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TNAU launches products to enhance plant growth

Staff Reporter

– Photo: M. Periasamy

Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University P. Murugesa Boopathi (second left) launching natural plant growth regulators ‘Seed Aid' and ‘Nutri Gold,' in Coimbatore on Sunday. Managing Director of Nitta Gelatin India Ltd, Cochin, G. Suseelan (left) is in the picture.

COIMBATORE: ‘Seedaid' and ‘Nutrigold', two organic plant growth promoters, developed by scientists of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), were released here on Sunday.

The project, sponsored by Nitta Gelatin India Limited, Kochi, was handed over to the company by the university for commercial manufacture.

Launching the products, P. Murugesa Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU, said the products were developed as a result of industry-institute linkages.

“Field trials have been conducted in various places to ensure success. Scientists should work out the cost benefit ratio so that farmers can know the incremental yield and income that can be derived out of using the products,” the Vice-Chancellor said.

He urged the scientists to present the outcome of the launches at the ensuing State level Scientific Workers' Conference so as to apprise the extension workers about the advantages of the products. They were also asked to conduct Adaptive Research Trials so that the products could be included in the ‘Crop Production Guide' of the State Government. This in turn would facilitate making recommendations to the farmers in an easier manner.

‘Seedaid' was a growth promoter that could be used to coat seeds with before sowing. Four ml of ‘Seedaid', six gm of polymer and 10 ml of water should be used for coating one kg of seed. ‘Seedaid' guaranteed quicker germination.

‘Nutrigold' in bottled form could be used as a foliar spray in the pre-flowering and flowering phase. It would function as a tonic and increase the yield by 15 per cent. The Vice-Chancellor expressed hope that such products were essential in boosting the production of pulses and oilseeds in the State. Efforts were needed to increase the Seed Replacement Ratio that would lead to their increased production, he said.

G. Suseelan, Managing Director, Nitta Gelatin India Limited, said that both the products contained natural proteins and minerals extracted from animal bones. The product would be initially launched in Tamil Nadu.

Application for patenting the product was in process. The products could be applied for most of the crops including plantation crops. Application for organic certification had also been made.

R. Umarani, Principle Investigator, and A.S. Ponnusamy, Co-Principle Investigator of the Project, explained the technical details of the products.

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Farmers reaping many benefits, says Minister

Rs. 3,750 crore allotted for special public distribution system

—Photo: G. Moorthy

In recognition:Minister for Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare A.Tamilarasi felicitating best performing cooperative societies in Madurai.

MADURAI: The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government was farmer-friendly; it had been giving subsidies to small and marginal farmers and waiving farm loans on a large scale, said Minister for Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare A. Tamilarasi.

Addressing the 57 {+t} {+h} All India Cooperative Week Celebration here on Saturday, she said that under special public distribution system, Rs. 3,750 crore was allotted. Crop loans for Rs. 136 crore were given to 48,324 farmers in the district.

Out of the 182 Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies in the district, 80 per cent were making profits.

On future plans, she said that all cooperative societies would be fully computerized, 30,000 tonnes of paddy will be procured from farmers and handed over to Tamil Nadu Civil

Supplies Corporation.

She distributed prizes to best performing cooperatives and also gave away welfare measures to farmers.Collector C. Kamaraj said that cooperative societies were nothing but people's organisations and talked about how the cooperative societies evolved in the West and in India and how it helped small farmers and working class people.Felicitations were offered by Latha Adhiyaman, MLA-Tirumangalam, N. Nanmaran, MLA-Madurai East, and K.V.S. Kumar, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Madurai region. Many agricultural products were kept on display at the venue and a lot of farmers and members of cooperative societies participated in the celebrations.

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Bumper harvest

Workers engaged in harvesting activity on the outskirts of Julurpad in Khammam district.
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Farmers advised to sell sunflower crop

Hubli: Considering the high yield and market conditions, the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) set up at the Agri-business Management Department, University of Agricultural Sciences – Dharwad, has advised farmers of north Karnataka to sell the sunflower crop immediately.

In a release issued here, the DEMIC authorities have predicted bumper harvest of sunflower because of the good monsoon. They have observed that chances of the prices shooting up in the next three to four months were remote.

The officials have said that with the yield touching as high as five to six quintals per hectare, sunflower markets at Bagalkot, Bellary, Gulbarga, Raichur and Ranebennur had witnessed good arrivals.They have said that considering all the aspects they want the farmers to sell their crop on harvest.The Government of India fixed the minimum support price of Rs. 2,350 and the current prices were hovering around Rs. 2,200 to Rs. 2,400 a quintal, the release said.

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Heavy rain destroys crops, roads

Staff Reporter

PATHANAMTHITTA: Torrential rain in the past four days has inflicted heavy damage to crops and property in different parts of the district. Floodwaters damaged many roads. The culvert on a small road parallel to MC Road in Adoor town caved in in the wee hours of Monday. Though official reports have put the number of damaged houses at three, reports from various parts of the district indicate that around 40 houses have been partially damaged in the past three days. Ranni and Kozhencherry taluks were the worst affected. The Kurambanmoozhi-Manakkayam tribal settlement has been isolated with the collapse of the Manakkayam causeway on Sunday.Five minor landslides were reported from the hilly tracts in Ranni in the past 48 hours. The Public Works Department put the damage to roads at Rs.2 crore and the Agriculture Department's estimate of crop loss is Rs.53 lakh. However, the actual figure is said to be much higher. Kozhencherry, Kallooppara, Vechoochira, Thottappuzhasserry, Enadimangalam, Peringara and Niranom villages suffered heavy crop loss.

Relief camps

Sixty-five families have been shifted to relief camps opened at two schools in Pathanamthitta municipal limits on Monday. A total of 38 families have been shifted to the relief camp at Government Lower Primary School at Anappara and 27 families at Christ English Medium School at Valanchuzhy.

hindustantimes

Tue,23 Nov 2010

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Nov 23

Max Min

30.4º | 23.8º

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 94%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:10

Sunset: 17:39

Barometer: 1007.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

Rainy

Wednesday, Nov 24

Max Min

30º | 23º

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Nov 25	**Nov 26**	**Nov 27**	**Nov 28**	**Nov 29**
28º | 25º	27º | 25º	26º | 25º	28º | 25º	29º | 24º
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Cloudy

express buzz

By P Jonathan Ambrose

22 Nov 2010 12:11:00 AM IST

New tech to bolster livestock farming

PUDUCHERRY: In a move to meet the rising demand for livestock in the UT, a Puducherry-based NGO, Best Foundation, has been coaxing farmers to venture into goat and sheep rearing by introducing new technologies, one of which is the stall-feed method.

More than 40 farmers have expressed interest in the same, with a few already having approached the banks for a loan.

“The stall-feed method has been successfully implemented in many parts of India though in the UT, it is relatively unknown due to lack of awareness. Also, at a time when agriculture in UT is facing a crisis with more and more agricultural lands being sold off to accommodate other ventures, this method seems tailor-made for the current situation as higher profits can be garnered from a small piece of land,” said B Damodaran, managing trustee, Best Foundation.

“Livestock rearing has been on the wane in Puducherry so much so that only a negligible amount of farmers still practise it largely as an ode to tradition and even they are falling prey to a bigger problem such as lack of labour. While the grazing method requires one man to monitor a herd of 20, with the stall-feed method, just a single farmer is enough to monitor over 200 goats,” he said.

Through this method, goats can be reared inside houses in stalls and hence need not be taken out for grazing which solves about 80 per cent of the labour problem.

Another advantage of this method is that the livestock is organically reared. While in the ordinary method, the goats need to graze about eight hours a day, which makes them lose 1,200 calories, through the new method, more weight is gained in a lesser period.

Faced with a roadblock as the bankers were apprehensive about disbursing loans to livestock farmers, during a training programme for farmers organised by the NGO here on Sunday, the NGO introduced a tri-party agreement involving the farmers, NGO and banks to get more loans, courtesy the new method.

“Earlier, with the livestock farmers having problems in repaying the loan, the bankers were a little apprehensive about giving loans to them. However, through this agreement, the NGO will organise regular veterinarian check-ups and field visits to send in regular health and stock report to the bank officials to keep them informed regarding the utilisation of funds. This seems to have earned the bankers’ trust leading to more of them coming forward to give loans,” he said adding that a farmer can earn up to Rs 80,000 per acre and that a farmer, apart from cultivating crops for feeding goats, can rear 21 goats and two cows per acre of land.

According to an official from the animal husbandry department, one of the other main factors for the decline of goat rearing in the UT is that the livestock farmers have been banned from letting their goats graze in the fields as they tend to destroy crops.

The new method not only puts an end to this menace but also goats are prevented from grazing on unhealthy lands.

The animal husbandry department, recognising that livestock farming is on a low ebb, has been organising training for self-help groups to find alternative sources of income.

The official added that as the stall-feed method does not take up much time, the farmer can take up some other jobs to enhance his income.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES
Tue, Nov 23, 2010 | Updated 08.54AM IST

23 Nov, 2010, 02.18AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale,ET Bureau

Onion farmers switch crop on seed scarcity

PUNE: Farmers are not deterred by the steep rise in onion seed prices and are prepared to pay the high prices, which have risen, on average, by 300% over last year. But due to the unavailability of the seed, estimated to be 20% short of the demand, they are being forced to opt for other crops.

Private onion seed companies are reporting an average rise of 300% in seed prices while farmers buying informally from each other are doing so at even higher prices.

Onion seed production by farmers had halved in the previous year due to the uncertain weather while demand has gone up on account of good prices that the commodity brought throughout 2010.

Jalna-based Bejo Sheetal Seeds Pvt Ltd, a joint venture between Bejo Zaden BV Holland and Sheetal Hybrid Seeds, India, has the largest share of hybrid onion seeds in the country. The price of its storage quality hybrid onion seeds increased from Rs 600/kg last year to Rs 1,500/kg this year, a 250% jump. The price of the non-hybrid open pollinated (OP) seeds increased 480% to Rs 600/kg this year from Rs 125/kg in the previous year. Says Suresh Agrawal, chairman, Bejo Sheetal Seeds: "We sold about 100 tonne onion seeds this year."

Although onion is a major agricultural commodity for domestic consumption and exports, the big seed companies from the private sector have stayed away from onion seed production. Farmers produce more than 80% of the seeds in the unorganised sector for their own use and to sell the excess quantity at the village level. Export of onion seeds is also not allowed as it may compete with the area required for onion for consumption purpose.

The first preference of farmers is to purchase seeds produced by farmers known to them rather than purchasing from private companies. There is also the fear that a private company may have sourced the seed from unreliable sources which could lead to crop failure.

Says Gokul Ahire, a farmer from village Pimpalgaon Basvant in Nashik: "Most of the farmers in my area have lost the seed yield, which has doubled the seed price. We prefer to buy from known farmers since they are reliable."

The Nashik-based National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) confirmed the shortage of seed. Farmers have lost about 50% of their seed yields due to the cyclonic rains in 2009. The prices are high as the seed shortage is about 20%, said NHRDF director Dr RP Gupta.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Nov 23, 2010

Cotton slumps to 4-week low on China growth

Bloomberg / November 23, 2010, 0:32 IST

Cotton declined to a four-week low in New York and futures in Zhengzhou fell on speculation that global demand will decline as China, the biggest importer, takes steps to slow growth and as planting expands in India.

Cotton for March delivery dropped as much as 2.7 per cent to $1.198 a pound, the lowest price since October 22, on ICE Futures US in New York and was at $1.2079 at 12:28 p.m. Tokyo time. Last week, the fiber dropped 8.2 per cent, the most since February 2009.

“Like soybeans in Chicago, cotton is very sensitive to any impact on China’s demand,” said Han Sung Min, a broker at Korea Exchange Bank Futures Co. in Seoul. The dollar’s weakness may limit a further drop in futures today, he said.

Cotton for May delivery slumped as much as 3.7 per cent to 26,185 yuan ($3,943) a tonne on the Zhengzhou Commodity Exchange and paused at 26,555 yuan.

On November 19, cotton in New York fell by the exchange limit of 6 cents after China ordered its banks to set aside larger reserves for the fifth time this year, draining cash from the financial system to limit inflation. The price has gained 60 per cent this year, reaching a record $1.5195 on November 10, amid surging demand from China and plunging inventories in the US, the leading exporter.

The euro gained for a fourth day as European finance ministers said the deal will create a capital fund for Ireland’s banks and may end up “restructuring” the financial industry. The currency rose as high as $1.3752 from $1.3673 in New York on November 19. A weakening dollar makes US supplies cheaper for importers holding other currencies.

Monsoons in India, the world’s second-biggest grower, prompted farmers to plant more fiber, according to the Cotton Association of India. Output in the year that started October 1 may reach 35.7 million bales, up 3.6 per cent from the September forecast, the association said on November16. Stockpiles monitored by ICE rose 10 per cent to 50,454 bales as of November 18. They have jumped five-fold from this year’s low of 8,910 bales on October 8.

World food import bill may cross $1 trillion: FAO

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi November 23, 2010, 0:27 IST

The food import bill of the global community could surpass the $1 trillion mark in 2010, with prices of most commodities going up sharply compared to the previous year, the Food and Agriculture Organisation has said.

In the latest edition of its 'Food Outlook' report, the UN agency asked the world community to be prepared for harder times ahead unless production of major food crops increases significantly in 2011.

The food import bills of the world's poorest countries are predicted to rise by 11 per cent in 2010, the UN body said, adding that low-income, food-deficit countries would witness a 20 per cent jump in their food import bills. By crossing the $1 trillion mark, the world food import bill this year will be higher than the peak achieved in 2008.

In its report, the FAO said that contrary to earlier predictions, world cereal production is now forecast to contract by two per cent in June, in contrast to its earlier prediction of 1.2 per cent expansion during the month. Unexpected supply shortfalls due to unfavourable weather events are responsible for the revision, the statement added.

Global cereal stocks are forecast to decline sharply and the FAO made a strong call for production to be stepped up to replenish inventories. World cereals stocks are anticipated to shrink by 7 per cent according to FAO, with barley reserves plunging by 35 per cent, maize by 12 per cent and wheat by 10 per cent.

Only rice reserves are forecast to increase by 6 per cent, according to the report.

Sugar was an important factor contributing to the rise in the price of the global food basket in recent months. According to the FAO, sugar prices, which recently surged to new 30-year highs, remain elevated and extremely volatile.

The price increases seen by most agricultural commodities over the past six months are the result of a combination of factors, especially unexpected supply shortfalls due to unfavourable weather events, policy responses by some exporting countries and fluctuation in currency markets, the report said.

Vietnam to remain largest pepper exporter

George Joseph / Kochi November 23, 2010, 0:26 IST

Total global pepper exports in this financial year would be 237,650 tonnes according to the latest estimates of the International Pepper Community (IPC). Out of this, 200,300 tonnes will be black pepper and the remaining (37,350 tonnes).

Vietnam will top the table with export of 105,000 tonnes followed by Indonesia with 44,000 tonnes and Brazil with 34,000 tonnes. With export of 18,050 tonnes, India will be at the fourth place in the table.

It is interesting to note that Vietnam started cultivating pepper only in the second half of 1970s, while India has been a pioneer exporter for more than 1,000 years.

Vietnam shipped seven times more pepper than India during April-October period of current financial year according to the latest data. During the period, Vietnam, the world's largest producer and exporter of pepper, shipped 73,848 tonnes against 9,600 tonnes by India. According to the latest information, Vietnam exported another 3,500 tonnes during the first two weeks of this month.

Exports to the tune of 229,710 tonnes in which the composition of black pepper is 185,250 tonnes and white pepper 44,460 tonnes is projected for the next financial year (2011-12).

Rain washes away sugar firms' sweet hope

Sanjay Jog And Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai November 23, 2010, 0:21 IST

Cost of production will go up, affecting the finances of producers.

Sugar manufacturers are expecting yet another bad year with an unexpected fall in recovery in the early cane crop following intermittent unseasonal rainfall.

Producers in the country’s two major sugar producing states, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, are struggling to decide an affordable cane price for farmers for the current crushing season.

Last year, profits made by sugar producers remained under pressure following the export ban and extra quota release which kept the price low in the second half. Sugar producers had earlier hoped for better profitability this year because of the low cane prices and high sugar prices.

Crushing units recorded between 0.5-1 per cent fall in recovery from the early cane crop that matures by October-end. The early cane crop becomes ready for harvesting by the end of October and is usually the highest recovery crop of the season.

“Due to unseasonal rainfall, especially during the harvesting season, cost of production will go up, thereby, negatively affecting the finances of the producers,” said B J Maheshwari, director of Dwarikesh Sugar, a UP-based producer.

Echoing his view, Vinay Kumar, managing director of National Federation of Cooperatives Sugar Factories (NFCSF) said although, the recovery is lower in Uttar Pradesh, a couple of day’s sunshine in the coming weeks will increase both cane yield and crushing recovery.

Meanwhile, crushing season in Maharashtra has been severely impacted. As on November 21, the 131 mills, who had started crushing, could run to capacity. As a result, only 5.51 mt of cane has been crushed, producing 0.44 million tonnes of sugar. During the same time last year, 6.28 mt cane was crushed and sugar production was 0.57 mt. The wet conditions have also affected sugar recovery which has fallen by one per cent to 8.14 per cent, against 9.14 per cent in the corresponding period last year.

The Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories in Maharashtra, the representative body of the over 170 mills, has estimated a drop in sugar production. The Federation had estimated sugar production of 9.5 million tonnes after crushing a record 82.5 million tonnes of sugarcane by end of the current season.

“However, it is difficult to ascertain the revised estimated production. But it is quite certain that sugar production will be less than 9.5 million tones estimated earlier,” a Federation official said.

State government officials said the rain might not damage the standing cane crop but it would certainly hamper the weight of the cane, tonnage per hectare and sugar recovery.

The Federation official said due to wet conditions in the field workers could not harvest the crop as bullock carts or tractors cannot enter the wet fields. This has forced millers to scout for roadside cane fields which are small in numbers and scattered all over.

Officials of the state government and the Federation admitted that if the present conditions continue for long then the sugar industry in Maharashtra might face financial hardship — similar to what had happened in 2003 due to drought and in 2006 due to excess rainfall.

Vivek Saraogi president of Indian Sugar Mills Association and managing director of Balrampur Chini, however, it is too early to sound the alarm as they are into the first week of crushing. He, however, kept the country’s output target at the earlier estimated 25 million tonnes, nearly 6.5 million tonnes higher than the previous year.

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Back **Fertiliser prices likely to go up on lower subsidy rates**

Firms may have to wait till next kharif planting season to raise MRP.

Fertiliser subsidy rates: New vs. old

(Rs per tonne)

Product	Old	New	%
DAP (Di-ammonium phosphate)	16268	12960	-20.33
MAP (Mono-ammonium phosphate)	16219	12770	-21.27
TSP (Triple super phosphate)	12087	9340	-22.73
MOP (Muriate of potash)	14692	12831	-12.67
SSP (Single super phosphate)	4400	3378	-23.23
16:20:0:13	9203	7431	-19.25
20:20:0:13	10133	8236	-18.72
20:20:0:0	9901	8083	-18.36
23:23:0:0	11386	9295	-18.36
28:28:0:0	13861	11316	-18.36
10:26:26:0	15521	12850	-17.21
12:32:16:0	15114	12332	-18.41
14:28:14:0	14037	11495	-18.11
14:35:14:0	15877	12916	-18.65
15:15:15:0	11099	9270	-16.48
16:16:16:0	11838	9888	-16.47
17:17:17:0	12578	10506	-16.47
19:19:19:0	14058	11742	-16.47
Ammonium Sulphate	5195	4413	-15.05

The ratios refer to nitrogen, phosphorus, potash and sulphur.

Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, Nov. 22

A sharp jump in fertiliser product prices from the next fiscal seems inevitable, with the Centre slashing nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) rates payable to companies.

Under NBS scheme, companies receive a fixed per-kg nutrient subsidy, applicable on all non-urea fertilisers. While the maximum retail prices (MRP) of these fertilisers have been technically decontrolled from April 1, the industry is informally obliged to keep farmgate price increases within ‘acceptable' limits in return for a fixed NBS concession on each product.

Currently, the per kg NBS rates are fixed at Rs 23.227 for nitrogen (N), Rs 26.276 for phosphorus (P), Rs 24.487 for potash (K) and Rs 1.784 for sulphur (S). But from next April , these rates are to be correspondingly reduced to Rs 20.111, Rs 20.304, Rs 21.386 and Rs 1.175. This will also translate into lower subsidy for individual fertilisers.

For di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), containing 18 per cent N and 46 per cent P, the subsidy applicable on each tonne now works out to Rs 16,268. With the proposed NBS rates from next fiscal, companies would be eligible for a concession of only Rs 12,960.

Similarly, for muriate of potash (MOP, with 60 per cent K), single super phosphate or SSP (16 per cent P and 11 per cent S), mono-ammonium phosphate or MAP (11 per cent N and 52 per cent P) and triple super phosphate or TSP (46 per cent P), the subsidy reductions would range between 13 per cent and 23 per cent.

Manufacturers of complexes — fertilisers having varying proportions of N, P, K and S — would also receive 16 to 19 per cent less subsidy on every tonne that they sell at the new NBS rates. “The lower subsidy from the Centre leaves us with no option but to charge higher MRPs from farmers,” said industry sources.

But will companies be allowed to raise farmgate prices? “The new NBS rates would take effect only from April 1. So the question of our raising prices arises, if at all, only next fiscal, that too after Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are over by May-June,” sources told Business Line.

Simply put, companies may have to wait till the next kharif planting season to print higher MRPs on their bags to compensate for the lower subsidy receivable from the Centre.

Although urea is outside, the sources added, the purview of the NBS, its prices, too may have to be revised sufficiently upwards in order to minimise the already-distorted pricing favouring its overuse, sources added.

The average MRP of DAP is now Rs 9,950 a tonne, while it is Rs 5,055 for MOP and Rs 5,310 for urea. These prices were fixed during this kharif. There have been no price increases for the current rabi season, except in a few complexes, where these have been limited to Rs 200-300 a tonne.

The new NBS rates have been arrived at by benchmarking them to international prices of urea (for N), DAP (for P), MOP (for K) and sulphur, which have apparently been taken at $280, $450, $350 and $125 a tonne, respectively. These are below their corresponding existing benchmarks of $310, $500, $370 and $190 a tonne.

“The new benchmarks are basically aimed at global suppliers, who would have to consider them while setting their prices. Since India is a major buyer, the limits on subsidy could help cap the import prices that are payable, thereby working to our advantage,” a source added.Imported urea is now landing in Indian shores at about $405 a tonne, with these being $620 for DAP, $370 for MOP and $185 for sulphur.

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Back **Non-basmati rice export caught in policy muddle**

G. Srinivasan

New Delhi, Nov. 23

The admission by the Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Mr Anand Sharma, in Parliament on November 18 that the export of non-basmati rice to some countries had resulted in denial of legitimate profits to the PSUs that were the canalising agency has not come as a shock to genuine rice exporters who were at the receiving end for not being able to execute export in view of the ban on such despatches since April 2008 that continues till today.

Trade sources told Business Line here that the statement of the Minister is riddled with contradictions even as it documents the lapses committed by the public sector trading companies that were granted the permission to export to African countries on a commercial basis. They said that the statement noted that the importing country nominated the importing agency in the recipient country and selected a domestic supplier in India, without involving the PSUs. Such a stance by the importing country militated against the government's public policy and the tender process of the PSUs. In fact, the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) which deliberated on the decision to send non-basmati rice and took a call should have been consulted by the PSUs if they were faced with such a demand from the importing country.

Exports

It was also pointed out by the industry that if the exports could be undertaken only through PSUs on a commercial price basis, the bargaining capacity of the PSUs to wrest the best price was naturally higher “since the governments of the African countries had not requested for the rice as aid or grant; the requests were for outright sale,” as said by Mr Sharma in his statement. If such were the lure of higher prices, the government's admission that “all documents showed the PSUs to be the exporter for record….and the PSUs operated on a meagre trading margin ranging between 1 and 1.5 per cent” does not exonerate the government of its primary responsibility in not supervising the PSU trading agency in a sensitive item export like rice. This raises the larger issue of lack of inter-face among PSUs chief functioning under the Ministry of Commerce with their administrative ministries. Otherwise, the PSUs would have simply carried out the transactions at the full knowledge of their administrative Ministry and both ways the lack of transparency must be plugged, they said.

More pertinently, the way export of banned non-basmati rice was allowed does look like ‘normal trade' with the PSUs acting like ‘brokers' for a petty margin with the rice exports being shipped by importing countries agencies and the suppliers chosen by them from

India.

A company that was exporting rice to Comoros asked one of the state trading agencies to permit it to send 5,000 tonnes but was told only PSUs could export. Moreover, when the ban was in place, the DGFT, functioning under the Ministry of Commerce, had allowed the export of 25,000 tones of non-basmati rice to two export-oriented units in Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry in 2008 and this was opposed by the Southern rice exporters themselves who said that they should not be discriminated. They said the government itself violated its ban by permitting the two export-oriented units (EoUs) to undertake non-basmati rice export for no valid reasons, a point brought to the attention of rice exporters association to the Union Finance Minister in November 2008.

Given the fact that there were a lot of loopholes in government's policy of clamping ban on non-basmati rice exports and then allowing PSUs to handle the selective lifting of ban on diplomatic grounds ham-handedly or giving permission to two EoU units to export 25,000 tonnes with no previous track record of shipping such huge quantities, a thorough probe into the whole sordid saga is needed, they said adding that the government should recover “the hugely disproportionate profits accruing to private parties”.With the country having procured 287.36 lakh tonnes and 336.84 lakh tonnes of rice in the last two kharif marketing seasons and bought 320 lakh tonnes in the 2009-10 marketing season that ended in September, and with government permitting import of rice duty-free, the time has come to lift the ban on non-basmati rice exports or at least allow such exports in small consumer packs with quantitative ceilings to large expatriate Indians, they said.

geeyes@thehindu.co.in

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Tata Chemicals launches customised fertiliser

‘Farmoola' aimed at wheat growers in western, central UP.

Kamal Narang

(From right) Mr Petras Simeliunas, Ambassador of Lithuania, Mr R. Mukundan, Managing Director, Tata Chemicals Ltd, and Mr Satish Chandra, Director-General, Fertilizer Association of India, at the launch of Tata's `Paras Farmoola fertilizers' in the Capital on Monday.

Our Bureau

New Delhi, Nov. 22

Tata Chemicals Ltd (TCL), on Monday, announced the launch of ‘Paras Farmoola', the country's first ever customised fertiliser product specifically targeted at farmers in western-central Uttar Pradesh (UP).

“The first truckload has already been despatched to the trade for use by wheat farmers this rabi season. We hope this will encourage others to also come out with products customised for specific crops and regions,” Mr R. Mukundan, Managing Director, TCL, told presspersons here.

Deepak Fertilisers, Nagarjuna Fertilisers & Chemicals and Coromandel International are among those which propose to introduce customised fertiliser formulations.

TCL's first ‘Paras Farmoola' offering – designed for wheat grown in the Agra, Meerut, Bareilly, Moradabad and Kanpur commissionerates – contains 10 per cent nitrogen (N), 18 per cent phosphorus (P), 25 per cent potash (K), 3 per cent sulphur (S) and 0.5 per cent zinc.

“Wheat farmers now apply one 50 kg bag of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) costing around Rs 500, half-a-bag of muriate of potash (MOP) costing Rs 130 and 10 kg of zinc sulphate (ZnS) costing Rs 400 on every acre at the time of sowing. Besides, they use two bags of urea (Rs 265 each) while irrigating the standing crop. The total cost of fertilisers comes to roughly Rs 1,560 an acre, against which they obtain an average yield of 12 quintals," noted Mr B.B. Singh, General Manager (Business Development), TCL.

With the customised fertiliser, the farmer can do away with DAP, MOP or ZnS and, instead, just apply four bags of 'Paras Farmoola' (costing Rs 600 each) as a basal dose, followed by the usual two bags of urea.

"The total fertiliser cost here works out higher (at Rs 2,930). But then, the farmer will get 22 quintals an acre, with this additional 10 quintals worth over Rs 11,000," claimed Mr Singh.

In the pipeline

TCL would be launching a similar customised product for sugarcane farmers of western-central UP next month, containing 7 per cent N, 20 per cent P, 18 per cent K, 6 per cent S and 0.5 per cent zinc. This would also be priced at Rs 600 a bag to the farmer.

"Cane growers in the region now use as many as four bags of DAP, two bags of MOP, 10 kg of ZnS and three bags of urea and get 25-26 tonnes an acre. We are recommending just four bags of Paras Farmoola and three bags of urea for obtaining 35 tonnes. In this case, the farmer not only harvests a higher yield, but also saves on fertiliser cost," Mr Singh added.

Two more plants

For manufacturing the customised fertilisers, TCL has set up a Rs 60-crore 130,000 tonnes per annum facility at its existing urea unit at Babrala in UP, with technology sourced from A.J. Sackett of the US. The company intends to establish two more plants, involving a total outlay of Rs 110 crore, in West Bengal and UP.

Customised fertiliser manufacture basically involves mixing and crushing of urea, DAP, MOP, ZnS, bentonite sulphur and boron granules for obtaining the desired proportion of N, P, K, S and micronutrients. The mixture is subjected to steam injection, drying, sieving and cooling, so as to get a uniform product with every grain having the same nutrient composition.

Customised fertilisers are currently not covered under the Centre's nutrient based subsidy (NBS) regime. Companies, however, are entitled to claim subsidy on the urea, DAP and MOP used in their manufacture. “If the idea to deliver nutrients to crops, there is no reason why the NBS should not be extended to customised fertilisers,” noted Mr Satish Chander, Director-General, Fertiliser Association of India.

Date:23/11/2010 URL: http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/11/23/stories/2010112351681700.htm

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Back **Aromatic rice varieties lose flavour on weak demand**

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Nov. 22

Rice witnessed a mixed trend on Monday. With low buying, aromatic rice varieties witnessed a downtrend. Non-basmati varieties witnessed a steady trend.

Mr Amit Kumar, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told Business Line that sluggish domestic demand led the market down. There is no support from the export front as new contracts have not been signed. Old contracts are being executed, he added.

Prices of aromatic rice dropped by Rs 50-70 a quintal. Prices of Pusa-1121 steam (new) ruled around Rs 5,100 a quintal, while the old variety ruled at Rs 5,200. Pusa-1121 sela (new) ruled around Rs 4,100 whereas the old variety was at Rs 4,200-4,250.Pusa-1121 raw (new) ruled at Rs 5,100-5,130, while the old variety quoted at Rs 5,200. Pusa (sela) ruled at Rs 3,230 and Pusa (raw) at Rs 4,100-4,120.Basmati sela ruled at Rs 6,100 while basmati raw was at Rs 7,050-7,080.Prices of non-basmati varieties ruled almost unchanged and maintained their previous levels. Prices of PR-14 ruled between Rs 2,050 and Rs 2,150, while PR ruled between Rs 1,850 and Rs 1,950 a quintal. Sharbati sela (old) ruled between Rs 2,500 and Rs 2,700 and Sharbati steam (new) at Rs 2,600-2,800 a quintal.

Brokens such as Tibar ruled at around Rs 3,100, Dubar at Rs 2,200 and Mongra at around Rs 1,800.Around 5,000 bags of PR-13 arrived, and ruled between Rs 900 and Rs 910. Grade-A variety arrived in 50,000 bags and ruled between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,030. Around 2,000 bags of RS-10 were quoted at Rs 1,450-1,500.

About 5,000 bags of Sharbati also arrived and ruled between Rs 1,500 and Rs 1,550. Sugandha-999 arrived in about 5,000 bags, and quoted at Rs 1,600-1,700.Around 5,000 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) arrived and quoted at Rs 2,000-2,300. Around 15,000 bags of Pusa-1121 quoted at Rs 2,000-2,500.Low arrivals lifted the prices of pure basmati paddy. About 10,000 bags of the paddy of pure basmati rice arrived here and quoted at Rs 2,000-2,900.The entire stock was lifted by agencies and rice millers.

Date:23/11/2010 URL: http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/11/23/stories/2010112351691700.htm

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Back **Turmeric stable on nominal arrival**

Our Correspondent

Erode, Nov. 22

The prices were stable in Erode turmeric market sales yard on Monday due to the nominal arrival of the commodity into the market.

But the product's price was increased around Rs 800 in the Gobichettipalayam cooperative society.

After closure of two days, the turmeric market assembled on Monday and the prices are stable as medium level of stocks arrived to the market.

“If the supply increases, certainly the prices will decrease by Rs 300 to Rs 500 a quintal in the coming days. Now there is very good demand from other places for the commodity, so the prices are remaining at Rs 15,000 a quintal. The merchants are expecting that the prices will remain so till the end of November,” said Mr R.V. Ravi, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

In the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 8,590 to Rs 14,959 a quintal, root variety Rs 8,560 to Rs 14,919 a quintal. Both varieties of the turmeric decreased by Rs 140 a quintal, when compared to last week price.

In the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, finger variety was sold at Rs 14,409 to Rs 15,809 a quintal, root variety Rs 13,830 to Rs 14,979 a quintal. Out of 201 bags arrived, 97 bags were sold.

In the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, finger variety was sold at Rs 14,668 to Rs 15,119 a quintal, root variety Rs 14,419 to Rs 15,028 a quintal.

Out of 1,254 bags kept for sale, 1,070 bags were sold. The prices are steady and there was no appreciable rise in price.

Date:23/11/2010 URL:
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Back **Soya oil firm as overseas market turns sluggish**

Our Correspondent

Indore, Nov 22

Mandis here on Monday witnessed subdued trading in soya oil with prices remaining steady compared with Saturday. On account of weak overseas market where KLC closed at Rs 142, trading in soya oil remained sluggish on weak demand. In the spot, soya refined quoted steady at Rs 535-Rs 540 for 10 kg.

On Saturday also, soya oil witnessed a decline on weak overseas market. From Rs 535-Rs 540 in the morning, soya oil plant rate tumbled by Rs 3-5 at Rs 532-Rs 535. However, on Monday, soya refined gained marginally but its demand continued to remain weak as overseas market turned red.

In resale, soya refined quoted at Rs 528-Rs 532 for 10 kg. Similarly, soya solvent prices also remained steady at Rs 510 for 10 kg (delivery rate). Decline in foreign market had also its bearing on the National Board of Trade where soya oil prices closed Rs 4 lower at Rs 569.20. In the morning, soya oil at NBOT had opened at Rs 570, thereafter it touched the high of Rs 573 and closed at Rs 569.20 due to weak overseas market.

On the other hand, soyabean edged higher with rise in soya futures at the NCEDX where its December contract closed at Rs 2,306 per 100 kg after opening at Rs 2,272. In the spot, soyabean quoted Rs 30 up at Rs 2,070-Rs 2,140. Similarly, plant deliveries of soyabean also perked up by Rs 30 at Rs 2,200-Rs 2,250. Rise in soya price was also attributed to increased demand at plant level. About 7,000 bags of soyabean arrived in Indore mandis on Monday against 2.25 lakh bags at the State-level.

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Back **Fishery, poultry sectors on Nokia Life Tools radar**

V. Sajeev Kumar

Kochi, Nov. 22

Nokia Life Tools, which offers a range of agriculture information and education services through SMS, is getting encouraging response from both urban and rural consumers across the country.

Mr Natesh B.V., Director – Emerging Markets Services, Mobile Solutions, Nokia, pointed out that around five million users across the country are availing themselves of the service introduced in June last year.

With the growth in the handset base in the country, the consumer base will further increase in the coming years.

The services are designed to address information gaps thus enabling consumers to be better informed and helps improve their livelihood, he said.

The company is working closely with various Central and State Government departments and other partners to extend the service in other sectors also. The new sectors which are on the anvil included fishery and poultry by offering various kinds of services, he said.

In Kerala, the company is working closely with Spices and Rubber Boards.

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Back **Marginal fluctuations in cardamom**

G K Nair

Kochi, Nov. 22

Cardamom prices remained more or less steady last week, with slight fluctuations, at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

A sudden rise in arrivals last Tuesday at the South Indian Green Cardamom Company's auction, at 75 tonnes, led to a sharp fall in the prices — the auction average fell to Rs 920 a kg from previous Sunday's average of Rs 1,017 a kg. There was also a withdrawal of 10 tonnes.

However, from Wednesday onwards, the market improved and on Thursday, the individual auction average moved up to Rs 1,003 a kg on good buying support.

Upcountry buyers, especially those from Delhi, who appear to have exhausted their stocks during the Diwali sales, purchased large quantities.

Non-availability of cardamom from the only other source, Guatemala, was another reason for dealers to cover whatever was available of local stocks, for the upcoming New Year season, they said.

This has kept the prices ruling firm despite an increase in arrivals last week, they said.

However, exporters stayed away as they felt the prices were too high.

According to growers, the third round of picking is likely to end soon. From the fourth round, arrivals might dip, they added.

As the spice is not available from any other source, North Indian dealers were covering for the wedding, Christmas and New Year seasons, Mr P. C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told Business Line.

According to him, at the Sunday auction of the KCPMC, arrivals stood at 73 tonnes and the entire quantity was sold out. The maximum price rose to Rs 1,203 a kg, and the minimum price was Rs 760 a kg. The auction average improved to Rs 975 a kg, he said.

Total arrivals last week soared to 350 tonnes, of which almost 335 tonnes were sold. Exporters stayed away due to high prices.

Total arrivals during the current season, from August 1 to November 21, stood at 3,744 tonnes. Of this, 3,694 tonnes were sold.

Arrivals and sales in the same period of the previous season were 3,786 tonnes and 3,714 tonnes, respectively.

Weighted average price as on November 21, was Rs 1,056 a kg, up from Rs 687.50 a kg, on the same day last year.

Prices for graded varieties in rupees/kg on Monday were: AGEB (7mm) 1,085-1,095; AGB (6mm) 1,010-1,025; AGS 985-1,000; AGS1 970-980. Prices quoted in the local market in Bodinayakannur were AGEB 1,075-1,085; AGB 1,000-1,015; AGS 975-990; AGS 1 960-970.Weather conditions in the growing areas have generally been favourable. However, for the last three days, the growing regions received heavy rains which may damage the plants, growers said.If this weather persisted, then it will damage the late crop, they added.

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Back **Mixed trend in rubber**

AravindanKottayam, Nov. 22

Spot rubber showed a mixed trend on Monday. The undercurrent was firm on supply concerns as rains continued to hit almost all the plantation areas. Major grades improved on fresh buying and short covering as there were no quantity sellers even during closing hours. The volumes were not impressive.

Sheet rubber increased to Rs 201 (200) a kg in the main marketing centres. The grade firmed up to Rs 200.50 (199.50) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi according to the Rubber Board.

Futures improve

The December series improved to Rs 204.00 (202.92), January to Rs 206.80 (206.26), February to Rs 208.75 (208.52) and March to Rs 211.76 (211.75) a kg for RSS 4 on National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

The volumes stood at 5774 lots and the turnover at Rs 118.96 crores. The total open interest in all series was 5768 lots.

RSS 3 firmed up at its November futures to ¥367 (Rs 199.57) from ¥365.5 during the day session but then weakened to ¥365 (Rs 198.52) a kg in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM). The grade (spot) improved to Rs 201.22 (200.79) a kg at Bangkok.Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 201 (200); RSS-5: 189 (188); ungraded: 185 (184); ISNR 20: 194 (194) and latex 60 per cent: 130 (130).

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Back **Pepper futures down on selling pressure**

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Nov 22

Pepper futures on Monday was nearly steady with a marginal decline on selling pressure.

Dealers, who were holding old stock of inferior quality pepper of 500 GL, resorted to selling and investors and exporters bought it on the spot at much lower rates and sold futures.

This created a selling pressure pushing the futures and spot markets down.

The market, which was on the upward swing in the forenoon, witnessed high volatility in the afternoon because of this selling pressure and later recovered and closed slightly below the previous close. Those medium and small operators, who were buying, realised later that the quality of the material was so inferior and that processing of it was possible only by those having modern facilities in the current unfavourable rainy conditions withdrew and that helped the market to recover later in the afternoon.

Domestic demand low

Meanwhile, domestic demand was low as the upcountry buyers are waiting for the new crop to come which according to them came by around November 20 last year. December contract on the NCDEX was down by Rs 88 to close at Rs 22,300 a quintal. January and February fell by Rs 76 and Rs 171 respectively to close at Rs 22,514 and Rs 22,651 a quintal.

Total turnover increased by 6,825 tonnes to close at 13,620 tonnes.

Total open interest moved up by 362 tonnes to 14,004 tonnes.

December open interest went up by 89 tonnes to 11,556 tonnes. January increased by 262 tonnes while that of February just scaled up by 4 tonnes, indicating good additional purchases.

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Back **Poultry meet opens today**

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Nov. 22

The Indian Poultry Equipment Manufacturers' Association (IPEMA) will host the three-day Poultry India 2010 beginning November 23.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Mr Anil S. Dhumal, President of IPEMA, said the expo would showcase appropriate and cost effective solutions to the poultry industry in developing countries. “We have started this annual event in 2007 to promote the Indian poultry equipment in the Gulf, Asian and African countries,” he said.

IPEMA will organise this expo in association with EAC (Exhibition Advisory Committee) that comprises all major poultry associations representing equipment, feed milling, breeding, integration, processing and pharma sectors.

Scheduled to be held at the HITEX expo facility at Madhapur, the event is expected to be attended by over 15,000 visitors. “We are expecting representatives from the US, Europe, China and South-East Asian nations,” he added.