

THE HINDU

Discussion on formation of farm ponds on April 3

A meeting to discuss formation of farm ponds in the district will be held at Thirumanur panchayat union office on Wednesday (April 3). According to a release from M. Ravikumar, Collector, the State government has announced that it will extend subsidy for setting up farm ponds in the lands of the drought-affected delta farmers at a total cost of Rs. 1.5 lakh in order to encourage them spawn Rs. 30,000 worth fish.

Besides, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, steps will be taken to set up these ponds in the lands of the willing farmers at Thirumanur and T. Pazhur panchayat unions to an extent of 15 square metres or 30 square metres.

The ponds could be used to conserve rain water and spawn fish which would help the farmers get supplementary income.

For a pond measuring 30 square metres, the subsidy will be Rs. 30,000 and for the one measuring 15 square metres, it will be Rs. 17,500.

The proposed meeting will discuss all the issues relating to farm ponds and hence the Collector has requested the farming community to attend it without fail.

‘Special attention of farmers needed for good harvest’

Periodical and special attention of farmers is essential to harvest a good crop that can fetch high price in the market, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K. Ramasamy said.

Direct supervision

Inaugurating a three-day training on 'Agro Export and Domestic Trade', organised by the Department of Trade and Intellectual Property of TNAU, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Thiruvannamalai district, he said that sincere efforts and direct supervision of crops alone could enable farmers to rectify the problems in farming and earn a good income from agriculture.

"Farmers can sell 50 per cent of their produce through domestic and the rest through export market. Adoption of scientific practices and cooperation among farmers can earn better farm profit. Knowledge gained through experience should be shared among farmers," he added.

K.N. Selvaraj, Head, Department of Trade and Intellectual Property, said that information about potential crops for export, the right place to export, rules and regulations to be followed for export were taught to farmers during the training.

Nearly 65 farmers of Vempakkam Block of Thiruvannamalai district attended the training.

SBI notice riles farmers

Over 200 loan-recovery notice issued in Nagapattinam

Repay loans or be publicly humiliated. This is the message that the State Bank of India has sent to farmers here in the delta districts.

The country's premier public sector bank has issued notices to 200 farmers warning them that their photographs would be displayed on the banners as 'defaulters' outside the bank.

It has also told the farmers that their photographs would be published in newspapers and the costs for the banners and newspaper advertisements would be added to the outstanding amount of the defaulters, reads the notice that also promises legal

action. The State government recently announced drought relief for farmers by extending repayment deadlines for loans borrowed from cooperative societies. But farmers who have borrowed from the nationalised banks are yet to get any relief.

Farmers here have claimed that over 200 such notices have been put out to farmers in Nagapattinam and similar complaints were made from other Central districts.

“Threat of legal action is agreeable. But the prospect of being shamed and humiliated may push the farmer to suicide. This is when banks bail out corporates all the time,’ says Alexander, president, Tail End Farmers Association, Mayiladuthurai, holding a notice issued in Tamil. The notice is addressed to a farmer with an outstanding due of Rs. 39,775 for a loan taken in 2009.

“The threat of use of the borrower's photograph originally obtained for banking purpose for public humiliation is not an ethical practice,” says an official.

The borrowing clause speaks only of legal action and does not mention such practices, says Gobi Ganesan, of Farmers Association, Mayiladuthurai.

When contacted, a State Bank of India official said the letters were issued by the controller of the zonal office of Tiruchi and were well within the guidelines. According to a lead bank official, banks had received guidelines to deal with the mounting NPAs. RBI has allowed for such publication of ‘wilful defaulters’. “However, we only engage recovery agents, and have not used publication of photographs as recovery tactic.”

This comes a year after the Madras High Court flayed the recovery methods adopted by the State Bank of India while hearing a plea against forcible hypothecation of a tractor from a farmer in Erode district.

Disposing of the plea in May last, the court had maintained that recovery would have to be made as per the law and not by acts of force, coercion, or verbal abuse. Maintaining that public humiliation and force was not correct, the court had upheld the sanctity of “strict customer confidentiality” by recovery agents.

Drought relief: prepare new list, say farmers

Farmers have urged the district administration and agriculture department to prepare a new list of farmers eligible for Annawari Certificate to receive assistance from the Government. Farmers who petitioned the Collector in this connection alleged that revenue and agriculture officials have shown partiality in preparing the list.

“Of the five taluks in the only farmers who are growing all types of crops in Rasipuram taluk have been given the certificate. Farmers growing select crops have been entitled to get the assistance from the Government in the Namakkal, Tiruchengode, Paramathi-Velur, and Kolli Hills taluks,” said a farmer representative P. Chandrasekaran of Kalkurichi panchayat.

He said tapioca was the main cash crop grown across the district and farmers have been equally affected by the drought

“Farmers who have been growing onion, turmeric, and coconut on thousands of acres of cultivable land across the district too are suffering,” he said. “Government authorities should give the certificate by conducting a crop-wise and area-wise survey,” said A. Chinnasamy of Sendamangalam, another farmer.

He alleged that in some areas the officials had listed crops that were not cultivated there, due to which no farmer would get the assistance from the government.

District Collector D. Jagannathan said that the list was prepared based on details given by farmers in a particular locality and were verified by officials concerned. “Necessary steps will be taken to rework the list based on a representation from the farmers,” he said.

Precision farming can solve farm ills

Small and marginal farmers may soon be better equipped to tackle the vagaries of climate-dependent agriculture and market dynamics through precision farming.

Seminar on agribusiness

A Stakeholder Awareness and Education Seminar on Agribusiness and Commodities Price Risk Management will be held on April 3 at the Convocation Hall of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

Organised by *The Hindu Business Line* jointly with commodity futures market regulator - Forward Markets Commission (FMC) - under the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs and the country's largest agri-commodity futures exchange - National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) - the seminar seeks to bring together hedgers and prospective hedgers in the agricultural commodity markets with a view to creating awareness on scientific ways of price risk management.

The participants would include stakeholders such as producers, processors, trading houses, importers, exporters and others in the physical market who need to manage commodity price risks arising out of volatile market conditions.

Ganga Murthy, Principal Advisor to the Government of India, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, is the chief guest. K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, M. Mathisekaran, Member FMC, Lakshmi Narayan, Wholetime Director, T. Stanes and Company, and Arun

Anant, Chief Executive Officer of Kasturi and Sons Ltd, will take part.

Experts will make presentations on various topics of relevance to market participants.

For registration, contact S. Prabhakar on **98942 88511** .

‘Smart Agriculture’ to overcome vagaries of weather

Helps farmers tackle climate change and market conditions



Small and marginal farmers across the State may soon be better equipped to tackle the vagaries of climate-dependent agriculture and market dynamics.

Researchers at the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) and the International Centre for Free and Open Source Software (ICFOSS) have joined hands to develop a technology-assisted system to generate detailed information on soil and agro-climatic conditions. Named Smart Agriculture, the project seeks to utilise precision farming methods to improve crop output.

The researchers are working on an IT-enabled system to provide real time data on soil and micro weather conditions. The Cloud-

based platform will be based on sensors installed in each plot to keep a constant tab on different variables.

ICFOSS has developed the prototype of a solar-powered remote station for monitoring soil and atmospheric conditions. Working on Open Source hardware and software, it automatically uploads data to the Cloud.

Specific inputs

“Precision farming requires specific information on the state of the atmosphere and soil, in terms of parameters such as temperature, humidity, soil pH, rainfall, soil salinity, and wind vector (speed & direction). The data can be used to provide advisories for farmers depending on the type and age of crops they have planted,” says Satish Babu, Director, ICFOSS.

According to A.K. Sherief, Professor, Agricultural Extension, KAU, the project seeks to provide micro-level information for changes in farming practices to suit climate change and market conditions. “It also focuses on using technology to solve the labour problem, a vexatious issue in Kerala. For example, robotic farm equipment and sensor-based sprinklers that could be activated according to soil conditions could help to replace farm labour to some extent.”

The monitoring system has a field unit consisting of a network of sensors to measure soil and micro weather conditions. A micro-controller working on Open Source hardware connects networks while a credit card-sized computer-on-a-board handles GPRS-based or SMS-based connections. The station is powered by a solar charging circuit.

Mr. Babu says the system can also be used to provide market intelligence, post harvest and value addition options for the farmer. “The end result of our efforts should be well-informed, empowered farmers who are assured of remunerative price for their produce without market uncertainties.” A Cloud-based back-end provides

the storage repository for the data. Experts monitoring the system can access the repository from anywhere using a mobile or laptop. ICFOSS has also developed an Android App to report pests in crops using camera and voice automation. “Our objective is to enable easier access to information for the farmer using IT-based platforms and mobile phones or hand-held devices,” says Dr. Sherief. Mr. Babu said the prototype of the monitoring station would be revised to accommodate more sensors for better monitoring of conditions

Cattle vaccination camps from tomorrow

As many as 1.15 lakh cattle will be vaccinated at the animal husbandry camps planned in the district from April 2 to April 30. According to a release from Collector Darez Ahmed, already two phases of vaccination have been completed in the district.

The third phase will begin at Kovilpalayam, Thenur, Kiliyapatty Pudur, Pudhuvettakudi, Thunijapdi, Kolappadi, Periyavenmani, Chinnavenmani, Pudhukudisai, Kadur, Nallarikkai and Thungapuram villages in Veppur panchayat union. Thereafter eight groups of officials will fan out to all the villages, panchayats and towns in the district, and complete the exercise by the end of the month.

Water level- Madurai city

WATER LEVEL

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 113.10 feet (permissible level is 136 feet) with an inflow of 100 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs on Sunday.

According to the Public Works Department officials, the water level in Vaigai dam was 45.87 feet (permissible level is 71 feet) with an

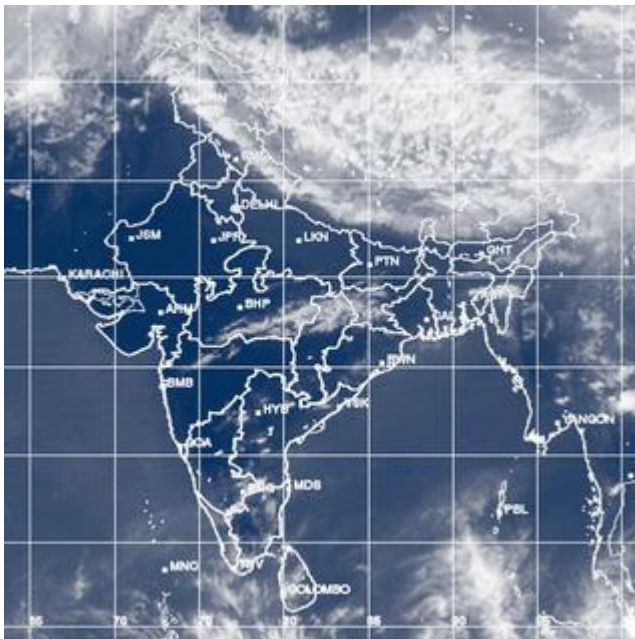
inflow of 120 cusecs and discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit was 2,172 mcft.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 77.80 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 152.43 cusecs and 250 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 88.35 feet with an inflow of 31 cusecs and there was no discharge from the dam.

Kanyakumari

The level in Pechipparai dam stood at 9.40 feet. It was 28.90 feet in Perunchani, 4.26 feet in Chittar I, 4.36 feet in Chittar II and 3.20 feet in Poigai dam.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on March 31st.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	31	18	0	8
New Delhi (Sfd)	29	17	0	5
Chandigarh	28	17	0	25
Hissar	30	15	0	39
Bhuntar	26	8	tr	102
Shimla	19	9	1	99

Jammu	28	17	0	32
Srinagar	21	7	0	69
Amritsar	30	15	0	4
Patiala	29	17	0	23
Jaipur	32	19	0	3
Udaipur	33	17	0	0
Allahabad	36	18	0	9
Lucknow	32	16	0	1
Varanasi	36	19	0	6
Dehradun	29	15	0	17
Agartala	35	23	0	25
Ahmedabad	36	23	0	0
Bangalore	35	24	0	1
Bhubaneshwar	40	26	0	0
Bhopal	34	21	0	21
Chennai	35	26	0	32
Guwahati	35	19	6	20
Hyderabad	38	26	0	0
Kolkata	33	26	1	1
Mumbai	32	23	0	0
Nagpur	39	21	0	15
Patna	36	20	0	1
Pune	37	16	0	3
Thiruvananthapuram	35	26	0	80
Imphal	30	18	1	27
Shillong	25	13	2	22

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st March.

MAINLY DRY WEATHER

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers has occurred at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh. Weather was mainly dry over the rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: HIMACHAL PRADESH: Shimla 1 .

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES : The maximum temperatures rose appreciably in west Rajasthan, rose in Haryana and Punjab and changed little elsewhere. They were appreciably above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, appreciably below normal in Haryana and west Uttar Pradesh, above normal in Himachal Pradesh , below normal in Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The highest

maximum temperature in the region was 36.4°C recorded at Barmer (Rajasthan) .

MINIMUM TEMPERATURES : The minimum temperatures rose appreciably in west Uttar Pradesh, rose in Haryana, Punjab and Uttarakhand changed little elsewhere. They were normal in rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 13.8°C recorded at Nazibabad (Uttar Pradesh)

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 02nd April 2013: Rain/thundershowers would occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh from 1st April onwards. Rain/thundershowers may also occur at one or two places over north Punjab and Uttarakhand from 2nd onwards. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 02nd April 2013: Mainly clear sky. Mist in the morning.

hindustantimes

Weather Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Apr 1

Max Min

32° | 26°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 56

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:05

Sunset: 06:20

Barometer: 1010

Tomorrow's Forecast








Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Apr 2

Max Min

35° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Apr 3	Thursday Apr 4	Friday Apr 5	Saturday Apr 6	Sunday Apr 7
				
35° 26°	36° 26°	36° 26°	36° 27°	36° 26°
Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast

Bihar assigns Rs. 300 cr for power lines for farmers

In welcome news for millions of farms in power-starved Bihar, the state government has sanctioned Rs. 300 crore for a dedicated feeder line for agriculture, officials said on Monday.

The state cabinet approved the amount late on Sunday, an official in the chief minister's office said. "This is a first-of-its-kind dedicated feeder line to provide electricity to farmers in Bihar," he said.

According to officials, the state government plans to install 968 new feeders of 11KV each with 55,925km of distribution lines and 1.46 lakh transformers to primarily supply power to 19 lakh pumping sets in the next decade.

The government has projected year-wise requirement of estimated funds for the feeder segregation. The total estimated amount for the 12th and 13th five-year plan is around Rs. 8,370.44 crore.

The government has already projected its year-wise power requirements for agriculture sector for the next 10 years. By 2016-17, the state would require 1,478MW power exclusively for the agriculture sector.

The government's move will go a long way in increasing agricultural productivity, said an official of the state agriculture department.

Agriculture is the backbone of Bihar's economy, employing 81% of the workforce and generating nearly 42% of the state's domestic product, according to the state government.

At present only 5.83% of the total power supply to the state is used in the agriculture sector in Bihar, compared to 38 percent in Haryana, the highest in India.

Last year, President Pranab Mukherjee launched the much-awaited agriculture roadmap of Bihar. Its main objective is to help to bring a "rainbow revolution" in the state in the next five years, boosting the production and processing of agricultural and farm goods and pushing up growth rate in the sector.

The five-year agriculture roadmap covers the period 2012-17, with an investment of Rs.1.52 lakh crore. It aims at raising agri-growth to a minimum of 7% per year.

The Bihar agriculture roadmap is the first of its kind in the country and focuses on the development of food processing, food preservation, fisheries and animal husbandry.

Now, buy Alphonso mangoes online from farmers

It is that time of the year again when the king of fruits is back in demand. Mumbaikars can now buy the Alphonso online, directly from farmers in Devgad and Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. One of the first organisations to go solo with the sales was the Devgad Taluka Amba Utpadak Sahakari Sanstha Ltd

(DTAUSS). The 25-year-old co-operative society is made up of 700 farmers from Devgad Taluka, all growing the Devgad Alphonso mango.

“Since we are a co-operative society of Devgad mango farmers, only the Devgad Alphonso is available on our website. It is a premium variety because of its superior taste and aroma. The rates differ every season because they are decided by market demand-supply and cost of production,” says Omkar Sapre, member of the board and chief marketing officer, DTAUSS, adding that the season has just started and so far the production looks average.

Problems are on the rise too. Due to reduction in subsidy on pesticides and fertilisers, their prices have increased, there is a shortage of adequate manpower to work on the fields, an increase in pests and lack of effective pesticides. “Since the tsunami of 2004, we have not seen a stable climate. It rains when it should be warm and gets cold when it should rain,” says Adv Ajit Gogate, chairman, DTAUSS.



The co-operative society is currently in the process of putting up a factory from where customers will be able to buy mango pulp, pickles, drinks, barfis and wadis directly.

Similarly, another organisation, AAR Mangoes works towards providing consumers mangoes directly from Ratnagiri. Grown on 40 acres of land on more than 2,000 trees, they are couriered and distributed to various parts of Maharashtra, including Mumbai, Kolhapur and Nashik.

“We only grow the Alphonso and the going rate this season ranges from R500 to R1,200 per dozen. The season has been average, and climate change has taken a toll on the fruit,” says Ganesh Ranade, a mango farmer.

Ask if the fruit they market is cheaper in comparison to what is available in the market and we are told that it is not possible. “We arrive 20 days late. That is because we do not artificially ripen our mangoes. They are organic. So due to the time lag, our products are 20 per cent more expensive than what is available at that time in the market,” says Ranade.

AAR Mangoes also offer mango tourism facilities. On packages of different rates, one can head to Ratnagiri, enjoy rural life for a few days and hog on mangoes. “We also make mango pulp in limited quantities,” says Ranade.

Spot the difference

Naturally ripened mangoes have a natural aroma that is noticeable from a distance. Chemically ripened mangoes are devoid of such a smell.

The mangoes should look and feel soft. Chemically ripened mangoes are yellow, yet hard.

Observe the colour. Naturally-ripened mangoes have uneven colouring in yellows and green.

Many people feel that if mangoes show wrinkles, they are good.

Mangoes will show wrinkles if they are overripe.

Mature mangoes develop a slight trough near the stem, enough to hold a drop of water or stop it from sliding down. Immature mangoes do not have that trough.

To place your orders, log on to www.devgadmango.com or www.aarmangoes.com.

You could also call the AAR Mangoes representative in Mumbai on 96192 46419.



Congress calls farmers meet today to protest irrigation Bill

Gujarat Congress will organise a convention of farmers in Gandhinagar Monday to protest the latest Gujarat Irrigation and Drainage Bill that was passed by the ruling BJP government in the Assembly recently, said a press release from the party Sunday.

The convention is going to be attended by almost all the senior party leaders from Gujarat, the release added. Gujarat Governor Kamla Beniwal has cleared the Bill that was passed by the Assembly.

Calling the Act "anti-farmer", Congress has stated that under the provisions of the law, farmers would be required to get a license first to dig a bore well or tube well in their farms and would be required to pay the license fees also. Under the Act, the release added, if somebody violated the provisions, the person could be imprisoned for six months. The convention has been organised at Pathikashram in Gandhinagar on Monday, 10

am, and farmers from different areas of the state are going to visit it, the release by Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said.

Almost all the senior Gujarat Congress leaders are going to address the convention, the release added. The list of leaders include Gujarat Congress chief Arjun Modhwadia, leader of Opposition in the Assembly Shankarsinh Vaghela, Gujarat in-charge Mohan Prakash, Shaktisinh Gohil, Siddharth Patel and Union Ministers Dinsha Patel, Bharatsinh Solanki and Tushar Chaudhary.

Meanwhile, the state police received an alert from the CIB about an alleged threat of a possible bomb blast during the Congress rally in Gandhinagar against the irrigation Bill. Five SPs and 50 DSPs were given special duty to ensure security. The security arrangement includes — 50 police inspectors, 150 sub-inspectors, 40 women sub-inspectors, 800 constables and head constables, 100 women constables and 100 traffic policemen.

THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

London feasts on Dharmapuri farm produce

Visitors to Dharmapuri, one of Tamil Nadu's most backward districts, are unlikely to see the brighter side of it.

The dry region, where caste is deeply entrenched and Naxals on and off nurture hopes of a regrouping, is the most unlikely place to see farmers boasting of their business connections in Europe or South East Asia.

But a silent revolution, though on a small scale, is happening in the western district with farmers raking in moolah by exporting their agricultural produce to London and Singapore.

The transformation has materialised owing to the untiring efforts of the farmers and the valuable tips given by the State Agriculture Department. Samikannu of Molayanoor, who cultivates brinjal and drumstick on a two-acre land, says he was lured into export business after seeing middlemen make money after buying the produce of his hard work at a cheap price and then selling those off at higher prices in bigger markets to which he had never harboured the dreams of reaching.

"I came in contact with the Agricultural Marketing and Agriculture Business Departments. The officials helped me sign a MoU with a London-based importer to whom I sell my brinjals and drumsticks now," he says.

"As a farmer, I had my core skills at my disposal and knew how to harvest a higher yield. But marketing skills were alien to me due to which I incurred losses at the onset. But I never imagined that with the guidance of the Agriculture Department I will be exporting my farm produce to London. My next consignment is all set to be shipped to that place," says an excited Samikannu.

Like him, another farmer Mathi of Bulluhalli is exporting brinjal, tomato and mangoes to Singapore.

"I formed a network of 10 farmers from Marandhalli, Nallampatti, Samanoor, Pilikarai and Thomanahalli and now we jointly undertake the export operations. Every week, we are exporting a consignment of five tonnes of brinjal, 1.5 tonnes of mangoes and 0.5 tonnes of tomatoes to Singapore," he says adding "we are getting a nice price."

Mathi says the local Deputy Director of Agriculture (Agriculture Business) E Selvam has been a guiding force behind the farmers for their success.

T Thomas, Agriculture Officer (Agriculture Business) says:
“Farmers usually tend to think that exporting their produce to foreign countries is a difficult proposition. But in reality it is a simple process.

“They have to just adhere to certain specifications for successfully exporting their farm products. In Dharmapuri, we are always willing to provide information tips to the farmers who wish to get into export business.”

Thomas adds that if farmers cultivate organic vegetables and fruits, it will fetch them an even higher price abroad because people there preferred natural yields.

No bus terminus on agricultural land: Ramadoss

PMK founder S Ramadoss on Sunday urged the Tamil Nadu government to alter its plans to construct a bus terminus at Vandalur, because the project would entail acquisition of 65 acres of agricultural land. Instead, he suggested that the terminus could be constructed on 100 acres of poromboke land owned by the government at Kolappakkam.

Ramadoss also threatened to mobilise the local residents of the area against the project if the state government failed to act on his suggestion.

“Keeping in mind the growing traffic congestion in Chennai and the fact that the mofussil bus terminus at Koyambedu was opened more than 10 years ago, the government has made the correct decision to construct another bus terminus at Vandalur,” said Ramadoss in a statement.

“But it is being said that the government has decided to acquire 65 acres of agricultural land for the new project. This decision to acquire irrigated land to build a new terminus is shocking,” he added.

The PMK leader said that the loss of agricultural land would affect the livelihoods of more than 1,200 families in the area. Besides, the move would also have an impact on the State’s food security.

Business Standard^{beta}

Market pulse for agro commodities: Mangal Keshav

Total inflow of small cardamom crop declined to 61.4 tons from which 61.1 tons were sold at CPMC auction held at Kumily.

Arrivals of chilli crop declined to about 50,000 bags while demand has eased slightly due to financial year ending & poor exports at higher prices. Spot rates were quoted at '56-'62 per kg at Guntur market.

Spot market for Jeera will remain close till April 2, due to financial year ending. Spot rates of pepper garbled increased to '363 per kg and that of un-garbled was up at '348 per kg. Arrivals declined to 7 tons while trades too were down at 10 tons at auctions held at Kochi market, as per IPSTA.

Turmeric update : Erode market will remain close on March 26-27 and then from March 29 to April 8, while Nizamabad and Sangli markets will remain shut from March 26 to April 1 for holi and financial year closing.

Average price of small cardamom declined to '644.5 per kg while maximum

price offered was down at '969 per kg, as per spice board. Total inflow of small cardamom crop declined to 61.4 tons from which 61.1 tons were sold at CPMC auction held at Kumily.

Arrivals of Soya bean crop declined below 20,000 bags across MP market & about 1,000 bags at mandis of Indore while supply at mandis of Maharashtra stood ~15,000 bags & at mandis of Rajasthan ~10,000 bags, as per trade reports.

Spot rates of soya bean crop offered by planters were steady at '37-'37.5 per kg while rates across mandis of Indore were unchanged around '36 per kg, as per local traders.

Spot rates of Soya bean seed Indore (ex-mandi) closed up at '35.5 per kg, while that of Mustard seed Rajasthan closed down at '34 per kg, as per SEA of India.

Guar seed arrivals declined to 14,065 quintals, while the average of the closing spot rates were up at '9,570.3 per quintal.

Inflow of mustard seed crop declined to 154,625 quintals, while average of closing spot rates were down at '3,065.4 per quintal, as per agriculture marketing board of Rajasthan.

Arrivals of chana crop were seen steady across major trading centers; however off-take has declined ahead of Holi festival & is expected to pick up from April onwards. Spot rates were down & quoted at '33-'33.5 per kg.

Mentha oil futures closed in negative for the 5th consecutive week & declined close to its strong support level of 1,030 per kg. Spot rates too were down around '1,200-'1,220 per kg, in the absence of buyers while supply remain steady at 200-250 drums on a daily basis.

New crop arrivals weigh on agro commodities: Sharekhan

Buy sugar on dips for short term. sell chana, chilli and turmeric, while other agri- commodities are also likely to remain weak.

Both sugar and gur witnessed firm sentiment. ED&F Man sees 23.5 million tonne of sugar production for FY2013-14 marketing year. It also sees the Indian sugar import to 1.4 million tonne in FY2012-13 with 1.1 million tonne of sugar already landed in India till date. ISO chief revealed that sugar production in India in the next year looks positive despite concerns about drought situation in some states like Maharashtra. Due to drought this year, cane growers in Maharashtra and Karnataka have not yet started sugarcane planting. Drought in Maharashtra has been so severe that the state government has ordered saving water for drinking purpose. Maharashtra is likely to produce 4 million tonne of sugar in FY2013-14 owing to lack of rainfall in the region, according to Maharashtra state government officials. CCEA Meeting over sugar decontrol issue was further postponed to April 4, 2013.

The government issued a public interest notice to release the 104 lakh tonne of non-levy sugar quota in the next six months starting from April to September 2013 without any month quota limitation. However, there would be no conversion of unsold non-levy quota into levy quota during the period of current release. The government has also released, during this month, 3.69 lakh MT of levy sugar for meeting requirements of Public Distribution System (PDS) for April-May 2013. Outlook: Prices are likely to trade firm in near short term.

Chana witnessed a weakness in prices. Moreover, the traders expected that prices may touch the level of around Rs3,200 in near term. Recent rainfall in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan is likely to hamper the chana crop quality and yield. The government has extended ban on export of pulses till March 31,

2014. But there is an exception with export of kabuli chana, organic pulses and lentils being allowed up to a ceiling of 10,000 metric tonne per annum. According to the Gujarat's agricultural department, sowing under moong is reported at 16,400 hectares as on March 18, 2013 compared with 30,300 hectares during the previous year. Outlook: Chana prices are likely to witness a weak tone in the coming days.

Chilli witnessed weak sentiment on new crop arrivals. However, expected lower crop would resist the sharp fall in prices.

At Guntur cold storage, teza seed variety quoted at Rs7,800-8,000 per quintal, Indo-5 at Rs6,500-7,200 per quintal, 334 qualities at Rs5800-6200 a quintal. Red chilli production in Guntur area is lower by 25-30% against last year. Red chilli production in Guntur area is expected around 70-75 lakh bags. However, carry forward stock may be around 20 lakh bags.

Turmeric witnessed weak sentiment. But fresh export as well as domestic demand amid lower output expectations may support prices in near term. Turmeric traded down in major spot markets on higher arrivals and normal demand. Turmeric finger priced at Rs7,800 per quintal in Erode, root variety quoted at Rs6,500 salem per quintal, Salem finger at Rs9,000 per quintal and salem root at Rs7,500 per quintal. Arrivals stood at 10,000 bags. New unpolished finger variety offered at Rs6,600 per quintal and gatta at Rs6,000 per quintal in Nizamabad. Trade of 18,000 bags was reported in Nizamabad.

Palm oil prices poised to go down in surplus market



Mumbai, March 31: Crude palm oil prices have been under intense downward pressure for last several months. Trading currently at around Malaysia Ringgit 2,400 a tonne or close to \$800/tonne (free-on-board), the CPO market is poised for a downturn from April onwards when seasonal supply factors will begin to operate.

These include the commencement of peak production season for palm oil in Malaysia and Indonesia as well as supply pressure from a bumper harvest of soyabean in South America.

Stung by some seriously bearish forecasts made just before and during the price outlook conference in Kuala Lumpur early March, some plantation companies seem to have begun to float new theories about possible lower CPO output in Malaysia in the next three quarters. There is risk that market participants may get carried away. Whatever be the so-called revised demand-supply picture that is being put out now, it is abundantly clear that there is

simply no warrant for even any short-term price firmness, leave alone for the rest of the year.

Clearly, bearish factors outweigh others. Indeed, financial analysts are underweight on the sector because industry profitability is deteriorating as costs are rising. This will force companies to de-stock rather than build inventory.

Supply factor

From a supply perspective, Indonesian production is likely to remain strong for the next three years at least; and any slowdown will not materialise until about 2016. CPO production in the world's largest producing country is set to expand by at least 2 million tonnes (mt) each year next 4-5 years because of new plantings that were undertaken in 2007-10.

Contrary to inspired expectations, CPO production is set to register a strong growth of 8-10 per cent this year, taking the world aggregate to 57-58 mt comprising Indonesia (30 mt), Malaysia (20 mt) and others (7-8 mt). The biological up-cycle is still in full vigour and the low cycle will start after Q3 this year, and not earlier.

Slowing demand

While supplies are nearly assured, it is the demand side that needs close attention. CPO prices are not going to be decided by supply growth, but by demand growth; and the demand side is not really looking solid. Disappearance for the year is estimated at 56-57 mt, making the fundamental well-balanced with a bias toward slowing demand.

Globally, vegetable oil demand growth has slowed in the last 5-6 years, and palm oil demand growth has slowed even faster. There is structural slowdown in demand growth, especially in the biodiesel sector where there is palpable lack of new mandates and increased constraints of substitution with CPO. Experts suggest that CPO may be nearing demand saturation. For 2012-13, global biodiesel demand is projected to rise by a mere one million tons, sharply down from 2-4 mt in recent years.

Many market participants are either unaware and do not appreciate the fact that regulatory headwinds for the biodiesel sector are growing. License and quotas as well as threat of anti-dumping duty stymie growth. Importantly, at least one million tonne of used cooking oil is now diverted for biodiesel purpose which obviously eats into the share of palm oil.

So, the road to palm oil price recovery is going to be long and arduous whatever sectoral interests may claim. This writer still holds that CPO prices are poised to decline further to around Ringgit 2,100-2,200 a tonne levels by May and will constantly test the psychological floor of Ringgit 2,000 and possibly breach it by June. Consensus will follow has it happened in 2012.

Tea prices drop at Coonoor auction despite lower volume

Coonoor, March 31: Tea prices fell by Rs 5 a kg compared with the previous sale at the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions with 87 per cent of the year's lowest volume of 8.17 lakh kg going under the hammer.

Homedale factory's teas, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped in both the CTC leaf and dust auctions when Belmont Tea and Produce Co., bought them for Rs 180 a kg.

In all, 112 marks got Rs 125 and more a kg.

Among orthodox teas, Chamraj got Rs 260 a kg. In all, 29 marks got Rs 125 and more.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 85-89 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 125-160 for brighter liquoring sorts.

They ranged Rs 99-101 for plain dusts and Rs 130-165 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Low quality arrivals crush tomato

Karnal, March 31:

Despite low arrivals in the market, tomato prices fell up to Rs 50-200 a quintal for the different varieties, on Sunday.

Around 600 crates (of 25 kg each) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted between Rs 700 and Rs 2,000 a quintal. Around 2,500 crates of varieties such as Anoop, Himsona, Trishul, Himshikhar and Ahmedabad were received.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that low quality of the stocks mainly pulled tomato prices down.

Traders expect arrivals to be in full swing within the next 15-20 days, he added.

Out of total arrivals, about 45 per cent stock was of low quality; around 30 per cent stock was of medium quality while about 25 per cent stock of total arrivals was of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality decreased by Rs 200 and quoted at Rs 1,600-2,000 a quintal. The prices of Medium quality produce went down by Rs 150 and quoted at 1,100-1,550 while Low quality produce was at Rs 700-950 a quintal, Rs 50 down from previous levels.

Though prices rose on a few occasions, the market did not manage to retain those levels.

Arrivals are likely to remain sluggish and even the quality of the stocks is likely to remain lower in the coming days. Traders expect that the market may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuation for the next few days.

Ample supply, demand hold pepper steady

Kochi, March 31:

The pepper market was volatile as usual last week but with limited activities mainly because of the holidays on account of Holi in north India and Easter in the main growing State, Kerala. The prices at the weekend remained nearly steady on matching demand and supply.

Arrivals of good bulk density material were limited. However, Karnataka pepper was being reportedly sold in the range of Rs 325 and Rs 335 a kg delivered anywhere in India.

On the exchange even as the April delivery is nearing maturity no stocks were claimed to be there. Those holding long positions and have hedged were said to be opting for delivery, market sources told *Business Line*.

There was liquidation in April and May. But the short position holders were buying back, they said.

Following the reported release of 34 tonnes of pepper belonging to an Aggregator, rumours were spread early last week that more and more pepper being locked up in the warehouses for long awaiting clearance from the food safety authorities, would be released soon creating a surge in availability. But, the trade alleged that samples of these lots aggregating around 6,800 tonnes are yet to be drawn and checked in the designated laboratories before being released.

On the other hand, the trade claimed that the outstanding position on Dec 20, 2012 was only 63 tonnes and the other positions were squared off.

Last week also witnessed sellers at the buyers' discounted price provided the payment was made on or before March 31. This phenomenon has activated the operators to push the market down on Monday, they said.

Meanwhile, agents of crushers/grinders in Chennai and Erode were reportedly buying high bulk density pepper from Kerala's Idukki district at terminal market prices on cash and carry basis.

The trade believes that there would emerge good domestic demand from early next month as most of the upcountry pipelines are still empty . Continued dry spell coupled with diseases in several areas in Idukki has affected the crop in the district, according to some of the growers who claimed that the production has been less. A similar feeling has been given by growers in certain parts of Wayanad also. “A realistic assessment might put the production at little over 50,000 tonnes this season”, a primary market dealer in Kattappana claimed.

The futures market showed a mixed trend with marginal up and down while the spot prices remained unchanged.

April contract on the NCDEX decreased by Rs 25 last week to close at Rs 35,950 a quintal on Saturday while May moved up by Rs 15 to close at Rs 35,935

Total turn over decreased by 4,898 tonnes to close at 3,222 tonnes indicating drop in activities. Total open interest declined by 169 tonnes to 2,120 tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 34,800 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,300 (MG 1) a quintal at the weekend on matching demand and supply.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$6,925 a tonne (c&f) for prompt shipment while April and May was at \$6,850 a tonne (c&f).
