

Poor rainfall leaves cotton farmers writhing in agony

50 per cent of the crop on 23,237 hectares lost



*twist in the tale: A woman with the cotton grown on her field at Alathur village in Perambalur district. —
Photo: M. Moorthy*

The impact of drought on cotton in Perambalur district, which normally contributes 4.8 lakh tonnes, accounting for 30 per cent of the State's total production, is likely to leave a gaping hole in the overall State cotton production. The normal cotton coverage in the State is about one lakh hectares.

Being one of the most backward districts in the State, it is maize and cotton that have been contributing to the agrarian economy of the district considerably, thus making a significant mark on the gross domestic product of the district.

Almost 90 per cent of the 5.64 lakh population of the district are dependent on agriculture. While 50 per cent of them are dependent on maize, at least 40 per cent are engaged in cotton cultivation.

The normal cotton cultivation area in the district is 17,140 hectares. This shot up to 26,291 hectares in 2011-12 and declined to 23,650 hectares in 2012.

Collector Darez Ahmed announced in the recent agriculturists' grievances day that of the total cultivated area of 84,317 hectares in the district, as much as 78,285 hectares had been indentified to have suffered loss of more than 50 per cent because of the drought.

According to official sources, even the *Nilam* cyclone that battered several districts did not shower even a single millimetre of rainfall in Perambalur district.

As per the *annevari* certificate issued about a fortnight ago, of the total cotton area of 23,650 hectares, as much as 23,237 hectares have suffered over 50 per cent crop loss.

Rajachidambaram, general secretary, Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham, who hails from the district, laments cotton farmers are facing a crisis because of poor rainfall.

Official sources admit that as against the normal rainfall of 791 mm, actual receipt is only around 660 mm.

N. Selladurai, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangham, says he has lost as much as Rs.1.35 lakh by raising cotton in seven acres. "I spent Rs.1.75 lakh and what I have harvested could fetch me only around Rs.40, 000 which has just been enough to meet the wage component."

While farmers lament that acute water scarcity has devastated several acres of cotton, Kolathur C. Rajendran, another cotton farmer, says cotton is a six-month crop but could be raised only once a year.

"The maximum that we will be able to produce is 8-10 quintals per acre. But this year, it is hardly four to five quintals because of poor rainfall." Cotton is dead in areas such as Sirugambur, Ailur, and Ayakudikadu, he points out. He said cotton was quoted at Rs.6,000 per quintal in 2009-10 when cultivation cost was Rs.30,000.

Now the cultivation cost has shot up due to spiralling cost of labour and prices of fertilizers and it works out to Rs.45, 000 to 50,000 per acre. But cotton is now quoting around Rs.3,000 per quintal. "We will be ruined if we are to sell at this rate." "Unless we get at least Rs.10,000 a quintal, we will be in deep trouble" he added. Official sources said the minimum support price for cotton has been hiked by almost 30 per cent in 2012 (for medium staple from Rs.2,800 to Rs.3,600 and for long staple from Rs.3,300 to Rs.3,900).

Cane farmers hope partial decontrol will ensure payment

'Sugar mills should start paying growers for byproducts'

While a large section of farmers has welcomed the partial decontrol of sugar announced recently, some are opposed to it contending that it would hit the common man in the long run.

C. Nallasami, secretary, Federation of Tamil Nadu Agriculturists' Associations, hopes that hereafter there would be no pendency in settling the dues of cane suppliers by the mills as their cash reserves will substantially improve because of the decontrol.

“As the 10 per cent production that they have set aside for levy sugar so far could be sold at the market rate of Rs. 31 a kg as against Rs. 19 a kg they were selling to government for the public distribution system, they would become cash-rich.”

S.A. Chinnasamy, State president of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangham, says this was a benefit that farmers had been hoping for. “There has not been much delay in settling the payments this year though it used to take even months earlier. The Palacode Co-operative Sugar Mills in Dharmapuri district has been settling claims weekly whereas there was some delay in a couple of other co-operative mills.”



Under the new regime of partial decontrol of sugar, farmers feel they should get a higher price by the sugar mills.— PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM

But both of them demand that the current system of not taking the byproducts like molass, bagass, ethanol, and power into account should cease. “As of now only the sugar recovery is taken into consideration for fixing sugar price. It is an unjust and atrocious practice.” Mr. Nallasami demands that farmers be paid for all these byproducts also as mentioned in the Sugarcane Control Act 1966.

However, Mr. Chinnasamy is confident that unlike private sugar mills, co-operative mills will not be able to hide the profit they make because of these byproducts.

The major benefit to the industry because of decontrol is “transparency”, Mr. Nallasami asserts.

However, he is not happy with the current system under which farmers are forced to supply only to a particular mill. “After crying from the rooftop regarding globalisation, how can you force farmers into selling their produce only to a particular mill?,” he says.

However, Aiyilai Siva Suriyan, Tiruchi district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said in a statement that the Rangarajan Committee’s recommendation on sugar decontrol would inflict incalculable harm on farmers, cooperative sugar mills, and consumers.

Therku Matrum Vadakku Ayyan Vaikal Pasanadharar Sangham convener N. Veerasekaran has lambasted the committee as having “betrayed” farmers and “favoured” the private sector. He estimated that mills which procure sugarcane at Rs. 1,500 a tonne are making a profit of Rs. 25,000. Despite such a profit, it is invidious to exempt them even from 10 per cent levy towards PDS.

‘Allow farmers to sell sugar’

C.Nallasami, secretary, Federation of Tamil Nadu Agriculturists’ Associations, has an innovative idea to rescue sugarcane farmers from the travails of poor price fixation. He points out that the Chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Crops and Prices resigned in 2007-08 when his recommendation of Rs. 1,540 per tonne of sugarcane as the statutory minimum price was ignored by the Central government which instead announced Rs. 811.80 per tonne. Hence, Mr. Nallasami does not even want the governments to fix the price for sugarcane. Besides, the government has all along been accusing the cane growers of failing to go in for value addition. As ethanol has become virtually indispensable for mixing with petrol because of the huge outgo towards oil imports, he pleads that all the sugar mills be permitted to produce ethanol.

KJP promises pension to elderly farmers

Karnataka Janata Paksha (KJP) president B.S. Yeddyurappa on Sunday said his party will provide pension to farmers aged above 65 years and extend the Bhagyalakshmi scheme to middle class families if voted to power.

Speaking after releasing the third list of 41 candidates for the ensuing Assembly elections here, Mr. Yeddyurappa said the party’s election manifesto was under preparation and these would be the salient features of the manifesto to be released on April 10.

Mr. Yeddyurappa claimed there has been widespread enthusiasm among general public, particularly the youth, to join the party.

The party had given preference to new faces, including youth, women and people socially backward classes while fielding candidates, the former Chief Minister said.

On the occasion, retired IAS officer S. Puttaswamy and former Jagalur MLA S.V. Ramachandra, who recently resigned from his membership from the Legislative Assembly as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party joined the KJP.

While Mr. Ramachandra will contest from Jagalur, Mr. Puttaswamy will contest from Arakalgud.

Mr. Putaswamy said he quit the Congress as social justice was ignored while giving ticket. Prominent among the candidates figured in KJP's third list are the former BJP MLCs Mohan Limbikai (Hubli-Dharwad West), who is pitted against BJP's Aravind Bellad, and Shivaraj Sajjan (Byadagi).

The list has seven candidates belonging to Scheduled Caste, three belonging to Scheduled Tribe, two each women and Muslim. With the third list, the number of KJP candidates announced has touched 143.

Anxiety grips Adilabad farmers

Worried over getting loans as banks record bad recovery last year



A farmer tilling his field near Chittaguda of Narnoor mandal in Adilabad district. - PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

Farmers in Adilabad have begun preparations for the ensuing kharif season amid anxiety about being able to access institutional finance in the wake of a dismal rate of recovery of crop loans recorded by banks for the just-ended year.

Financial institutions like Adilabad District Cooperative Central Bank (ADCCB) will, in all probability, make book adjustments and commercial banks will once again fall back upon the now well-established custom of middlemen remitting crop loan dues on behalf of farmers, of course by levying a 'charge' for doing so.

While farmers, at least a majority of the seven lakh of them in the district, will be "constrained" to go in for cotton, the banks are likely to use the enhanced scale of finance for cotton to their own benefit.

The sudden jump of over Rs. 1,000 per quintal in the price of cotton towards the end of kharif harvesting is a beckoning factor for farmers while the increased scale of finance from the maximum of Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 29,500 per acre of irrigated fields is being seen as a saviour.

"As the banks will refuse us fresh crop loans this season, we will seek the help of some middlemen to repay the debt on our behalf. The enhanced part of the scale of finance will be sufficient for paying 'interest' to him", Nomula Kishta Reddy of Jainad mandal headquarter explains of the gamut.

“The thrust on loans in agriculture sector will begin in mid-May. We hope to formulate a policy in the interest of farmers by then”, assures M. Damodar Reddy, Chairman of the ADCCB, when faced with the question of sanctioning crop loans in the light of poor recovery.

Meanwhile, it is expected that area under cotton cultivation will exceed last year's about 3.9 lakh hectares despite the trends in the sector of institutional finance. Area under soyabean is also expected to go up as the commodity also commanded a higher price towards the end of season.

The extent of area under cultivation will also see an increase by an estimated 20,000 hectares over the present 6.15 lakh hectares. This will be on account of fresh forest land being brought under agriculture.

Fresh from the farm



nature talk: A view of Surabhi and (below) students at the centre.

Offbeat Surabhi is a one-stop kitchen garden resource centre that is fast becoming a popular pit stop on the ECR

It is impossible to miss the interesting array of green roofs that rise to your left just past the Kottaikadu village, when you drive down the East Coast Road. Located on the roadside at about 110 km from Chennai, this green getaway is an altogether different kind of 'happening place' on the ECR.

A kitchen garden resource centre that combines a massive greenhouse, open farms, restaurant, lawns to unwind upon and informal discussion lounges un-walled from nature, Surabhi is the initiative of Good Governance Guards (GGG).

Inside Surabhi, on some days, you might hear the amazed chatter of bus loads of school children -- the wonder in seeing anything from cabbage and corn to guava and mango trees growing in pots.

On other days, you might see corporate folk in discussion, or families who drive down the road and take a pit stop here. Then, of course, there are the people who walk in to learn all they wanted to know about kitchen gardening, or get material such as seeds, saplings, manure, pesticides and space saving props for urban farming, and observe eco-sensitive practices such as power generation from solar plants and making cooking gas from green wastes, with guides showing the visitors around.

When these folks step out, more often than not, they are left with the thought that urban farming is not only feasible and necessary, but also fun.

“We wanted to set up a model farm to prove that one can grow all sorts of vegetables and fruits in pots”, says 64-year-old S.S. Radhakrishnan, president of GGG, who incidentally gave up his flourishing Customs Tax consultancy to live in and run this farm. “If you aren’t personally around to direct a farm, it doesn’t work,” he says.

Of late, villagers in the vicinity have taken to bringing the fruit and vegetable produce from their backyards to this centre, and have found a new source of income. Meanwhile, people who drive down the highway like Sumana and Ashok, buy their weekly supply of organic vegetables here, at nearly half their price compared to the city. That is because, at Surabhi, the transportation cost of vegetables has not been factored in, which amounts to a few thousand rupees per truckload of vegetables transported to the city.

This gave Radhakrishnan the idea of tying up with cab services plying along the route to stop for a minute at the farm and load in a few cartons of vegetables into their car boots, and drop them at vegetable shops in the city en route their destinations, which would halve vegetable procurement costs at city shops too. He goes on to advocate that the Government lease out its land along highways to people willing to do agriculture there.

“Thousands of acres lie vacant along highways. On the other hand, we are witnessing escalating food prices, not to mention a looming food crisis. If there are many such farms along highways, fresh and less expensive vegetables can be made available to cities,” says Radhakrishnan.

Surabhi can be reached at 9841023448 or e-mailed at reachus@goodgovernanceguards.com

HEMA VIJAY

People who drive down the highway buy their weekly supply of organic vegetables at Surabhi, at nearly half their price compared to the city

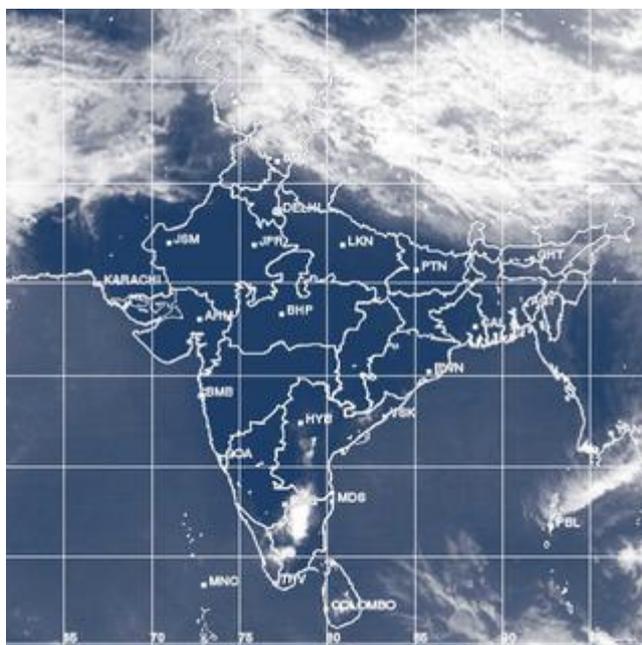
Compensation for crop damage

Farmers in the district were given compensation for crop damage caused by elephants and wild boar during the year 2012-13. Forest department officials said that 12 farmers were paid Rs. 90,900 in the Salem Division and Rs. 1 lakh was given to eight farmers in Attur Division. Another 47 farmers would be paid Rs. 4.17 lakh in few days. Officials said that once the farmers submit applications seeking compensation, the extent of damage would be assessed by the forest officials and forwarded to the government for sanctioning of the amount. The farmers have been told not to disturb or divert the movement of elephants as it would lead to human-animal conflict.

Award for SKM Egg Products

The Erode-based SKM Egg Products Export (India) Limited bagged the Export Excellence Award for 2011-12. The award was presented by the Madras Export Processing Zone for exporters from Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and 100 per cent Export Oriented Units (EOUs) from Tamil Nadu and Union Territory of Puducherry. The SKM Egg Products was selected for the award under the food and agriculture-based industries category.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on April 7th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	36	19	0	22
New Delhi (Sfd)	35	19	0	20
Chandigarh	32	19	0	25

Hissar	35	16	0	39
Bhuntar	29	8	0	104
Shimla	20	13	0	99
Jammu	32	19	0	33
Srinagar	22	9	0	93
Amritsar	31	18	0	4
Patiala	33	17	0	23
Jaipur	36	20	0	7
Udaipur	37	19	0	0
Allahabad	38	18	0	9
Lucknow	36	17	0	1
Varanasi	38	19	0	6
Dehradun	32	15	0	17
Agartala	36	24	0	33
Ahmedabad	40	24	0	0
Bangalore	36	23	0	19
Bhubaneshwar	42	25	0	0
Bhopal	37	19	0	21
Chennai	37	27	0	32
Guwahati	35	17	0	20
Hyderabad	39	25	0	42
Kolkata	38	25	0	1
Mumbai	33	23	0	0
Nagpur	41	21	0	15
Patna	37	20	0	1
Pune	38	17	0	3
Thiruvananthapuram	34	27	0	80
Imphal	30	13	0	72
Shillong	25	13	0	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.

RAIN AT MANY PLACES

RAINFALL Weather was dry over the region.

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

The highest maximum temperature in the region was 40.3°C recorded at Bikaner Airport (Rajasthan).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 09th April

2013: Rain/thundershowers would occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir during next 24 hours and at a few places thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh from tomorrow onwards.

Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan on 09th. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

WARNING: Thunder squall accompanied with hails would occur at one or two places over Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan on 09th.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 09th April 2013: Mainly clear sky.

Water Level

Water level in Periyar dam stood at 112.80 feet with an inflow of 100 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs on Sunday.

In Vaigai dam, water level stood at 45.96 feet with an inflow of 28 cusecs and discharge of 60 cusecs, according to Public Works Department. The combined credit stood at 2,131 mcft. Thekkady recorded a rainfall of 2.6 mm and Kodaikanal recorded a rainfall of 3.6 mm.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 74.60 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 177.78 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs was discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 86.78 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 32 cusecs and 5 cusecs was discharged.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 10.80 feet. It was 27.75 feet in Perunchani, 4.23 feet in Chittar I, 4.33 feet in Chittar II and 2.50 feet in Poigai dam.

Weather Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 71

Wind: normal

Monday, Apr 8

Max Min

32° | 28°

Sunrise: 06:00

Sunset: 06:21

Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Apr 9

Max Min

36° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Apr 10	Thursday Apr 11	Friday Apr 12	Saturday Apr 13	Sunday Apr 14
36° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Overcast	35° 27° Cloudy	35° 27° Cloudy	35° 27° Cloudy

A master in his field

Babu Jagjivan Ram headed the Union ministry of agriculture during two very critical periods: first, from 1967 to '70 and second, from 1974 to '77. In between he served as the defence minister and provided outstanding leadership in the struggle for the liberation of Bangladesh. He thus attended, with great dedication and distinction, to the two pillars of our freedom, captured in the immortal formulation of Lal Bahadur Shastri, namely, "Jai Jawan and Jai Kisan". Babu Jagjivan Ram achieved national admiration and appreciation rather young in his life through his work for giving support and comfort to the victims of the Bihar earthquake of 1934.

Throughout his life he remained a simple person, committed to the Gandhian values of non-violence and secularism. He was truly a son of the soil to whom agriculture remained the noblest of all professions. Even when he was a minister he used to attend to his kitchen garden and ensure that the plants are healthy and happy. He was also fond of growing mushrooms in his house. His unique characteristic was his desire to share good food with others, rather than eating alone. On many occasions I have

received a sudden invitation to come to his house for dinner and share the joy of good and tasty food.

During 1964-67, Bharat Ratna C Subramaniam provided the political leadership and support that led to the green revolution. Those were difficult days in our agricultural history. We were described as a nation leading a 'ship to mouth existence' since the public distribution system depended on the arrival of wheat from the United States under the US government's PL480 programme. The whole world had written off India from the point of view of its ability to feed itself. Indian farmers were described as "lazy and fatalistic" persons. It is in this atmosphere that the green revolution was born.

From that 'ship to mouth existence' of the 1960s, we have now graduated to the state of making access to food a legal right. Such a change in our agricultural destiny happened during the critical years of 1967-70 when Babuji led the ministry of agriculture. When Indira Gandhi invited him in 1967 to join as minister for agriculture and food, he told her that he would do so, but only if he was also made in charge of the irrigation portfolio. This was because of his conviction that irrigation water security holds the key to food security in our country. He also knew that land use decisions are also water use decisions. Therefore, land and water have to be managed in an integrated way. Unfortunately, today this wisdom appears to be absent and there is fragmentation with regard to the political management of the several components of sustainable agriculture.

Babuji was clear that unless farmers get a remuneration price, they would not take an interest in yield-enhancing technologies. In 1968, when the first large scale purchase of the Mexican semi-dwarf wheat variety Lerma Rojo was to be made by the Food Corporation of India, the Agriculture Prices Commission had recommended a difference of about R5 per quintal between red and amber grain varieties. Lerma Rojo, which gave a yield of 4 to 5 tonnes per hectare, had red grains and would have therefore fetched R5 less per quintal. Babuji knew that if such a difference in procurement price was adopted, farmers would lose interest in the cultivation of Lerma Rojo. He called Mr Dias, who was then the food secretary, and me for a discussion on this topic before he announced in Parliament that the government would buy all the wheat offered to it, irrespective of grain colour, at the same price. This one decision of his played a catalytic role in spreading the new high yielding varieties on a large scale during 1968-69 and in subsequent years.

The seeds of the green revolution in India were sown in the fields of the Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack, in the early 1950s through the indica-japonica hybridisation programme, and later in 1963 in the fields of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi and the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. Research on semi-dwarf, non-lodging varieties was started at IARI in the mid-1950s. The arrival and assistance of Dr Norman Borlaug in 1963 helped to accelerate the dwarf wheat breeding programme and purchase time in launching a yield revolution.

The wheat improvement and production programmes were entirely conceived, planned and executed by us. We achieved rapid progress and proved the prophets of doom wrong only because we could achieve synergy among packages of technology, services and public policies. Such a symphonic approach was facilitated first by C Subramaniam and later by Jagjivan Ram.

The year 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the initiation of the semi-dwarf wheat breeding programme that ultimately resulted in the wheat revolution. This development has made it possible for us to plan on conferring a legal right to food on about 70% of our population through the National Food Security Bill currently under the consideration of Parliament. When enacted, the National Food Security Bill of India will be the largest social protection measure against hunger in the world. The transition from 'a ship to mouth' existence of the 1960s to 'right to food' with homegrown food in 2013 marks the brightest chapter in India's agricultural history.

Among the various scientific and public policy initiatives that led to the green revolution of the 1960s, sharply focused inter-disciplinary research and international collaboration are important. Eternal vigilance is the price of stable agriculture and this will call for concerted and continuous attention to soil and plant health as well as resilience to climate behaviour. At the public policy level, assured and remunerative marketing opportunities hold the key to stimulating and sustaining farmers' interest in achieving higher productivity and production. This is the pathway to shaping our agricultural future and to achieving an evergreen revolution in farming. This is the message of Babu Jagjivan Ram to both agricultural scientists and farm women and men.

MS Swaminathan is a Member of Rajya Sabha and an agricultural scientist

The views expressed by the author are personal

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Government sweetener for sugar daddies

COIMBATORE: This is one sweet pill that no one is going to complain about at least for now. The government's decision to partially decontrol the [sugar sector](#) would boost the profits of sugar companies and enable farmers to get quick payments for the cane supplied. But there is a catch. Sugar prices will be completely market determined which is broadly in line with the freeing of petrol from [price controls](#). So, prices could shoot up during years when there is a deficit

production. Consumers would however continue to pay low prices (Rs 13.50 per kg in Tamil Nadu) for sugar purchased at ration shops.

The government move would result in the sugar companies making at least Re 1 more in profits for every kilogram produced. The industry would net Rs 2,500 crore-3,000 crore more in a year and this would boost profit margins of sugar producers by over 10%. Some analysts reckon that profits of sugar companies would increase by as much as 50%. Sugar production is estimated to be around 245 lakh tonnes in the current season (October-September) while consumption is pegged at about 230 lakh tonnes. With an opening stock of 60 lakh tonnes, there is no threat of sugar prices going up this year, top industry officials say.

"A lot of new investments will come into the sector," says Ravindra S Singhvi, Managing Director (MD), EID Parry, which is among the largest sugar producers in the country. "We can enter into long-term contracts and tie-up with institutional customers," he says. There is some cheer for sugarcane farmers as well. They would be able to get payments for cane supplies quickly. With the government tightly controlling supplies from the sector, cane arrears got piled up leading to friction between farmers and sugar mills over delay in payments.

"Since we would get a higher value (for sugar), we would be able to give payments (to farmers) earlier," says M Manickam, MD, Sakthi Sugars. Improved cash flows will enhance liquidity of sugar firms enabling them to settle dues to farmers on time, analysts tracking the sector say. Cane arrears will reduce substantially from the usual peak of 6-7 months following decontrol, according to estimates made by ratings agency [Crisil](#).

However, the centre has left the sugar price mechanism and minimum distance between mills' crop areas within the control of the state government. The centre advises the cane purchase price-known as the fair and remunerative price (FRP)-for companies. However, key sugarcane producing states such as Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu also announce state advised price (SAP) for sugarcane. Interestingly, the Rangarajan committee that advised sugar decontrol favoured abolition of SAP.

State governments would have to float tenders and buy sugar through competitive bidding from mills for supplies to ration shops. This would enable sugar companies, which had to supply 10% of their production to the government at rates lower than prevailing market prices, to get the best possible deal. Sugar mills supply the 10% quota also known as levy sugar at a subsidised rate of around Rs. 19 per kg for distribution to ration shops compared to the current

market price of around Rs 31.

And the icing on the cake is that the restrictions on [sugar imports](#) will also go. Sugar mills can now import sugar freely at a flat 10% duty and sell it in the domestic market. "We are finally out of government shackles," says a top industry official.

Cane arrears will reduce from the usual peak of 6-7 months following decontrol as per estimates made by Crisil. But the Centre has left the sugar price mechanism and minimum distance between mills' crop areas within the control of the state government.

 *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

In scarcity-hit Amreli village, it's a fight between blue bulls and farmers



Men carry water from Aji Dam on the outskirts of Rajkot city.

THE drought-like situation in Charkha village, around 7 km north of Babra town in Amreli district, has put farmers and wild animals in contention over water. While the farmers are dying hard to use scarce water to cultivate crops in tiny areas to compensate for crop failure in monsoon, blue bulls running around in search of water and fodder are damaging this crop. Large herds of blue bulls are found wandering in the periphery of the village. Due to scanty rains last monsoon, lakes and ponds in the villages have gone dry and water in wells have dipped. The village has tracts of social forestry area, the habitat of the wild animals.

During normal years, these bulls, locally called roj, drinking water from these small lakes and ponds. But this year, these sources dried up months ago since there was negligible inflow of water due to poor rains, villagers said. As a result, they go from one farm to another in search of water and food.

But this has put them in confrontation with farmers. Due to deficient monsoon, Kharif crops have failed. A few farmers, who have tube-wells, have grown fodder and vegetable crops. But these crops are coming under attack from these animals of the deer family.

"We have to maintain a vigil round the clock as a small lapse is enough for roj to damage the field. They damage more than they eat," said Mukesh Bhadaria (34), a farmer who has grown guar in around one bigha of land.

Bhadaria said that two persons have to patrol the field at night as the wild animals attack fields during this time. "We have to apologise to our guests who visit us in the evening as we have to reach our farm by fall of the night," Bhadaria further said.

The farmer says that when nobody is around, blue bulls come and drink water from tanks built on farm.

But water is very scarce in this village. "My well is 105 feet deep but there is no water in it. Luckily, I am among the few farmers in the village who have tube-wells with some water in them," he said. Bhadaria had sown cotton in his 17-bigha land but the crop failed due to shortage of rain. "I could barely cover the

cost of seeds. Instead of average 400 kg per bigha, this year the yield has barely been 60 kg." he said.

Magan Bharadia, another farmer, who owns a 30-bigha farmland to the south of the village, said, "I could not sow groundnut last season as the rain came too late and too little. Cotton crop also failed. My guar field is now target of roj. They come to drink water at my farm and also prey on crops. We have complained to forest officials but nothing has happened. However, we have never attacked them since it is a crime. We just shoe them away." Magan's 50-foot-deep well has also dried up.

Though, forest officers said they have made adequate arrangement of water for the wild animal. "There is one active windmill in Babra round and we are also maintaining seven other artificial water points by tankers and hand pumps," Anshuman Sharma, deputy conservator of forest (DCF), Gir (E) division, told The Indian Express.

However, the forest department does not have a proper count of this animal of deer family, officials admitted.

People of the village say there is scarcity of drinking water also as the village is completely dependent on Narmada water supplied every third or fourth day.



KJP manifesto to focus on farmers

Monthly pension to farmers aged 65 years and above, extension of benefits under the social security schemes to middle-class families, a cooperative society exclusively for women and overall development of all constituencies are some of the promises that KJP president BS Yeddyurappa is going to make in his party manifesto.

The former chief minister told reporters here on Sunday that farmers must be entitled to pension as he realised the hardships they face due to the uncertain weather and rains.

On the lines of UPA's decision to set up an exclusive bank for women, Yeddyurappa said that he would also set up a special cooperative society for women.

"I want to ensure women get cheap and hassle-free loans to become independent by taking up business," Yeddyurappa said.

He will also promised to extend the social security schemes, particularly the Bhagyalakshmi, for middle class families.

These issues are going to be KJP's poll plank, he said. He added that the party's election manifesto will be released on April 10.

Announces Third List

Yeddyurappa announced the third list of KJP candidates, which included names of former MLA SV Ramachandra and retired IAS officer BS Puttaswamy.

While Ramachandra is contesting from Jagalur, Puttaswamy has been given the ticket from Arakalagudu.

Both joined the KJP on Sunday.

Puttaswamy, a staunch follower of Congress leader Siddaramaiah, joined the KJP after he failed to get a ticket from the Congress.

Business Standard^{beta}

Food Min to notify sugar decontrol steps next week

On Apr 4, CCEA had decided to partially decontrol sugar sector, the only industry left under govt control



The Food Ministry is likely to notify next week its decision to give freedom to mills to sell sugar in the open market and removing their obligation to supply the sweetener at subsidised rates for ration shops.

On April 4, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had decided to partially decontrol the sugar sector, the only industry left under government control.

"We will notify changes in regulatory controls on sugar mills next week. We are preparing the notification," a senior Food Ministry official told PTI.

As per the CCEA decision, regulated release mechanism, under which sugar quantity for open market sale is fixed by the government, will be abolished with immediate effect.

Besides, mills will be freed from mandatory supply of 10% of their production to the government at cheaper rate to meet ration shop demand.

The sugar to be supplied through ration shops will be purchased by the state governments and the Centre will bear the entire subsidy, which is estimated to double to Rs 5,300 crore after the decontrol.

Currently, sugar is sold at the retail issue price (RIP) of Rs 13.50/kg in ration shops. The difference between RIP and the ex-mill price of Rs 32/kg, which is capped for two years, will be given as subsidy to states.

The other controls on the sugar sector such as pricing, cane reservation area and minimum distance between two mills have been left to the state governments.

Sugar production in India - the world's second biggest producer and largest consumer - is estimated to be 24.5 million tonne this year, as against the annual demand of 22 million tonne.

THE HINDU Business Line

Tomato arrivals likely to remain sluggish

Karnal, April 7: Low availability of stocks pushed tomato prices up by Rs 50-200 a quintal for the different varieties, on Sunday.

Around 700 crates (a crate is 25 kg) of different varieties of tomatoes arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted at Rs 700-2,200.

Around 1,800 crates of varieties such as Anoop, Himsona, Trishul, Himshikhar and Ahmedabad arrived at the markets of Karnal district.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line*, that low arrivals of the stocks mainly pushed tomato prices up.



Arrivals have failed to pickup and we have to wait for another 3-4 weeks for the arrivals to start in full swing, he added.

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

Prices of superior quality increased by Rs 200 and quoted at Rs 1,800-2,200.

Medium quality produce went up by Rs 50 and quoted at 1,100-1,600 while low quality was up Rs 100 at Rs 700-1,000.

On Sunday, not a single crate remained unsold because of low stocks.

Quality of the stocks has improved marginally over the last few days, said market sources.

Following low arrivals and steady domestic demand, market has been ruling in a tight range.

Arrivals are likely to remain sluggish in the coming days.

Traders expect that market may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuation for the next few days, said Vikas Sachdeva.

Exporters buy bulk of tea at Kochi sale

Kochi, April 7: Prices of almost all varieties of tea have declined at the Kochi tea auction, showing a mixed trend in sales.

In Sale No: 14, the quantity on offer in the CTC dust category was 7,54,500 kg.

The market opened on a steady to firm note for good liquoring teas, while others were irregular and lower by Rs 3-5.

As the sale progressed, all varieties were lower by Rs 5-10 particularly towards the close of the sale.

The drop was more in the case of high-priced teas compared to other varieties, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.



Declining price trend: Fair demand for teas

The orthodox dust also witnessed only a fair demand.

The quantity on offer was 20,000 kg and the market was lower by Rs 5-10.

Bulk of the offerings was absorbed by exporters.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted prices at Rs 115-133; RD grades ruled at Rs 130-152; SRD stood at Rs 136-158 and SFD at Rs 135-158.

The leaf sale also witnessed only a fair demand with prices showing a declining trend.

The quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 59,000 kg.

The market for select best Nilgiri broken and whole leaf barely remained steady.

Others were irregular and lower with longer margins of Rs 10-15.

Corresponding fannings declined in value.

A small quantity of medium tippy grades and broken were barely steady.

Others were irregular and lower.

Medium whole leaf registered a weak feature and declined in value. Medium fannings were dearer.

The quantity on offer in CTC leaf was 78,000 kg.

The market was irregular and lower by Rs 3-5.

In the dust category, Injipara (Prm) SFD quoted the best prices of Rs 167 followed by Jayshree (Prm) SRD at Rs 161.

In the leaf grades, Chamraj Green FOP (S) fetched the best prices of Rs 456 followed by Kodanaad TGFOP (S) at Rs 228.

Jackfruit gaining popularity as vegetable in North

Also being used as a substitute for meat in various dishes



Delicious: Also being used as a substitute for meat in various dishes.

Mangalore, April 7: Jackfruit is gaining acceptance as a vegetable, especially as a substitute for meat in dishes, according to an expert.

Shree Padre, who has been working on creating awareness about jackfruit cultivation for the past several years, told *Business Line* that jackfruit is basically used either as a fruit or as a vegetable. It is also a main ingredient in the preparation of many value-added products.

Raw jackfruit, as a vegetable, is gaining popularity in northern India, and a majority of them are being used as a substitute for meat in the preparation of various dishes.

Nearly 40 hotels in Nagpur region are using jackfruit as a substitute for meat in their cuisines. This is a development over the past five years, he said.

Stating that jackfruit satisfies many parameters of meat in the preparation of various food items, he said a majority of the around 50,000 tonnes of jackfruit sent from the south to north go to the kitchen table.

Padre was part of a team to the Vidharba region to study the potential of jackfruit there.

On the jackfruit crop potential in Vidharba region, he said the cultivation is not that big.

Because of the awareness about this crop in the past five years, a minuscule component is coming to the market.

Padre said that raw jackfruit as a substitute for meat has not gained prominence in southern India. With proper extension activities, raw jackfruit can be introduced in south Indian hotels as a substitute for meat, he said.

Prices flat at Coonoor tea sale

Coonoor, April 7: Some 72 per cent of the five-week high volume of 10.27 lakh kg offered for Sale No: 14 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions was sold with prices remaining flat.

Homedale factory's teas, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market when Paras Tea Co., bought it for Rs 192 a kg. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 172, Cross Hill Estate Rs 171, Hittakkal Estate Rs 165 and Shanthi Supreme Rs 161. In all, 131 marks got Rs 125.

Among orthodox teas, Chamraj got Rs 260, Highfield Estate Rs 200, Kilkotagiri Rs 186 and Sutton Rs 180. In all, 40 marks got Rs 125. On the export front, Pakistan did not buy. The CIS bought in a wide range of Rs 83-104.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 85-89 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.

Volatile trend continues in pepper



Kochi, April 7: Pepper futures continued to remain volatile mainly due to the activities of both operators who were engaged in pulling down and pushing up the market. As the April delivery is nearing maturity and the stocks are diminishing, many were seen trying to buy spot.

Tamil Nadu-based dealers were reportedly covering for the grinding industry in Erode, Madurai etc.

Upcountry buyers who prefer high bulk density pepper bought from Kerala while those need low bulk density, bought from Karnataka; 525 and 535 GL pepper at Rs 335 and Rs 345 respectively while 500 and below 500 GL material at Rs 325 a kg. As a result, Karnataka pepper is said to be available in many parts of the north Indian markets in Bihar, Jharkhand, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Delhi as the consumers prefer bold berries and not the bulk density. The limited availability here and the high domestic

prices appear to have paved the way for raising the imports in April- Feb 2012-13 to 13,707.62 tonnes from 10,062 tonnes in the corresponding period the previous fiscal. At the same time, India had shipped out only 13,944 tonnes of pepper in first 11 months of the last fiscal against 21,053 tonnes in the same period last year, sources said. The active contracts, April and May, slipped marginally by Rs 75 and Rs 230 respectively a quintal to close on Saturday at Rs 35,875 and Rs 35,705.

Total turn over showed an increase of 2,183 tonnes to 5,405 tonnes. Total open interest decreased by 327 tonnes last week to 1,793 tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 34,800 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,300 (MG 1).
