



### **Pact signed for Rs. 5000-crore fertilizer plant in Tripura**

The Tripura government, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and a private company signed a tripartite agreement on Tuesday to establish a huge urea fertilizer plant in the State. The State government would have a 10 per cent stake in the Rs. 5,000 crore project which will come up in the Kumarghat area of north Tripura by 2016.

Sudhir Vasudeva, CMD, ONGC, Vice President of the Chambal Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited (CFCL) M.S. Rathore and Secretary of Tripura government Samarjit Bhowmik signed the agreement. Manik Sarkar, State Chief Minister, Power Minister Manik Dey, Industry and Commerce Minister Jitendra Choudhury, and Chief Secretary S.K. Panda were present on the occasion at the civil secretariat.

Officials of the CFCL and the ONGC hoped that permission for transit transportation of fertilizers to the Indian mainland of India could be availed before the commissioning of the plant. "If we get the facility, we can meet the demands of various areas of country and supply fertilisers at a low cost," a CFCL official said.

The Tripura government had long been pursuing companies to set up a fertilizer unit in the State to take advantage of its huge gas reserves.

### **Farmers' festival to begin on April 14**

The Department of Agriculture in association with a few other departments will conduct 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' from April 14 to May 13. A release from the Department says that it along with the Horticulture, Agriculture Engineering, Sericulture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry departments and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will conduct the farmers' festival.

A farmers' chariot will reach the farmers at their farms explaining various facets of improved, scientific agriculture. Similarly, every revenue village will see a meeting involving officials from all departments.

The farmers will also get handbooks on farming techniques.

The release asks farmers to make use of the opportunity.

*A chariot will reach the farmers*

*at their farms explaining various facets of improved, scientific agriculture*

### **Training on preparing food products**

A training on commercial production of fruit products will be held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on April 17 and 18.

According to a TNAU release, trainees will be taught to process fruits into various value-added products like beverages, squash, jam, dehydrated fruits, pickles, fruit bar, candies, etc.

### **Demand Draft**

Those interested can send in a Demand Draft for Rs. 1,000 drawn in favour of Dean (Agricultural Engineering), Coimbatore, to Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003. For details call 0422-6611268.

### **Applications invited from farmers**

The government has decided to allow digging of percolation ponds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on the farm lands owned by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, small and marginal farmers to save rainwater to improve groundwater level.

According to a release from Collector R. Lilly, such percolation ponds should be in the size of 25 mt length, 20 mt breadth and 2 metre depth to save 1,000 cft water. It has been estimated to provide a maximum of Rs. 1.50 lakh for digging a pond.

The ponds would be dug up with the MGNREGS work force and interested farmers were asked to submit their applications at the office the Assistant Director at the local office or the district-level office of Agriculture and Agriculture Engineering. They could also inform over the toll free number 1299.

The government had enhanced the wages to Rs. 148 a day to the beneficiaries of the MGNREGS. A group of 20 beneficiaries should finish the allotted work to get the maximum wages. If there was any shortfall in implementation of the scheme, the public can lodge complaints over the toll free number, the release added.

### **Fodder scheme to provide succour to livestock, farmers**

The State government, through the Department of Animal Husbandry, is taking concrete steps to address fodder scarcity in drought-affected delta districts. For Karur district, a sum of Rs. 47.60 lakh has been sanctioned to implement Drought Relief Fodder Sorghum Programme by assisting farmers to grow irrigated sorghum with an attractive buyback arrangement.

Following the State government's recognition of Karur as a Cauvery delta district, the drought relief measures being extended to other seven delta districts applies to Karur as well.

One among the schemes is the fodder programme which would help address the scarcity of fodder for livestock in the region. Under the scheme, select farmers are being given 16 kg sorghum seeds and also extended cash benefit to the tune of Rs. 6,800 per acre to raise sorghum crop. It is estimated that the cost of production will be Rs. 13,600 per acres and the State government is extending a subsidy of 50 per cent to farmers for raising sorghum.

District Collector S. Jayandhi disbursed the special variety MP Chari sorghum seeds to farmers here to mark the launch of the scheme in Karur district. The target is to cover 700 acres and it is expected that the scheme would generate at least 10 tonnes green fodder in each acre .

The buyback arrangement under the programme would envisage farmers to sell their fodder produced through the milk cooperative societies for being sold to its members at a subsidised price.

At present green fodder is procured at Rs. 2 a kg and in case of dry fodder the purchase price is Rs. 10 a kg but after two months the price would definitely go up resulting in immense benefits to the growers. The variety is a short-duration fodder crop that could be harvested in 65 days under irrigated conditions.

The scheme is being implemented in Tiruchi, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Thanjavur, Pudukottai, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts apart from Karur district.

Similarly the State government is also implementing the Accelerated Fodder Development Programme under which farmers were being encouraged to raise perennial green fodder varieties such as CO-3 and CO-4 to meet fodder requirements.

### **Forest Department growing saplings in nurseries to improve green cover**



Forest Department personnel watering the saplings being raised at the nursery in the Thogarapalli Reserve Forests on Tuesday.— Photo: N. Bashkaran

Tree saplings and seedlings are being raised in the nurseries owned by the Forest Department across the district. Saplings of teak, rosewood, pungan and other varieties were being raised in the division.

An official told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that the department had raised over one lakh saplings in Hosur Forest Division, of which 65,000 were distributed free of cost to different government and private institutions and establishments to mark the birthday of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.

The saplings were distributed to government schools, offices and even private schools with an aim to improve green cover in the district. Last year, the department extended a helping hand to the district administration to plant 2.5 lakh saplings, a target fixed by the then Collector C.N. Maheshwaran. A nursery established in this February in Thogarapalli reserve forest had started raising 15,000 saplings and 5,000 seedlings on 1.5 hectare for free distribution, said, A. Babu, Ranger, Krishnagiri Forest Range.

The department had started filling up troughs with water for the benefit of spotted deer and peacocks in the Thogarapalli forest, Mr. Babu added.

## **Gale dashes banana growers' hopes**

### **Drought-hit ratoons could not withstand the strong winds, say farmers**

Sunday's gale coming after severe drought for the past three months not only uprooted banana trees on hundreds of acres of land in the Kulithalai region of Karur district but also the feeble hope engendered by the growers to salvage something out of a hopeless situation.

Banana growers in the usually fertile Kulithalai-Nangavaram belt of the district were fighting drought-like conditions as water was not available for irrigation in the South Bank Canal and Kattalai High Level Channel that irrigate thousands of acres of banana, paddy, sugarcane, betel vine and other crops. Banana, alongside sugarcane, is the most popular cash crop preferred by farmers in the region. Farmers rely heavily on the banana crop for reaping a bountiful harvest that could keep them going for the next year.

However, this year the water scarcity coupled with scarce rains during crucial periods weakened the banana ratoons planted on thousands of acres in the arc from Krishnarayapuram to Kavandampatti.

"No rain and water to irrigate meant the banana crop struggled to come up strong enough to keep aloft bearing the heavy bunch. For many weeks now, we have been complaining that banana crops were withering due to lack of adequate water and the authorities must do something to salvage the situation.

When we are demanding support for tackling drought, the Sunday gale has simply uprooted the remaining trees in the plantations. It seems everything is lost for us," says S. Manikkam Muthuraja, an elderly farmer, surveying the uprooted banana trunks in his field at Thimmampatti near here.

"Normally the gales used to affect us only in the Tamil month of Chitrai. But this year the gale advanced to Panguni, the last month of the Tamil calendar year and the extending drought

could be one of the factors for the advanced gale in Panguni that has taken the growers by surprise,” say some farmers.

The villages affected by gale and drought include Kulithalai, Parali, Valandur, Thanneerpalli, Kottaimedu, Kandiyur, Myladi, Valayapatti, Panikkampatti, Nachalur, Neithalur, Panaiyur, and adjoining areas of Kulithalai region.

It is feared that almost all banana crops failed due to severe and continuing drought in the belt and whatever withstood the drought the Sunday gale has dismantled.

“We want the State government to take a holistic view of the drought and compensate affected banana growers accordingly,” says deputy secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association Kavandampatti R. Subramanian.

Almost all farmers, including those who purchased water through the lift irrigation to save the standing crop, need to be compensated properly.

With Karur being accorded the delta district status, the drought situation must be addressed accordingly in a just manner as the growers could never get what they have spent on the crop, Mr. Subramanian says.

### **ZREAC to identify research gaps, solve them**

The Southern Zonal Research and Extension Advisory Council (ZREAC) meeting has decided to identify research gaps and devised strategies to solve them.

At the valedictory session on Tuesday, the meet formed crop-wise groups and discussed field problems in major crops like groundnut, paddy, pulses, sugarcane and millets.

ANGRAU Dean (student affairs) Pramod Chandra Kumar asked scientists to use the advanced facilities at the Regional Agricultural Research Stations to address the farmers’ woes, using a biotechnological approach.

Associate Director of Research (RARS) T. Giridhara Krishna presided, while S.V. Agricultural College principal N.V. Naidu sought thorough field testing of crops before their recommendation for large-scale cultivation.

## Three engineers-turned-farmers reap success in capsicum cultivation

They want more youngsters to take up similar vocation



E. Nandakumar at the polygreen house at Gorimedu in Salem where he has cultivated capsicum.-PHOTO: P. GOUTHAM

Three engineering graduates have become role models for the younger generation by cultivating capsicum in the available land within the city limits and reaping rich benefits.

E. Nandakumar (24), a B. Tech (Biotechnology) graduate from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, started capsicum cultivation in his 2,000 sq.m. land at ATC Nagar in Gorimedu, 10 months ago.

While Nandakumar looks after production, his friends P. Karupannan arranges buyers and U. Vishnu Vardhan looks after distribution in local market and supplying to shops in Chennai.

By adopting innovative methods in pest control and using of both organic and inorganic manure, Nandakumar was able to reap 2.5 tonnes of yellow (orebelle) and red (bomby) capsicum varieties in a month.

“The documentation procedures with the bank and horticulture department were too complicated initially and hence obtained assistance from the National Horticulture Board, New Delhi,” Nandakumar says.

“The polygreen house, drip irrigation and the infrastructure are the major component in the project cost that was met by the loan. Field visits during college days helped me to gain knowledge and my professors provide valuable tips in cultivation,” Nandakumar adds.

He said that the less labour intensive project can be started in minimum of 1,000 sq.m. land and farmers should not be afraid of the huge project cost involved. "The market for capsicum is growing due to its health benefits and global buyers, especially Spain and Indonesia, seek at least two tones of capsicum everyday," he says. "The required knowledge about disease identification can be overcome by experience."

'We are planning to form a cluster in the district, so that bulk production would help in exporting the produce,' Nandakumar says and adds that awareness level among farmers is very low and he wants more youngsters to take up the project.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

### **IIT-BHU students develop technology to help farmers**

How about irrigating the farms through a call and message from mobile phone? The budding technocrats of Indian Institute of Technology, [Banaras Hindu University](#) (IIT-BHU) have devised the prototype of a unique technology by utilising kinetic energy that can help farmers and solve many problems like remote irrigation of farms, controlled release of fertilisers and keeping away rodents and birds.

Coming from agricultural background in Haryana, Aman Agrawal, a third year student of electronics of IIT-BHU, who has prepared the device with his [friends](#) 'Krishimaan' explained that the device consists of three cockpits, one of which comprising LED circuits will be monitor the level of water in the farms during irrigation.

Once the water reaches a certain pre-defined level, the low voltage wires placed in the farm will complete the LED circuit with water and thereby send a signal on the farmer's cell phone (connected with the circuit). The farmer can call back from his cell phone to stop the flow of water in the farm at any time.

The system can change the way resources are harnessed in Indian farms and motivate



maximum production by utilising less resources and money.

Vasu Doegar, another team member, said that while one of the cockpit will send controlled ultrasonic waves to keep away the rodents, birds and animals without any damage to the health of [the animals](#) and surrounding human population, the other cockpit, fitted with sensors and different numbers of blades would control the spraying of fertilisers.

The cockpits will run from the kinetic energy of the water falling from the tubewell. "Most of the farmers depend on diesel and petrol to run the agricultural devices. Ours is a smarter and greener alternative, it will reduce pollution and save a lot of money by harnessing the kinetic energy," said Aman.

Professor PK Mishra, coordinator, technology business incubator (TBI), said the students have developed the prototype of the entire system and it is working excellent. The idea given by them is at par with the contemporary need of the farmers and it may be incubated in the TBI, IIT-BHU to help the students developing it further. Team Krishimaan comprising Aman Aggarwal, Vasu Doegar, Rahul Toppo and Aman Jha bagged first position in the recently held all [India business](#) plan competition 'Tech-Agro' organised by Malviya Centre for Innovation Incubation and [Entrepreneurship](#) (MCIIE), IIT-BHU.

Once the product is ready, the students are keen to introduce the system in the canal irrigated areas of Haryana and eastern Uttar Pradesh. "A lot of farmers are not aware about how the renewable sources of energy can be utilised in farming, saving a lot of time and money. The technology is aimed at bringing the farmers at par with global counterparts," informed Aman.

### **Western disturbances expected, harvest wheat now, farmers told**

"Harvest wheat now," suggested Director General of Meteorology, India Meteorological Department, New Delhi. The wheat crop in Punjab might go under stress this season as [Indian Meteorological Department](#) predicts fresh [western disturbances](#) heading towards the north region.

One of which is all set to arrive on Wednesday. The next western disturbance is expected

around April 13 and 14. These disturbances are expected to lead to winds and rain which might have a severe impact on the wheat crop.

"Clouds of risk hovering over farmers this season as we have some active western disturbances lined up for the month of April which might bring down the crop yield," said L S Rathore, Director General of Meteorology, India Meteorological Department, New Delhi, when a Ropar based farmer, M B S Sandhu, asked about the forecast for next 24 days. "Good news is that there will be no hail storm but certainly there would be rain and wind that can damage the crop standing in fields," said Rathore.

"Where crop is mature, nothing can be done, I can only suggest that farmers start harvesting and storing the wheat in safe area," he added.

Rathore also asked farmers to keep a track of "temperature, wind speed and possibility of rainfall for the next three hours" on Nowcast. With upgradation of their equipments, forecasts can be given for longer periods, he added. "Right now, we are able to give an accurate forecast for five days. Soon we will be extending the forecast to seven days and then to 10 days. Thereafter, we will be month long forecast," he said.

"Steps are being taken to reach out to farmers at block level, and not just district level. With proper advisory, they can cut the cost of cultivation and increase production," Chandigarh Met Director Surender Paul said.

Rathore was on an official visit to Chandigarh meteorological centre with Dr along with O P Singh, Deputy Director General of Meteorology.



Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Wednesday, Apr 10

Max    Min

Tomorrow's Forecast









Thursday, Apr 11

Max    Min

Partly Cloudy	33°   27°	Partly Cloudy	37°   27°
Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:59		
Humidity: 70	Sunset: 06:21		
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1010		

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Apr 12	Saturday Apr 13	Sunday Apr 14	Monday Apr 15	Tuesday Apr 16
				
37°   27°	37°   27°	37°   27°	38°   28°	39°   28°
Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny

Airport Weather	Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:59	
Chennai	Humidity: 70	Sunset: 06:21	
	Wind: normal	Barometer: 1010	



Textile Ministry unable to decide on banning cotton export



Registration for cotton exports is all set to cross the exportable surplus of 80 lakh bales (170 kg each) estimated by the Cotton Advisory Board.

But, the Textile Ministry is undecided on whether it should ban exports or release part of the stocks held by the Cotton Corporation of India in the domestic market to cool prices.

“Placing a ban on cotton exports is a politically sensitive issue. Last year, the ban created a lot of bad blood between Textile and the Agriculture ministries. We do not want a repeat of that,” a Textile Ministry official told *Business Line*.

The Ministry is also not sure if it should release a part of the cotton stock held by the public sector Cotton Corporation of India in the domestic market at the current prices.

Since prices are still rising, it could later be held accountable for selling cotton at a lower price when it could have gained by selling at a later date, the official said.

The advisory board advises the Government on cotton policy based on the production and price situation in the domestic and global markets.

### Limit breached

Textile Ministry officials said that the export limit may well have been breached as there is heavy demand in the international market since China is buying cotton to build its stock.

In fact, the Cotton Corporation that makes market intervention purchases when domestic prices fall below the minimum support price has registered 10 lakh bales of cotton with it for exports.

The Directorate-General of Foreign Trade that registers cotton for exports does not seem to be too troubled by the rise in registrations.

“Cotton availability in the country is normal and there are no signs of a shortage. We are not too worried about numbers being breached as the Cotton Advisory Board keeps revising them,” a DGFT official said.

### Prices rise

Domestic textile industry, however, is crying itself hoarse over the increase in prices of cotton that have risen about 15 per cent over the last few months.

A ban on exports would ensure continued availability of cotton in the domestic market and cool prices.

The Textile Ministry is, however, jittery as any ban on exports could lead to protests from the Agriculture Ministry and cotton growing States of Gujarat and Maharashtra, like last year.

Moreover, some might argue that cotton prices are not high enough to justify a ban.

### Releasing the stock

The other option being explored by the Textile Ministry is to ask the Cotton Corporation to release the cotton stock held by it in the market to ease prices.

It has about 25 lakh bales of cotton in its stock.

“The question that is hounding the Textile Ministry is whether it should release its stock at current prices in the domestic market when there are indications that prices would rise further in the coming months. It would lead to losses to the exchequer and the Textile Ministry would be held accountable for that,” the official said.

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**Maharashtra farmers go online to sell their produce**

In a first of its kind initiative, agriculture produce and other goods from 25,000 villages across Maharashtra would soon be available online.

Using computer kiosks, installed in panchayat offices across the State, farmers would be able to offer and sell their produce in the market.

The computer infrastructure has been created under the 'e-panchayat'— a nation-wide IT programme initiated by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

In Maharashtra, the programme is being implemented as 'Sanganakiya Grameen Maharashtra', a project of the State Rural Development Department.

Under the project, certificates such as birth, death, marriage and caste are being issued. The accounts of the panchayats are also managed with the help of computers.

### Domain names

State nodal officer for the project, Archana Walzade, told *Business Line* that the Maharashtra Government has already initiated the process of registering domain names for all panchayats.

On the Webpage of each panchayat, local information of the village along with available inventory of agriculture produce would be updated regularly.

The information would be collated using software, helping customers to buy from the farmers directly, in turn, eliminating middle-men.

"We are looking at tying up with logistics companies for shipping the goods to customers," Walzade said.

She said that 25,000 panchayat villages have already been connected, while the remaining 2,982 located in remote areas would soon go online. Technology options like VSAT are being explored.

A VSAT is a satellite ground station that offers data connectivity.

Basant Sinha, CEO (IT and Rural Business), Sixth Dimension Business Solutions, said that the idea of using computer connectivity in rural areas for trading in agriculture products is 'very innovative'. It will help remove middlemen from the transactions, "Many a time they pocket all the profits in trade," he said.

The Panchayati Raj Ministry, using funds available under the 13th Finance Commission, has invested in a computer, printer and network connectivity for over 25,000 panchayat offices.

The software developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) was installed for various applications.

Dedicated teams of computer operators and engineers have been appointed for maintaining the network.

The NIC is a national body, which provides e-governance solutions.

A back of the envelope calculation suggests that about Rs 125 crore has been invested for hardware and about Rs 240 crore is required annually as expenses that include salaries and other consumables.

From April 1, all the 25,000 village kiosks are live and are providing 19 documents and certificates for the rural population.

### Yet to pick up

Sinha, who was earlier COO of SREI Sahaj e-Village, said that trading will gain momentum, when an e-commerce platform gets launched.

Similar ventures such as ITC e-choupal have been a resounding success, he added.

Agriculture expert Raosaheb Pujari said that currently few farmers use the Internet for trading. With better connectivity, the number of farmers who trade will increase dramatically.

E-commerce will take root in rural areas, he said.

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## Japanese scientists scan Indian Ocean for monsoon trap

Japanese scientists are keeping a close watch of the Indian Ocean where a suspected road block is threatening to ambush this year's monsoon.

Called Indian Ocean Dipole, this refers to seesawing of temperatures in the Indian Ocean to the south-east and south-west of mainland India.

### ADVERSE IMPACT

A team lead by Toshio Yamagata at Tokyo-based Regional Institute of Global Change had discovered this years ago as also its impact on the Indian monsoon.

The monsoon is impacted when East Indian Ocean is warmer relative to the west (negative phase of Indian Ocean Dipole) as is suspected would be the case this year.

When the reverse (positive phase) occurs, monsoon benefits from warming of the west Indian Ocean – as in last year when it emerged midway from nowhere and saved the season from being a total disaster.

### DRIER WEATHER

“Our SINTEX-F model here predicts a negative dipole this year,” says Swadhin Behera, team leader, Climate Variation Predictability and Applicability Research Programme, at the centre.

A negative phase usually means drier than normal conditions for most of mainland India – particularly parts of North-East, central and North-West. This may not good news for India after suffering from a bad first half of the monsoon last year, Behera said in an e-mailed communication to *Business Line*.

### PRESENT CONDITIONS

“Present conditions in the Indian Ocean also favour a negative dipole in support of the SINTEX-F predictions,” he explained.



“However, we are a bit cautious this year after the model failed first time last year to predict the turnaround from negative to a positive dipole phase. We will keep watching the ocean conditions for next couple of months and change the outlooks if necessary.”

Separately, he said that the SINTEC-F model has predicted that the neutral (neither El Nino nor La Nina) state would hold in the Pacific, which is comforting for monsoon.

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### **Demand boosts coconut oil; copra rules flat**



A steady trend continued in coconut oil prices in Kerala and Tamil Nadu with local demand rising.

This pushed up prices to Rs 64.50 a kg in Kerala (Rs 62) and Rs 62 in Tamil Nadu (Rs 61.75).

Thalath Mahamood, former President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), said that the upward trend is likely to continue for the next couple of days with the interest shown by upcountry buyers.

However, copra prices remained at the same level reported last week at Rs 4,450 a quintal in Kerala (Rs 4,500) and Rs 4,200 in Tamil Nadu, the same reported last week, he said. Other

edible oils such as palm oil ruled at Rs 53/kg (Rs 51) and palm kernel oil at Rs 55, quoted at the same level last week.

He pointed out that local cooperative societies have started procuring raw coconuts from markets in Kerala in a limited scale at Rs 16 a kg bringing much relief to farmers. However, the association is concerned about that absence of a proper copra procurement drive by the designated agencies. A proper procurement drive, he said, would definitely revive the market especially with the starting of the season in Tamil Nadu from May. The season in Kerala had already started, he said, adding that this has necessitated good procurement initiative to fetch better price for farmers.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member of COMA, said though the market is ruling in a steady line, the demand is still weak due to the absence of a sound corporate buying. This is because other edible oils are still cheaper.

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### **TN to push hybrid grape cultivation among farmers**



Tamil Nadu government is looking at ways to encourage farmers to cultivate hybrid varieties of grapes, which have good demand in overseas markets.

“Through our Grapes Research Centre, we have been trying to find ways and means for cultivating hybrid grapes and encourage farmers in it,” Agriculture Minister S Damodaran told the State Assembly.

He was replying to Andipatti MLA Thangamiselvan (AIADMK), who requested the government to look into ways for better grapes cultivation and sought more subsidy.

The move aims to help farmers involved in grapes cultivation in the state to generate higher income.

While farmers in Madurai and Theni districts were getting low profits, farmers in Maharashtra were yielding good returns, because they were cultivating hybrid varieties, added Damodaran.

### **Wheat harvest seen at record on high-yield seeds**

**Production in the year ending June may be higher than the 94.9 mn tonnes harvested a year earlier**



Wheat harvest in India, the second- biggest grower, may reach a record for a sixth straight year after farmers increased use of high-yielding seeds and winter rains boosted crop prospects, a state-run researcher said.

Production in the year ending June may exceed 94.9 million tonnes harvested a year earlier, Indu Sharma, director at the Directorate of Wheat Research, said in a phone interview yesterday. The agriculture ministry predicts the crop to drop to 92.3 million tonnes this year.

A bigger harvest may prompt India to increase exports as it runs out of space to store the grain, potentially reducing global food costs, which fell for a fifth month in February. The country has approved shipments of 9.5 million tonnes from state reserves since July as inventories expanded, according to the food ministry. Futures slumped to a nine-month low in Chicago early this month on signs that expanding supplies will outpace demand amid concern that global

growth will falter.

"The government is sitting on a huge stockpile and if the harvest is going to be better it is natural for the government to go for more exports," said Prasoon Mathur, an analyst at Religare Commodities Ltd. "If huge quantity is exported some pressure on global prices may be seen."

The contract for May delivery fell 0.3 per cent to \$7.105 a bushel in Chicago at 4:07 pm in Mumbai. Futures tumbled to \$6.5975 on April 1, the lowest for a most-active contract since June 20. The contract for May delivery on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Ltd. rose as much as 0.8 per cent to Rs 1,417 per 100 kg (\$26) and was at Rs 1,412.

### **Rising inventories**

State stockpiles expanded 27 per cent to 27.1 million tonnes at the start of last month. The government plans to boost purchases from farmers to 44 million tonnes in the marketing year that began April 1 from 38.1 million a year earlier, the food ministry said February 19.

Farmers have begun harvesting in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh states and yields look better than a year earlier, said Veena Sharma, secretary of the Roller Flour Millers Federation of India. Crop arrivals will accelerate in about 10 days as rains in some areas have delayed harvest, she said.

"High-yielding varieties and timely sowing by farmers in high production areas will help a harvest better than last year," Sharma said. "Effective and timely rains in February were good for the crop. The temperatures have been conducive."

Wheat exports from India were 4.03 million tonnes between April 1, 2012 and February 22, according to the food ministry.

### **World coffee exports up 9.6% in Oct-Feb**

**Exports from India, on the other hand, were down marginally in the October-February period**

Global coffee exports rose by 9.6 per cent to 46.5 million bags in the first five months of the current coffee year on significant rise in shipments from Indonesia and Vietnam, according to

the International Coffee Organisation (ICO).

Exports from India, on the other hand, were down marginally in the October-February period.

The worldwide coffee shipments stood at 42.42 million bags (of 60 kg each) in the same period of the 2011-12 coffee year (October-September), the global body said.

"Exports in February 2013 reached 8.6 million bags, bringing the total volume for the first five months of the coffee year to 46.5 million bags," ICO said in a report.

The rise in shipments during the October-February period was mostly due to increased exports of robusta varieties, along with small increases in Colombian Milds and Brazilian Naturals, it said.

Export from Brazil, the world's largest coffee exporter, fell slightly to 13.40 million bags during October-February, from 13.5 million bags in the same period last year.

However, the shipments from Vietnam, the world's second largest coffee exports, rose to 10.25 million bags from 8.7 million bags, while exports from Indonesia increased to 4.92 million bags from 2.61 million bags in the review period.

Exports from Colombia rose to 3.56 million bags from 3.33 million bags in the said period. Whereas exports from India marginally declined to 1.77 million bags in the first five months of the 2012-13 coffee year from 1.92 million bags in the year-ago period.

In terms of world production in the 2012-13 crop year, ICO said that the total is now estimated at 144.6 million bags, a 6.4 per cent increase on the previous year.

"The damage caused by coffee leaf rust in Central America has been compensated by increased production in other countries, particularly Brazil, Indonesia and Ethiopia," it said, adding that the current outbreak of coffee leaf rust in Central America is considered one of the worst ever recorded.

Coffee production in crop year 2012-13 has been severely affected in Central America and it is likely that the impact on the 2013-14 crop will be even worse, it added.

### **Crude palm oil weakens on sluggish demand**

#### **Prices weakened owing to sufficient supplies**

Crude palm oil futures for May weakened by 60 paise, or 0.13% to Rs 468.30 per 10 kg in 356 lots.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the April contract traded lower by 50 paise, or 0.11% to Rs 467 per 10 kg in 105 lots.

Prices weakened owing to sluggish spot market demand against sufficient supplies.