up to a month, are explained in detail with exhibits. Machines for producing banana value added products including banana fibre extractor are also on display by research institutions and voluntary organisations.

Banana, the exhibition also provides an overview of the latest technological advances and scientific inputs on several other horticulture crops too, says R.Selvarajan, Virologist, NRCB, and chairman of the exhibition committee. Apart from the National Research Centre on Banana (NRCB), which hosts the conference along with the Association for Improvement in Production and Utilisation of Banana, the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research, Directorate of Oil Palm, Central Tuber Corps Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, and Coconut Development Board have set shop at the exhibition.

There is a wealth of information for general visitors too as the stalls throw light on some exotic recipes for dishes made from tubers and vegetables and other food/agro products. For instance, interested visitors could even learn how to extract oil directly from coconut flesh with out drying it up.

The exhibition will be open till Monday at Hotel Sangam, the venue of the conference, in the city.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Tue, Dec 14, 2010 | Updated 10.30AM IST

14 Dec, 2010, 01.33AM IST, S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

GM rubber gets Centre's permission for field trial

KOCHI: The Central government has permitted field trials of genetically modified rubber by the Rubber Research Institute of India. With this India becomes the first country in the world to try and boost rubber supply by using GM technology to make it hardy and more capable of withstanding changing weather patterns.

Natural rubber has become increasingly scarce as yields are dwindling from ageing trees while demand for tyres is at record high. While field trials are expected to start next year, commercial cultivation will be considered only after the new technology performs well for at least five seasons.

If approved for commercial use, rubber will be the second major crop after cotton to use genetic engineering to boost farmer incomes and increase raw material availability.

RRII, the first to start research in GM rubber, hopes to flag off field trials by 2011. “In money terms we expect the GM rubber to lead additional revenue of Rs 300 crore every year to the rubber sector,” said James Jacob, director, RRII.

If RRII does not go ahead with the programme, private laboratories and other countries might win the race for GM rubber, Jacob said. India has the best planting material in rubber and the best productivity.

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee, under the Ministry of Environment, has given permission to the government-run institute to conduct field trials in Kerala and Maharashtra. The Kottayam-based institute will now seek permission of the state governments for starting the trials. As Kerala’s declared stand is to make the state a GM-free region, the field trials are most likely to be held in Maharashtra.

GM rubber will be a more sturdy plant, and may have 10 % more yield than existing varieties. The new clone is being developed with the genetic material taken from the rubber tree itself. Field trials will also look at its resistance to diseases like tapping panel dryness syndrome.

GM rubber will be a big relief to the tyre manufacturers who are now facing an acute shortage of natural rubber. MK Mehta, deputy general manager, JK Tyres, said if the GM rubber has all the molecular properties that the industry’s technical team require it would be welcomed. “Of course it should be environmentally safe,” he added.

Rubber Board has been doing laboratory trials for the last five years though actual research started in mid-1990s. Studies done by the Rubber Institute show productivity of rubber could fall by almost 6% in traditional rubber growing areas in the next decade as a result of global warming.

Meanwhile, unexpected rains in the main producing regions have resulted in production cutbacks and loss of income to farmers. The rubber sector has seen a major loss of tapping days due to heavy rains in the rubber producing centres. “The long intervals between tapping days have gradually started adversely affecting the productivity of the trees,” says Biju John, proprietor, CPM Spices Corporation.

The rubber sector has also been experiencing an acute shortage of tappers. The net result is that there is a shortage of rubber in the market. The shortfall in rubber production due to the prolonged rains has assumed serious proportions with the November figures showing a 5.4% fall over the same period of the previous year. The year end shortage is likely to be 80,000 tonne.

It is amidst these developments that the scientists debated the introduction of GM rubber in the country at a plantation crop seminar held at Kottayam last week. The GM approach “holds potential for developing location specific clones that can tolerate adverse effects of climatic change”, a statement issued by the RRI said.

The Indian Rubber Growers Association general secretary Sibi Monippally welcomed the move to conduct field trials with GM rubber. However, opposition to the programme has already been voiced from different quarters. Thanal, a Thiruvananthapuram-based organisation that has been taking up environmental issues, has already called for a ban on the adoption of such technology in the state.

14 Dec, 2010, 01.31AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale,ET Bureau

Sugar mills happy with higher prices

PUNE: By selling their sugar for Rs 28 a kg, sugar mills are making enough money to pay farmers the government-advised cane price (SAP) and also some profit. Low wholesale prices at the start of the season, higher cane prices and the prospects of a bumper sugar supply have kept the companies on tenterhooks about the business prospects.

“The current ex-mill sugar price in Uttar Pradesh is Rs 28.50 per kg. We can pay the SAP of Rs 205 a quintal if sugar prices remain at Rs 29 to Rs 30 per kg,” said a senior official of the UP Sugar Mills Association. Sugar cane crushing is currently in full swing across the country, including top two producing states — UP and Maharashtra.

With sugar prices having firmed up despite increased sugar production, it is unlikely that the prices will come down significantly in the near future. This has helped the mills to pay more than the fair and remunerative price.

In Maharashtra, the mills in the high recovery zone of Kolhapur-Sangli have begun to pay the first advance of Rs 2,350 per tonne including harvesting and transport costs. In the rest of the state, most mills are comfortably paying the ex-field FRP of around Rs 1,500 per tonne although farmers are agitating for the first advance of Rs 2,000 per tonne ex-field.

“Cooperative banks in Maharashtra have given pre-season loans of Rs 2,075 per sugar bag (a quintal) based on a benchmark sugar price of Rs 2,500 per quintal. Of this loan, the mills get Rs 1,450 as cane price, Rs 250 as processing expense, while Rs 375 goes as recovery of past loans,” said Prakash Naiknavare, managing director of Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Mills Federation.

Though the Maharashtra sugar mills’ realisations are above the benchmark rate of the banks, the mills do not have access to the extra money. This has been earmarked by the banks for the recovery of past dues.

Sources in the South Indian Sugar Mills Association, Karnataka, said that mills had agreed to pay a cane price of Rs 2,200 per tonne in north Karnataka and Rs 1,800 per tonne in south Karnataka. With sugar prices currently ranging between Rs 27-30 per kg, the mills can comfortably meet farmers' demands.

14 Dec, 2010, 01.21AM IST, Sutanuka Ghosal,ET Bureau

Soyabean prices may surge on supply concern

KOLKATA: Heavy rains in Indonesia and Malaysia coupled with drought-like situation in South America may put pressure on soyabean imports in the next couple of months.

However, this is unlikely to put severe pressure on soyaoil prices as there is enough domestic supply of soyabean in the domestic market. Talking to ET, Sandeep Bajoria , CEO of Sunvin Group, said: "Soyaoil sector works according to the year that begins on November 1 and ends at October 31 next year. Generally, India produces 15 lakh tonne soyaoil and imports another 16 lakh tonne from international markets. In the present scenario, prices are likely to go up by $50-$100 per tonne. The current price is $1,280 per tonne." The soyabean kharif crop this year has been almost equal to last season's.

"This year the country has produced soyaseed of 89 lakh tonne. There may be fluctuation in prices in the next two months but we do not see a huge jump in prices," said PK Sardar, executive director of Central Organisation for Oil Industry & Trade.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Dec 14, 2010

Govt to review cotton exports before extending Dec 15 deadline

Newswire18 / New Delhi December 14, 2010, 0:48 IST

The government might review cotton export shipments so far this season before deciding on whether to extend the December 15 deadline for dispatching export cargoes, Textiles Secretary Rita Menon said today.

“First, we are going to see what the valid registrations are, then we will see the gap (between actual shipments and export allowed) and then we will take a policy decision,” Menon said.

The government had capped cotton exports in the current marketing year, which started October, at 5.5 million bales to rein in local prices, which had risen about 50 per cent within a quarter in line with surging global prices.

It had allowed the textiles commissioner to start cotton export registrations from October 1.

Rubber surges to record high

Bloomberg / Tokyo December 14, 2010, 0:46 IST

Rubber rose to a record as rain cut output, worsening a supply shortage, as demand for the commodity used in tyres expands, led by rising car sales in China and India. The cash price in Thailand also reached a record.

May-delivery rubber on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange climbed as much as 3.8 per cent to an all-time-high of ¥396.4 a kg (4,712 a tonne), exceeding the previous record of ¥388.9 reached on February 13, 1980, before settling at ¥395.5. The contract has gained 43 per cent this year.

Futures advanced after China’s central bank refrained from increasing interest rates and government reports showed China’s economy is gaining momentum, boosting speculation that demand from the largest user will keep expanding. China's industrial-output growth accelerated to 13.3 per cent last month from a year earlier, surpassing economists' median estimate of 13 per cent.

"The figures from China showed economic growth accelerated, regardless of government measures to cool expansion," said Takaki Shigemoto, an analyst at research company JSC Corp in Tokyo. "The data, together with a lack of a rate increase by China, created a bullish mood among investors, leading to a rally in equities and commodities markets."

May-delivery rubber in Shanghai rose as much as 4.5 per cent to close at a daily limit of 35,320 yuan ($5,302) a tonne. The contract reached a record 38,920 yuan November 11.

Cash rubber in Thailand surged to a record 138.55 baht per kilogram, boosted by a supply shortage and the Tokyo rally, according to the Rubber Research Institute of Thailand.

The price will likely extend gains as latex output in the country starts a seasonal decline as early as next month, said Hisaaki Tasaka, an analyst at Tokyo-based broker ACE Koeki Co.

China, India

A natural-rubber shortage in India, the world's biggest consumer after China, may deepen almost five times over the next decade as rising incomes boost demand for tyres. The deficit may widen to 840,000 tonnes in 2020 from 175,000 tonnes next year, according to Vinod Simon, president of the All India Rubber Industries Association. In 2015, the shortfall might be 687,000 tons, Simon said.

China's sales of passenger cars including multipurpose and sport-utility vehicles increased 29.3 per cent to 1.34 million last month, higher than the previous record of 1.32 million in January, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. The pace of growth was the fastest since April.

Veg oil imports dip 11% on high local supply

BS Reporter / Mumbai December 14, 2010, 0:45 IST

Imports of vegetable oils declined 11 per cent in November due to improved supply from local crushing units since the beginning of the new season.

Data compiled by the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) showed that India's total vegetable oil imports slumped to 668,917 tonnes compared to 753,966 tonnes in the corresponding month of the previous year. B V Mehta, executive director of SEA, attributed the fall to higher availability from local crushing mills and volatility in the rupee.

Indian vegetable oil industry comprises 15,000 oil mills, 600 solvent extraction units, 600 vegetable oil refineries and 250 vanaspati units spread across the country that crush/process oilseeds, oilcakes, rice bran and vegetable oils. Apparently, a majority of units have started crushing oilseeds, with hopes that mills will run in full capacity throughout the six months due to bumper seed crop this season.

As a consequence, edible oil output from domestic sources this season is estimated to rise to nearly seven million tonnes from a little over 6.5 million tonnes last year.

Moreover, the strengthening rupee lured traders and refiners to stock full quantity in order to fetch higher profit if the rupee weakens to average over 46 against the dollar. Weakening of the rupee makes imported goods costlier. Hence, traders of such commodity build inventory full to their capacity when value of the local currency goes down.

The average value of dollar against the rupee declined sharply to 44.75 in October from 45.50 in September and 46.75 in August. But, it slightly jumped to 45.50 in November this year, as compared to 1.6 per cent decline from the average 46.25 in the comparable month of the previous year.

The domestic turnover of the vegetable oil industry is pegged at Rs 100,000 crore this year, while the import-export turnover is estimated at Rs 45,000 crore.

During November, import of refined, bleached and di-odized palmolein was reported at 70,516 tonnes as compared to 112,604 tonnes in November 2009. Share of refined oil and crude oil was reported at 11 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively.

Pepper prices likely to remain high in 2011

George Joseph / Kochi December 14, 2010, 0:41 IST

The tight supply condition in the global pepper market is not likely to ease for the next seven-eight weeks, as stocks in major producing countries like Vietnam, India and Indonesia are declining sharply.

Supply is expected to improve only by mid-February, when harvesting in Vietnam will be active. Market participants remain bullish on pepper for the entire 2011, as production in the next season may fall due to a sharp deviation in the climatic condition.

Exporters, dealers and growers say prices will surpass the earlier record of Rs 27,000 a quintal (which happened a decade back) in 2011, with some of them expecting a level of Rs 30,000.

Vietnam and Indonesia, the two leading pepper suppliers, have already sold out their stock. Hence, they are now quoting much higher price tags. At present, Vietnam is selling the ASTA grade for $5,400 a tonne, while the 500 gm/litre grade is being quoted at $4,750.

Interestingly, Vietnam has already imported around 15,000 tonnes of pepper till November this year, which indicates that stocks have exhausted there. A bumper crop in Vietnam can only ease prices in the new year. According to estimates, Vietnam will produce 95,000-100,000 tonnes of crop this time, down by around 10,000 tonnes. Conservative estimates indicate a much lower production of 82,000 tonnes due to unfavourable climate.

Spices Board projects Indian production at 48,000 tonnes, but growers estimate a maximum output of 42,000 tonnes. (Normal crop in India is 55,000 tonnes). Production estimates have been poor because heavy rainfall during the September-November season destroyed fresh spikes on pepper vines, especially in Wynad and Idukki districts.

Labour shortage is also posing a serious threat to pepper production. Even at a high wage rate (Rs 500 daily), growers are not getting enough workers for plucking the crop. Labour shortage alone could curtail two-three per cent of production this season, said Abdu, a leading farmer in Wynad.

The new crop is likely to hit domestic market by January. Pepper from southern districts of Kerala usually arrives at the terminal market by the first week of December, but it will be delayed this time by at least four weeks.

25% jaggery units close on low prices, labour shortage

Dilip Kumar Jha & Vds Rama Raju / Mumbai/ Visakhapatnam December 14, 2010, 0:34 IST

Prices have dropped 30 per cent on poor demand, bumper cane supply.

Over 25 per cent of jaggery manufacturing units (kolhus) across the country have shut down within a month of beginning the season on a promising note due to a 30 per cent decline in prices.

Thousands of kolhu operators from the unorganised sector started operations mid-October, when jaggery prices were quoting at Rs 1,340 per 40 kg. But, prices fell dramatically due to massive availability of cane on bumper crop this year.

“Unseasonal rain during November damaged most of the rabi crop like wheat and mustard sown in October. Therefore, farmers had to re-sow these, resulting into the diversion of contractual labourers from cane harvesting to wheat plantings. As a consequence, most of the manufacturing units faced labour shortage, resulting in the closure of units,” said Vijendra Kumar Bansal, proprietor of Durgadas Narayandas, a Hapur-based veteran jaggery trader.

Also, farmers had been unwilling to hire contractual workers on competitive wages due to steep decline in jaggery prices, which had fallen nearly 30 per cent across the country due to the lack of demand, Bansal said.

Jaggery prices in Hapur were quoted at Rs 800 per 40 kg. The benchmark Chaku, Laddu and Khudpa varieties were traded in Muzaffarnagar in the range of Rs 860-920, Rs 845-865 and Rs 870-910 per 10 kg, respectively, on Friday.

The sweetener's arrivals into both Hapur and Muzaffarnagar mandis, India's two leading jaggery markets, have declined nearly 50 per cent to 10,000 quintals each.

Prices in Anakapalli, the second-largest jaggery market in the country, have dropped more than 30 per cent compared to the last jaggery season (September-August). During the current season, black jaggery prices in the market have been quoting at Rs 205-210 as against Rs 300-310 per 10 kg in the September-December period last year.

Jaggery arrivals to the market had dropped significantly in the last one week due to heavy rain, even though purchasing rates had raised, said K L N Rao, president, Anakapalli Jaggery Traders Association. In the 2009-10 jaggery season, arrivals were reduced to 2.7 million lumps (each lump contains 15 kg), as against 3.1 million lumps in the preceding year. Hence , traders offered higher prices in the last season.

Stockists have abstained so far from the market amid fears that buying at the prevailing price will result in losses. During the last season, they built huge stockpiles in anticipation of higher prices. But, the sudden price decline has resulted in losses to the tune of Rs 1,50,000 per 10 tonnes of jaggery sales.

During the last season, a trader stocked an average 2,000 lorry loads (each load consists 10 tonnes) at Rs 280 per 10 kg in Anakapalli. But, because of the price decline, they disposed off the stock at Rs 210-230 per 10 kg, resulting in losses of Rs 60,000-80,000 on each load, said K Buchi Raju, a veteran trader.

At present, the only relief for the kolhus is the decline in cane prices. As against Rs 260-270 per quintal last year, the raw material is available at Rs 180-200 per quintal this year.

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Back **More groundnut for direct consumption this year**

Higher production and arrivals help trend.

Alternative fuel:A worker at a groundnut export unit loads compressed groundnut shells onto a van at Rajkot. These compressed shells, known as white coal, are used in boilers at nearby industrial units. Outfits that convert groundnut-in-shell to kernels for export and the domestic market sell the white coal for Rs 3,500 a tonne. It is much cheaper than coal. —

M.R. Subramani

Recently in Rajkot

Hasmukhbhai Harjibhai of Dhanhisarda village (Agi) in Rajkot district considers himself lucky for having switched to groundnut from cotton this year. His family owns five acres and has taken on lease another six acres. His family has cultivated groundnut in all the 11 acres.

“We have had a good crop. The yield is around 40 maunds (20 kg each) an acre and we have harvest totally some 500 maund,” said Harjibhai. On Wednesday and Thursday last week, Harjibhai sold 128 bags (38 kg each) of groundnuts, earning Rs 645 for each bag.

Farmers such as Harjibhai are flooding the agricultural produce marketing committee (APMC) yards in the Saurashtra region with groundnuts.

“This year, the daily arrivals are ranging between 20,000 and 25,000 bags. We expect the arrivals to continue like this until January,” said Mr Mahesh Patodia, a trader at Gondal APMC yard, 35 km from Rajkot. “Last year, arrivals were around 10,000 bags only during the same time,” he says.

Thanks to the huge arrivals, groundnut for direct consumption this year will be higher.

“Despite the damage due to rain in early November, groundnut crop in Gujarat will be 17 lakh tonnes (lt). At the national level, production is expected to be 40 lt,” said Mr Govindlal G. Patel of Deepak Enterprises that deals in vegetable oils.

“We expect 12 lt of kernels to be available for direct consumption from the kharif crop,” he said.

“Of this, 20 per cent will go towards consumption along with liquor and another 10-15 per cent will be consumed in confectionaries,” said Mr Patel.

exports

Some 2.5-3 lt are expected to be exported as HPS or hand-picked seed. “There is good demand for our HPS in Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines,” he said.

According to an HPS exporting firm, Indonesia imports Indian HPS and converts it into peanut butter.

Mr Bipin V. Patel of S.K. Industries said some 400 small units in and around Junagadh town, 100 km from Rajkot, process groundnut-in-shell into kernels for export and domestic markets.

“In the last 20 years, groundnut has witnessed higher demand and growth so that around six lt groundnut is produced in Junagadh district itself,” he said.

Advanced varieties

“Export can be increased by growing high-yield varieties,” says Dr K.L. Dobariya, research scientist at Junagadh Krishi University. “There is good scope for growing groundnut as summer crop that can be harvested towards May-end,” he said.

The vegetable oils trade has estimated groundnut-in-shell production this year at 41 lt (32.9 lt last year), leading to kernel availability of 28.70 lt (23 lt). Of this 20 lt are expected to be retained for sowing and direct consumption against 18.6 lt last year.

It is from this 20 lt that the industry expects 12 lt direct consumption and 2.5-3 lt HPS exports. Last year, some 11 lt are estimated to have been consumed directly while exports have been pegged at 2.5 lt.

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Back **Cardamom gains with exporters on buying spree**

Cold conditions in North may impact demand, say traders.

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Dec. 13

Cardamom prices moved up further last week on buying support from both exporters and domestic dealers at the auctions. Upcountry buyers covered good quantities. However, they were not as aggressive as they were in the recent weeks. Probably, the stockists/investors have covered sufficient quantity.

Dealers are, however, still covering. Exporters bought an estimated 35 tonnes last week to meet their immediate commitments, trade sources said. Arrivals last week remained almost at previous week's levels. The third round of picking is over. Fourth round is expected to commence this week. A reasonable volume of arrivals are expected in this round, growers said. The Tamil Nadu Government's covering for Pongal is also over. Extreme cold conditions in North India will impact demand, traders said. Therefore, the demand is likely to show slight dip till mid-January, but it would not depress the price, they said.

Non-availability from other sources and increasing domestic demand could keep the prices stable at present levels, they said.

At Sunday's auction conducted by the KCPMC, arrivals stood at 77 tonnes and the entire quantity was sold out. The maximum price was Rs 1,400 a kg, while the minimum was Rs 880 a kg. Auction average was at Rs 1,103 a kg, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told Business Line.

arrivals

Individual auction average during the week was in the range of Rs 1,090 and Rs 1,190 a kg. Good green colour bold of 8 mm that witnessed thin supply was fetched Rs 1,350–1,400 a kg. Total arrivals during the current season from August 1 to December 12stood at 5,039 tonnes. Of this, 4,932 tonnes of cardamom were sold.

Arrivals and sales in the same period of the previous season were 5,071 tonnes and 5,015 tonnes respectively.

Weighted average price as on December 12 was Rs 1,113 a kg, up from Rs 701.50 a kg the same day last year.

On Monday, in Bodinayakannur 8 mm green colour bold fetched Rs 1,350– 1,400 a kg while bulk was sold at Rs 1,100–1,150 a kg, trade sources said.

Prices for graded varieties (Rs/kg) on Monday were: AGEB 1,270– 1,300; AGB 1,190 – 1,200; AGS -1,150 – 1,175; AGS1- 1,125 – 1,140. Prices in the open market in Bodinayakannur on Monday in rupees a kg were AGEB 1,250 –1,270; AGB 1,175–1,195; AGS- 1,125 – 1,140 and AGS 1 -1,100 –1,125.

The weather conditions prevailing at present in the growing areas are favourable for the crop. The region has not received any rains during the past few days, growers said.

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Back **Canadian fund to boost regional staple food grains**

Millet project to cover Haveri, Namakal, Koraput, Rudrapriyag.

Declining trend:A view of a sorghum feild

Anil Urs

Dharwad, Dec 13

The Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF) has funded CAN$9,95,000 (Rs 4 crore) project in India to strengthen regional staple food grains. It has selected minor millet to give a food security at local village level.

strengthening rural families

The project is to strengthening of rural families through empowerment by introducing food security through enhancing production, processing and value addition of regional stable food grains such as minor millet at local village level.

Haveri in Karnataka, Namakal in Tamil Nadu, Koraput in Orissa and Rudrapriyag in Uttaranchal have been selected for the two-year project.

CIFSRF has selected McGill University, Canada, to provide technical support and the University of Agricultural Sciences-Dharwad (UAS-D) is to play the anchor role in India and has roped in two non-Government organisations (NGOs) – the Chennai-based M.S.

Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and the Dehradun-based Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation (Hesco) to implement it the states.

Small Millets

“India grows six species of small millets in two million hectares largely comprising fragile agricultural regions. In order to address food security issues at local village level, project has three components: 1) To address minor millet production, 2) Processing and value addition at local village level and 3) To develop or encourage dedicated women entrepreneurs through self-help groups (SHGs),” Dr Nirmala B. Yenagi, Professor and head, Department of Food Science and Nutrition, College of Rural Home Science, UAS-D, told Business Line.

Mechanisation

According to Dr Vijaya Raghavan, Professor at McGill University, “The project will also aim for some percentage of mechanisation which is low cost and applicable at village level like flour making or roti making orther value-added products using millets.”

“To fund CAN$9,95,000 millet project, CIFSRF has roped in other agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC),” said Dr Sara Ahmed, senior programme specialist, IRDC regional office for India and China.

Area of cultivation

Prior to green revolution, the eight millets comprising pearl millet, sorghum and six small millets (finger millet, little millet, Italian millet, barnyard millet, proso millet and kodo millet) used to occupy 39 per cent of grain producing area and contribute 30 per cent of the grain produced in the country.

Currently, their cultivation has declined to 18 per cent of the total food grain producing area with their share to national grain pool shrunk to 15.5 per cent.

“The millet is one of the cheapest and more easily accessible to poor, the reduction in millet production is having phenomenal impact on the grain diversity in the rural food basket and the food and nutritional security of the rural poor, particularly in agriculturally fragile regions," Dr Yenagi pointed out.

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Back **Ginger may gain on lower crop in China, higher exports**

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Dec. 13

Fall in ginger output in China this year leading to higher exports from here and increasing domestic demand are set to push up the ginger prices, according to trade sources.

Added to this, short supply and very thin carryover stock are expected to push up the dried ginger prices too, they said.

"Already the prices of high quality fibreless Cochin and Himachal raw ginger, used for drying, is ruling at Rs 2,300-2,500 for a 60 kg bag," Mr P.V. Eliyas, a ginger grower in Karnataka and Kerala, told Business Line.

When one tonne of this variety is dried we get around 300-350 kg of dried ginger. Around 10 to15 per cent of the total output is of this grade, he said. It is mainly grown in Kerala's Palakkad district and in some parts of Ernakulam and Idukki districts and Shimoga and Chickmagalur areas in Karnataka.

Meanwhile, price of the vegetable variety raw ginger is ruling at Rs 1,200 a bag whereas it is sold in the retail markets in the country at Rs 60-80 a kg. An estimated 40,000 bags of vegetable ginger move out of South India to various markets spread over the country, he said adding it is also reportedly exported to Bangladesh this year.

Exports up

Short supply from China because of crop failure there has pushed up the Indian exports of ginger this year. Total shipments of the commodity during April-October 2010 were at

6,050 tonnes valued at Rs 38.29 crore against 2,225 tonnes worth Rs 21.17 crore in the same period last year.

However, realisation declined to Rs 63.29 a kg whereas it was Rs 95.14 a last year, official sources said.

According to Mr Eliyas, there is an increase of 30 per cent in output this year. But, due to the erratic weather there has been an estimated 20-30 per cent crop loss thus making the total output almost at previous year's levels, he claimed.

World market

Meanwhile, trading sources in Kochi said drop in production and thin carry over stocks had pushed up the ginger prices sharply. Dry ginger prices have shot up to around Rs 250 a kg, they said. Availability in the world market from other origins has also shrunk as many have given up its cultivation because of the uncertainty in prices, which used to remain more often not remunerative, traders said.

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Back **IOB to fund contract shrimp farms of Oceanaa group**

Our Bureau

Chennai, Dec. 13

Chennai-based Oceanaa group has signed a pact with Indian Overseas Bank for doing white shrimp (vannamei species) culture through contract farming. According to the pact, Oceanic Bio-harvests (part of Oceanaa group) will identify farmers having a minimum of one hectare of cultivable land with licence from the Coastal Aquaculture Authority and recommend them to the bank for sanction of loans.

According to Mr Joseb Raj, Managing Director of Oceanaa group, the total cost of cultivation will be a little over Rs 4,75,000 a hectare a crop. The farmer will invest 15 per cent and the rest (Rs 4,00,000) will be extended by the bank as cash credit repayable in six months. There will be two crops a year.

Oceanaa will supply seed, feed and actual health products to farmers against invoices to the bank. (The company has its own shrimp hatchery with a capacity to produce 350 million seed a year.) Besides, the company will also provide free technical assistance to shrimp farmers and will buy back shrimps at market prices prevailing at the time of harvest, based on weight, count and quality.

Processing unit

The group also has a processing unit at Marakkanam,about 100 km from here, where it will process shrimps and sell them in the domestic and export markets. The sale proceeds will be routed through the bank. This will facilitate repayment of loans and leave surplus in the hands of farmers, Mr Raj explained. Besides, shrimps will also be insured against white spot disease and ponds insured against natural calamities by New India Assurance Company.

The company is already doing contract farming for tiger shrimp culture from 2008 with financial assistance from Indian Overseas Bank. Oceanaa currently has 450 hectares under tiger shrimp cultivation from 200 farmers from Chennai and Puducherry.

Some of the existing farmers have expressed interest to cultivate Vannamei shrimp as the yield on a hectare will be much more than in the case of former. “We will identify another 300 farmers in 2011 to cultivate white shrimp as there is a great demand for this in both domestic and international markets,” he said. Oceanaa plans to start shrimp exporting from the last quarter of the current fiscal year.

It plans to export at least 500 tonnes of shrimp to European and Japanese markets during the quarter. For 2011, the target is to export at least 5,000 tonnes. International buyers were scornful of Indian shrimps because of their muddy tang and a lingering smell of antibiotics. The company claims to have a technology that eliminates the disagreeable tang — a factor that helped it get the bank loan.

“This contract farming will ensure traceability and more transparency to the export market right from the purchase of brood-stock, hatchery, faming and processing. With the help of a new software developed, Oceanaa will ensure availability of all traceability records to the buyer," Mr Raj explained.

The Oceanaa Group is a diversified entity with business interests in food processing and the IT sector. The group is a major player in farming and processing of aqua shrimps, vegetables and fruits. It also has a chain of nine retail outlets under the brand Fish N Fresh in Chennai and plans to expand its horizon with 16 more outlets in other cities too.

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Back **Area under organic farming up at 10 l ha**

Our Bureau Kochi, Dec. 13

The Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Professor K.V. Thomas, said that organic cultivation in the country has made reasonably good progress in the last few years, as area under agriculture under certified organic farming has grown from 42,000 hectares in 2003-04 to 10.5 lakh hectares in 2009-10.

Of this, nearly 7.5 lakh hectares are fully certified while the remaining three lakh are under various stages of conversion, the Minister said in his inaugural address at the India International Food and Agri Expo 2010 here.

He said that organic farming is also an ideal option for rain-fed marginal land areas and hill areas. Besides the Central Government, various States have also started their own organic farming promotion programmes. Nine States, including Kerala, had drafted policies for organic farming promotion. Among them, Sikkim, Mizoram and Uttarakhand have declared intention to go 100 per cent organic in due course. The Minister also underlined the need for using advanced technologies in farming, post-harvest handling, packaging and cold chain management.

With demand for organically grown food increasing in domestic and international markets, there is need to tap this opportunity to reap benefits for farmers, he added.

Unused funds

Later speaking to reporters after the inaugural function, the Minister said the State had been allocated Rs 700 crore under the Vidarbha package for drought-hit States. About half of the funds allocated to the State had remained unutilised.

The Union Government had suggested the unutilised funds could be used for promoting organic agriculture projects. The Centre would provide more funds, if required, he said.

The objective is to introduce organic farming in cashew plantations in Kasargod. The programme will be extended to the entire district so as to convert Kasargod into a fully organic district, he said, adding that the scheme could be replicated in other districts.

The Foundation for Organic Agriculture and Rural Development, Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Development, Agricultural Ministry and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development are jointly organising the event.

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Back **Morarka Foundation, Govt ink pact for organic farming**

Our Bureau

Mumbai, Dec. 13

Morarka Foundation, founded by the industrialist Mr Kamal Morarka, has signed a deal with GTZ Saudi Arabia (The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) to develop organic agriculture in Saudi Arabia.

As part of joint initiative, a delegation of 20 progressive farmers and 10 senior officials under Dr Saad Abdullah Khalil, Head, Organic Agriculture Department, Ministry of Agriculture, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will visit various certified organic farms developed by the Morarka Foundation at Bhuj since the earthquake in 2002.

Mr Mukesh Gupta, Executive Director, Morarka Foundation, said the Foundation is already providing technology for organic farming to Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Australia.

The Foundation will also provide requisite training on all subjects mutually identified by the two parties. Over the years, Morarka Foundation has developed know-how, practices and technologies for organic cultivation and biotechnology-based inputs and services for organic production management, agronomics practices and value addition management in organic food in India and overseas.

The Foundation and its sister concern are also supplier of organic inputs such as growth promoters, pest repellents, compositing solutions, fertilisers and agronomic services for organic agriculture.

Globally, the organic products are swiftly replacing synthetic and chemical products because of their benefits. Worldwide 30.4 million hectares are under organic production. The global trade of organic goods touched $38.6 billion with India contributing about $62.5 million (about Rs 300 crore), which is just 0.2 per cent of the organic trade.

Started in 1993, Morarka Foundation has expanded the scope of its activities to about 15 States covering a population of one million. It works closely with over two lakh certified organic farmers. It has collaboration in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Costa Rica, England, and the US.

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Back **Uphill task for plantations to find labour**

DEMAND IN PLAINS.

Anil Urs

Hubli, Dec. 13

With agricultural activity still on in the plains, the arrival of migratory labour from North Karnataka to the coffee plantation belts has been delayed, resulting in shortage of labour for coffee picking.

“Availability of additional labour between December-February is crucial for the plantations due to coffee picking and other farm related activities. This year, due to agricultural operations still on in the plains, we are facing shortage of labour,” said Mr Marvin Rodrigues, Vice-Chairman, Karnataka Planters' Association.

Coffee plantations in Chikmagalur get labour from Shimoga, Sagar, Sorab and from plains – Chitradurga, Davangere, Challakere and Hirekerur. Estates in Sakleshpura and Kodagu get the manpower from Hassan, Mysore, K R Nagar, Kollegal and Chamarajanagar.

Coffee estates, irrespective of size, have been affected. The scarcity of labour has resulted in increase in wages and incentives resulting in higher costs.

According to Mr Nishant Gurjer of Sethuraman Estate, Chikmagalur, “During coffee picking season, 80 per cent of labour requirement is met by migratory labour and the balance is locally available labour at village or taluk level.”

“Initially, we were concerned about shortage. But for us saving grace is that coffee estates in Chikmagalur have had delayed ripening of arabica beans due to excess rainfall and unfavourable weather conditions in November,” he added.

Coffee estates which received early blossom showers in March have had early ripening. In such cases, there has been considerable damage due the rainfall and lack of labour to pick the coffee in November.

Mr Marvin Rodrigues said “The other problem faced by the plantation industry is the lack of availability of skilled farm workers. Increasingly, we are getting unskilled labour working on estates, which effects quality of operations on estates and increases cost of production. It is difficult to quantify the losses on this account.”

Some growers have initiated the process of mechanisation of estate operations such as weeding, spraying, pitting (for replanting). A few estates have made a small beginning in mechanisation of harvesting.

“The question now, is not whether, but when to mechanise. A number of machines have come into the market. However, the costs of these machines are high. The Karnataka Planters' Association (KPA) has made an appeal to the Coffee Board to subsidise the cost of such machines by 50 per cent, so that all growers, small, medium and large couple mechanise wherever possible," said Mr Marvin Rodrigues.

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Back **Global cues, demand warm up soya oil**

Our Correspondent

Indore, Dec. 13

Soya oil perked up at Indore mandis on increased demand at plant level and strong global cues.

Soya refined oil increased by Rs 3-4 on improved domestic demand and rise in Malaysian palm oil prices.

In the morning, soya refined was quoted at Rs 550 for 10 kg and it increased to Rs 555 with a further rise in the Malaysian market, that closed up. Some plants such as Ruchi Industries and Premier Industries purchased soya refined oil at Rs 553. Trading in soya refined oil was mainly done for December 20-30. In the resale, the refined oil was traded at Rs 543-Rs 544 for 10 kg.

Soya solvent perked up by Rs 2 on increased demand. On the spot, soya solvent quoted at Rs 520, while in delivery the oil was quoted at Rs 523.

On the National Board of Trade, soya oil futures gained on bullish global market. On the exchange, soya oil January contract touched a high of Rs 603 after opening at Rs 596, before closing at Rs 599.50, up Rs 9 from the previous close.

Compared with NBOT, soya oil futures slightly edged higher at the NCEDX where its January contract closed at Rs 602 for 10 kg.

On NBOT, soya oil futures witnessed its first cut on Monday, when its rate opened at Rs 576.20. The NBOT will witness two more cuts on December 14 and 15.

Soyabean also gained on improved demand at plant level. Local mandis witnessed arrival of about 4,000 bags of soya seeds against 2.50-2.75 lakh bags at the State level. Mandi rates of soyabean was quoted at Rs 2,050 to Rs 2,100, while plant deliveries' rates perked up by Rs 20 at Rs 2,180-Rs 2,200 a quintal. At the NCEDX also soyabean edged higher with its December and January contracts closing at Rs 2,209 and Rs 2,262 a quintal.

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Back **Poor bulk buying pounds turmeric**

Our Correspondent

Erode, Dec. 13

Lack of bulk demand for spot turmeric in Erode resulted in its prices dropping Rs 300 a quintal on poor sales on Monday.

“There is no demand for spot turmeric in Erode resulting in poor sales. During the corresponding period last year, prices were around Rs 10,000-11,000 a quintal; this year the prices have touched Rs 16,000. By selling limited quantity, farmers earned good revenue, whereas the buyers have to pay more for the commodity. So they are expecting new crop. Till the arrival of new crop, there will be limited sales,” said Mr R.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Mr Ravishankar said that the local traders were expecting the new crop to arrive in markets in the middle of January.

He said bulk buyers were purchasing limited stocks despite a fall in prices. Futures, which quoted at a low of Rs 14,170, recovered to Rs 14,300 later, showing that demand is decreasing.

Despite poor arrivals, prices have not increased; to the contrary, they have declined.

In the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 9,501 to Rs 16,109 a, the root variety Rs 9,000 to Rs 15,966. Prices of both varieties of turmeric have decreased by Rs 300 on the opening day of the week, against the last weekend prices.

In the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 15,920–16,510, the root variety Rs 15,969–16,220. Of 689 bags kept for sale, 590 were sold.

In Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 15,719–16,531, the root variety at Rs 15,519 to Rs 16,251. All the 50 bags kept for sale were sold.

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Back **Trickling inflow perks up basmati**

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Dec. 13

Paddy arrivals continued to witness a downtrend with just around 30,000 bags of paddy varieties arriving at the Karnal grain market terminal on Monday.

Mr Tara Chand Sharma, a paddy and rice trader, told Business Line that low paddy prices are keeping paddy farmers away from the market. Low arrivals resulted in a price rise of pure basmati, while other varieties continued at lower levels, he added.

In the rice market, following the low buying, low trading was witnessed. Rice prices of aromatic and non-basmati varieties ruled almost flat. It's unlikely to see any major buying or change in prices this week, said Mr Sharma.

Prices of Pusa-1121 steam (new) ruled at Rs 5,200-5,250 a quintal, while the old variety sold around Rs 5,300. Pusa-1121 sela (new) was at Rs 4,200, whereas the old variety at

Rs 4,300-4,350. Pusa-1121 raw (new) quoted between Rs 5,050 and 5,150, while the old variety quoted around Rs 5,250. Pusa (sela) sold at Rs 3,200-3,250 and Pusa (raw) at Rs 4,150.

Basmati sela quoted at Rs 6,050-6,100, while basmati raw was around Rs 7,050-7,100. Brokens such as Tibar was at Rs 3,150, Dubar at Rs 2,300 and Mongra around Rs 2,000.

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Back **Pepper futures gain on bullish sentiments**

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Dec. 13

Pepper futures on Monday gained on bullish sentiments and buying support following delay in arrival of the new crop. Bullish sentiments were prevailing in the market giving the impression that the bull operators have got into the driving seat.

All the contracts moved up. People covered back January and small quantity of February. There was no liquidation but some switching over was there.

Sellers withdrew, as the futures moved up, quoting higher rates while buyers were showing interest, market sources told Business Line. The sunny weather prevailing in the growing areas for the past couple of days did not make any impact on the market, they said.

Indian parity in the international market was at $5,025-5,050 a tonne (c&f) and remained competitive with other origins, especially Indonesia. The overseas buyers, mainly in the US and Europe, would be on holidays from next week onwards for Christmas and New Year and hence some buying has to emerge from there this week, they said.

December contract on NCDEX went up by Rs 249 to close at Rs 21,790 a quintal. January and February increased by Rs 294 and Rs 371 respectively to close at Rs 22,162 and Rs

22,387 a quintal.

Total turnover increased by 3,361 tonnes to close at 9,366 tonnes.

Total open interest moved up marginally by 12 tonnes to 14,097 tonnes. December open interest dropped by 933 tonnes while January increased by 896 tonnes indicating switching over and additional purchases. February moved up by 50 tonnes.

Contrary to the expectation of the market players there was no liquidation today.

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Back **Rice millers in East Godavari on strike, refuse to buy paddy**

Our Bureau

Kakinada, Dec.13

The rice millers in East Godavari district are on a strike from Sunday in protest against the policies of the State Government and are not buying paddy from farmers. The district has the highest number of rice mills in the State - 550 - which roughly mill 30,000-40,000 tonnes a day.

Millers are demanding waiver of market cess of 1 per cent, free issue of permits to export rice to other States and also revocation of certain taxes. They are also demanding lifting of ban on non-basmati rice exports to other countries.

Most of the rice exports to other countries are routed through Kakinada port and the millers in East Godavari play a significant role in supplying rice to the traders from the North who export rice to the African countries and Bangladesh.

Rice millers in the Telangana region and other districts have not joined the strike.

Mr A. Ramakrishna Reddy, President of the AP Rice Millers' Association, reportedly made a vain attempt on Sunday to persuade millers in East Godavari to drop the strike plan but in vain.

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Back **Farmers' association leaders held**

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Dec. 13

Leaders of several farmers' associations were arrested when they tried to meet the Chief Minister, Mr N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, at the Legislative Assembly to submit a memorandum on the problems being faced by them.Protesting their arrest, Mr N. Chandrababu Naidu, President of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), held a dharna opposite the Assembly complex, disrupting traffic for about two hours. He, along with scores of TDP and Left party legislators and activists, were arrested and shifted to Goshamahal police station. Mr Naidu, who was later released, decided to stay put in the station to express solidarity with the other arrested leaders.

Mr Yanamala Ramakrishnudu, Politburo member of TDP, condemned the arrests and demanded that they be released immediately. “It is unfortunate that the Government chose to arrest the leaders when they wanted to seek relief. It shows the anti-farmer attitude of the Government,” he said.In a statement here, the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch too criticised the Government for resorting to arrests.

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Oman, India warm up on tech, farming

India and Oman have entered into an agreement under which the two sides will prepare a report on nine areas of cooperation for direct investment and technology transfer. The two sides are also eyeing contract farming as the next area of cooperation.According to Oman’s official news agency, the agreement was signed by Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Omani ruler Sultan Qaboss’ adviser for economic planning affairs Mohammed bin Al Zubair.The Supreme Committee for Promoting Economic Relations between Oman and India was established under a directive of Sultan Qaboos bin Said and Prime Minister Singh during the latter’s visit to the country in 2008 to promote economic cooperation between the two.

“The report shows fields upon which economic and trade relations can be expanded not only between the governments of the two countries, but also between the private sector in the Sultanate and the Republic of India,” Zubair said.

Oman could strengthen the domestic availability of food grains by entering into “contract farming” with Indian farmers, Ahluwalia said. “The Indian law does not allow foreign companies to buy land there and therefore, Omani companies can enter into a contract farming deals.”

“We have identified from our side a couple of firms that have shown interest in tying up with Omani investors to get into contract farming arrangement,” Ahluwalia said.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/637998.aspx

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather		Tomorrow's Forecast	
Partly Cloudy	**Tuesday, Dec 14** Max Min 29.4^{o} | 23.6^{o}	Rainy	**Wednesday, Dec 15** Max Min 30^{o} | 24^{o}
Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 5:57		

Humidity: 89%	Sunset: 16:39
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1008.0

Extended Forecast for a week

<table>
<tr><td>Thursday</td><td>Friday</td><td>Saturday</td><td>Sunday</td><td>Monday</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dec 16</td><td>Dec 17</td><td>Dec 18</td><td>Dec 19</td><td>Dec 20</td></tr>
<tr><td>25° | 23°</td><td>24° | 22°</td><td>25° | 22°</td><td>26° | 21°</td><td>27° | 20°</td></tr>
<tr><td>Rainy</td><td>Cloudy</td><td>Cloudy</td><td>Partly Cloudy</td><td>Partly Cloudy</td></tr>
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