



### **Steps to improve irrigation sought**

A Round Table on 'Agriculture: Water and Power' had speakers from different political parties demanding that the government take concrete steps to improve water sources to help farmers.

Participants at the discussion convened by the Neelam Rajasekhara Reddy Research Centre (NRRRC) of the Chandra Rajeswara Rao (CRR) Foundation for Social Progress wanted a comprehensive rejuvenation plan to increase the efficiency of the approximately 70,000 minor irrigation (MI) tanks in the State.

By taking up works like de-silting the tanks and strengthening the bunds, the twin objectives of conserving water by preventing run-off and facilitating percolation of water into the ground could be achieved, they said. Among those who voiced their opinions were President and Working President of the A.P. Rythu Sangham, Pasya Padma and K. Ramakrishna, respectively and Vice-President of the A.P. Rythu Sangham, affiliated to the CPI-M, S. Malla Reddy.

Other participants included President of the Farmers' Wing of YSR Congress Party, M.V.S. Nagi Reddy, General Secretary of Telugu Rythu (Telugu Desam Party), N. Venkateswara Rao and former MP S. Ramachandra Reddy and Secretary of the CRR Foundation, Chennakesava Rao.

While the NRRRC's Treasurer P.S.V. Prasad presided, its Director T. Lakshminarayana presented a paper outlining the challenges and suggestions on the way forward. He recalled the NRRRC had initiated an in-depth study titled 'Power Generation – Rational Utilization and harnessing'.

Mr. Lakshminarayana regretted that while the government agreed that water was the basic right of a farmer, it was unfortunately becoming scarcer by the day. With MI tanks being the way they are and with the groundwater table receding into the depths, it now required more energy to draw the water out.

### **Central team visits drought-affected areas**

A Central team headed by Sanjay Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, toured Kurnool district to assess the drought situation during the kharif season of 2012 on Sunday.

Team members include K.K. Roy, Director of Ministry of Agriculture, Prem Sen, SE, Central Water Commission, K. Manoranjan, Directorate of Tobacco and Nanda Kumar, Director Department of Animal Husbandry.

The team is likely to rely on statistics to assess the impact of drought during kharif season. The team visited Pyalakurthi near Kodumur and Karivemula in Devanakonda mandal.

The team leader told farmers that they would not be able to see the extent of damage that happened 18 months ago but would go through the statistics and examine the responses of the stakeholders.

Results of crop-cutting experiments, water table, drinking water sources, nature of water supply systems, rainfall and availability of fodder for cattle would be the critical inputs.

### **Drought-hit farmers pour out their woes**

Several farmers who owned lands and cattle in Galiveedu mandal in Rayachoti constituency in Kadapa district, but turned into labourers under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme owing to severe drought for the fourth successive year, appealed to the Central drought team members on Sunday to provide work for at least 200 days an year to provide succour to them.

The Central team headed by Kalyan Chakravarthy comprising Renuka Kumar, Deenanath, Manas Chowdary, Balasubrahmanian and Vinod Kumar inspected the severely drought-hit Veligallu Colony, Pyrampalle, Yerradoddipalle and Kapavandlapalle in Galiveedu mandal and Varige in Rayachoti mandal. People, particularly women, obstructed the convoy at Yerradoddipalle and Kadapavandlapalle and appealed for supply of drinking water by tankers.

A woman farmer Manjula of Veligallu Colony, who owned 10 acres of agricultural land and 15 cows lamented that she had no option but to turn a labourer owing to acute scarcity of irrigation water and fodder. She lamented that a borewell sunk by spending Rs. 1.50 lakh did not yield water but left her in debt. Two more farmers Veerabhadraiah and Ramanamma pleaded for increasing the number of days of work under NREGS to 200 an year, from 150 days at present.

The Central team inspected parched fields near Sivalayam at Gantimadugu in Veligally Colony and watched a photo exhibition arranged there. YSR Congress MLA G. Srikanth Reddy told the team that borewells sunk up to a depth of 700 feet were not yielding water and due to the grim situation, farmers were selling away the “mangalasutra” of their spouses.

District Collector Kona Sasidhar explained to the team that successive droughts and grave depletion of ground water in the area led to dismal crop cultivation forcing farmers to work as labourers. Local people said little water available was fluoride-hit and diseases such as chikungunya plagued them.

### **Allowance suggested**

The Collector suggested disbursement of special allowance under NREGS to aged women labourers during summer. People of Pyrampalle lamented that unable to purchase fodder by spending thousands of farmers, they had been selling cattle to slaughter houses. Children's education and maintenance of their families have become herculean tasks, they said. Drought severe

Anantapur Staff Reporter adds: “The drought has been very severe and the conditions pathetic”. This was the response of the Central team which visited Anantapur district for field level enquiries into the severity of the drought suffered by the district.

Anantapur district, for the third consecutive year now, has been suffering severe droughts – but none as severe as this year – with drinking water becoming scarce in more than sixty percent of the district.

“I have invested all I had for drilling four bores in my four acres of agriculture land, after selling 50 sheep but in vain. I not able to feed my family at least twice a day,” said a sobbing Narasimhappa of the Korevandla palli village of the Gorantla mandal evoking a sympathetic response from the team who were apparently taken aback at the poverty that the drought had brought to the people of the district. Meanwhile, the district administration gave a dossier to the visiting team requesting funds to the tune of Rs 1065.32 crores to mitigate the effects of the drought in the district. While Rs 648.88 crores has been asked for extending crop loans to farmers in the district, Rs 94.59 crores for rural drinking water and Rs 20.93 crores providing dry fodder to the cattle in the district besides conducting cattle camps.

Similarly, Rs 33.80 crores has been asked for extension of the micro irrigation facilities in over 5000 hectares through Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project (APMIP) in the district and Rs 250 crores for handloom workers. The drought assessment team, which left for Hyderabad is scheduled to meet the Chief Minister and other related Ministers and officials before finalising and submitting a report to the Government of India.

### **Central team interacts with villagers**

Mahabubnagar Correspondent adds: Agricultural joint secretary of Union government Sanjeev Gupata who led the Central drought team said that they would submit a detailed report to about prevailing drought conditions in Mahabubnagar district.

The Central team visited several villages in Amangal, Veldanda, Jadcherla, Addakal and Kothakota mandals on Sunday to assess the drought conditions in the district.

The team interacted with the villagers.

The villagers informed them about the drinking water scarcity, fodder scarcity and depleting ground water level. The team members also held discussions with officials and asked about the deficit rainfall for the current year and previous year. The team members also asked the villagers whether they were being supplied drinking water through tankers.

*I owned 10 acres of agricultural land and 15 cows but had no other option but to turn a labourer owing to acute scarcity of irrigation water and fodder, says a woman farmer Manjula of Kadapa district.*

*I invested all I had for drilling four borewells in my four acres of agriculture land but in vain. I am not even able to feed my family at least twice a day, laments Narasimhappa of Anantapur district*

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**Crop production will double in three years, says Agriculture Minister**

**Field visits to be organised as part of Uzhavar Thiruvizha**



Artistic display: S Damodaran, Minister for Agriculture (left), M.S.M Anandan, Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (second left) and K.V Ramalingam, Minister for Public Works, at the 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' in Tirupur on Sunday. Mayor A. Vishlakshi is also in the picture.-Photo: M.Balaji

Minister for Agriculture S. Damodaran on Sunday inaugurated a mega farmers' festival - 'Uzhavar Thiruvizha', organised by Department of Agriculture to disseminate the latest farming technologies to farmers in the district and thereby meet the production targets envisaged under 'Second Green Revolution'.

"Under the 'Second Green Revolution' underway in the State, it has been planned to double the crop production and increase the revenue of farmers threefold over a period of three years ending 2015," Joint Director of Agriculture Mohammed Kalimullah Sherif said.

The 'Uzhavar Thiruvizha', to be held till May 20, would not only cover the farmers involved in raising agriculture crops but also those in the fields of horticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry and fisheries.

As part of the festival, officials from various departments would be carrying out field visits to educate farmers on conservation and judicious use of water resources, importance of periodic soil testing and pest control techniques.

Minister Mr. Damodaran released a handbook on the 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' in the presence of Minister for Public Works K.V.Ramalingam, Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment, District Panchayat Chairman M. Shanmugam, District Collector G. Govindaraj, Agriculture Director M. Rajendran, Mayor Visalakshi Appukutty and also Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy.

The Ministers distributed financial assistance and farm appliances worth Rs. 72.42 lakh to 114 beneficiaries at the function.

Hybrid agriculture crop varieties and farm gadgets were displayed at an exhibition held on the sidelines of the inaugural of the festival here.

A total of 15 farmers were given prizes for maintaining the free goats and sheep distributed to them under a government scheme, in accordance with guidelines prescribed.

### **Adopt SRI, paddy farmers urged**

#### **Collector inaugurates Uzhavar Peruvizha in Thanjavur**



Collector K. Baskaran and Rangasamy and Rathinasamy, MLAs distributing farm machinery at Uzhavar Peruvizha which was inaugurated in Thanjavur on Sunday.— PHOTO: B.

VELANKANNI RAJ

District Collector K. Baskaran has appealed to farmers to follow water efficient methods such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI) for paddy cultivation in the district.

Inaugurating the Uzhavar Peruvizha, to be held in all 14 panchayat unions for a month till May 15, the Collector said that last year SRI method of cultivation was taken up on 84,391 hectares of land in 84 villages.

He asked the local body representatives such as panchayat union presidents and panchayat presidents to help in the success of Uzhavar Peruvizha by carrying the message of doubling production and increasing income three times.

Uzhavar Peruvizhas are held as part of ushering in the second green revolution.

The Collector flagged off 14 mobile vans, christened Uzhavar Peruvizha rathams, with soil testing and other facilities, on the occasion.

The Collector distributed fodder estimated at Rs. 10,000 each to 10 farmers who had reared the milch animals (cows) given to them well and fodder worth Rs. 19,500 each to 15 farmers who had reared the goats well.

The Collector said that cows had been distributed to 1,200 beneficiaries in 24 villages. Goats have been distributed to 10,733 farmers in 219 villages.

M. Rangasamy and M. Rathnasamy, MLAs, Savithiri Gopal, Chairperson of Thanjavur Municipality, Amutharani Ravichandran, Chairperson of Thanjavur District Panchayat Council, Mohammed Tahiya, Joint Director of Agriculture, Thanjavur district participated in the function.

### **Flagged off**

Flagging off of the special ratham and awareness rally of students and mini exhibition of various departments on the achievements of the government marked the inauguration of the month long farmers festival in Tiruvarur district on Sunday.

R. Kamaraj, Food Minister, flagged off the ratham titled 'second green revolution in the field of agriculture' at a function at Alangudi village.

The State government had earmarked Rs. 140 crore for the provision of compensation to farmers who suffered crop loss due to the serious drought situation prevailing in the State.

The farmers festivals were planned to provide assistance on new technologies for augmenting the crop production by coordinating the efforts of various departments.

District Collector S. Natarajan presided over the function. G. Ganesan, Joint Director of Agriculture and K. Mayilvaganan, Deputy Director of Agriculture, spoke.

### **A chance to farmers**

Staff Reporter from Karur writes:

The State government has always been benevolent to suffering farmers. Chief Minister Jayalalithaa has done yeoman service to their betterment by implementing schemes to meet their specific requirements, Transport Minister V. Senthil Balaji has said in Karur on Sunday.

The Minister, who inaugurated the Uzhavar Peruvizha, urged officials from various line departments to sensitise farmers on the opportunities open to them and pave the way for a second green revolution, the cherished dream of the Chief Minister.

Farmers' festival offered a chance to farmers to get rejuvenated by accessing recent technology, getting to know about research and development in various agricultural disciplines, experience sharing with peer groups, adapting latest know-how to their situations and so on.

District Collector S. Jayandhi, Karur MP M. Thambi Durai, Krishnarayapuram MLA S. Kamaraj, Joint Director of Agriculture M. Deivendran, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies Santhanam, and Deputy Director of Horticulture Sadasivam spoke.

### **Distributed**

The District Collector C. Manoharan distributed farm equipments and welfare assistance worth Rs. Three lakhs to farmers at the inaugural of the farmers festival programme in Killanur village in Pudukottai district on Sunday.

The collector said farmers festivals would be held in all village panchayats in the 13 unions till May 20. The officials of different departments would explain the programmes being implemented for the benefit of the farming community. The farmers should take advantage of these schemes for augmenting the agricultural produce.

V. C. Ramaiah, president of the District Panchayat, K. Nagarajan, District Revenue Officer, P. M. Perumal, Joint Director of Agriculture, John Joseph, deputy director of Agricultural



engineering, N. Annamalai, deputy director of Agricultural Marketing, Vijayakumar, deputy director of Horticulture, and Vairavan, head of the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, spoke.

### **Existing price of turmeric not remunerative, say farmers**

Though the turmeric crop size in Tamil Nadu has witnessed a sharp fall and the arrivals during the current season are quite thin compared with the last year, the prices of the yellow spice have not picked up as expected by the farming community.

Except the hybrid crop, the prices of many varieties continue to hover around Rs. 7,500 to Rs. 8,500 a tonne, which according to farmers was not remunerative.

“The actual demand from market has not picked up. Only the stockists are buying the yellow spice as there is a general perception among them that there will be a significant rise in the prices in the future. The absence of demand keeps the prices low,” Ulavan Producers Company vice-chairman D. Venkateshwaran says.

“But the graded turmeric (hybrid variety) fetches about Rs. 9,000 to Rs. 12,000 in the market,” he adds.

### **Production cost**

The farming community say that the current prices are not remunerative as there is a steep increase in the cost of cultivation. “The rates of inputs including fertilisers and the labour cost have gone up sharply. The price of a 50-kg DAP fertiliser, which stood at Rs. 486 a year ago, now costs Rs. 1,300. A farmer is spending at least Rs. 9,000 to Rs. 9,500 to produce a quintal of turmeric. Only when a farmer gets Rs. 10,000 plus for a quintal, he will be able to make a little profit from the cultivation of turmeric,” points out Turmeric Farmers Association of India president P.K. Deivasigamani.

Traders however claim that there will not be any significant rise in the prices till June this year. The lower production forecast may propel slight gains in turmeric prices. Even if the demand picks up significantly, the prices may not go beyond Rs. 12,000 a quintal, they say.

The prices of yellow spice registered a record high of Rs. 17,000 a quintal in November 2010. As a result, the total production went up to 65 lakh bags in the year 2011 and 90 lakh bags in 2012 against an average production of 40-42 lakh bags.

This forced the prices to plunge to a low of Rs. 4,600 in September 2011. The prices went further down to Rs. 3,350 a quintal by mid-2012. Then, the crop has recovered gradually this year.

India is the world's largest turmeric exporter accounting for 60 per cent of the world turmeric exports. Erode is one of the largest trading centres for the yellow spice.

### Farmers' festival begins in districts



Green revolution: Agriculture products on display at the Farmers Festival held at Rasingapuram in Theni district on Sunday; (Right) propaganda vans in Ramanathapuram.— Photos: G. Karthikeyan and L. Balachandar



“Mechanisation of farm activities and adoption of modern agriculture practices are the need of the hour”

Mechanisation of farm activities and adoption of modern agriculture practices are the need of the hour not only to double food production but also to boost farmers’ income by scaling down production costs, said Finance Minister O. Paneerselvam.

Inaugurating the farmers’ festival at Rasingapuram in Bodi union on Sunday, he said that with farmers confronting growing scarcity of water for irrigation, labour shortage and increase in other input costs, modern tools and advanced technologies will play a crucial role in minimising use of water, fertilizers and other inputs.

Uncultivable lands could be converted into cultivable lands owing to minimum use of water thereby increasing food production.

To intensify campaign, a propaganda van will tour all villages and campaign on use of inputs and offer latest technologies. Soil testing will be done at villages and soil cards will be given to farmers to enable them to choose the suitable crop. Massive awareness on modern and

sustainable agriculture practices among farmers was necessary to achieve desired goals in food production, he pointed out.

The State Government had allocated Rs.5,181 crore for development of agriculture and for implementation of farmers welfare scheme. It has also been hiring farm equipment for those who could not afford to buy them, he noted. Collector K.S. Palanisamy said that similar festivals will be held at 101 villages in the district in phased manner.

### **Dindigul**

Field demonstration showcasing control of white flies in horticulture crops using yellow trap method and benefits of drip irrigation were conducted at the farmers' festival held in the district.

Inaugurating the festival at Sendurai village, Minister for Power R. Viswanathan said that farmers' festival was a platform to extend latest technologies and modern agriculture practices to farmers.

Collector N. Venkatachalam said that modern agri-equipment and models of recent scientific advancements in irrigation and pest management displayed at agri-expos will enlighten the farmers.

### **Ramanathapuram**

District Collector K. Nanthakumar launched 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' in the district by flagging off publicity and propaganda vans on Tamil New Year's Day at the Collectorate here.

The Collector flagged off 11 propaganda vans, one each for the 11 blocks in the district to disseminate to the farmers, the latest technologies in agriculture and sensitise them on the second green revolution programme unveiled by the State government to double crop production and increase three fold income of the farmers. A team of officials from the Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Agriculture Marketing, Agriculture Engineering, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Cooperation, lead bank and NABARD would interact with the farmers during the Peruvizha and transfer the latest technologies in crop production and integrated farming, Joint Director of Agriculture Ka.Sakthimohan said.

He said the teams would cover more than 1.2 lakh farmers in the district, by visiting all the 400 revenue villages during the Peruvizha from April 14 to May 20. The propaganda team would meet about 300 farmers in each revenue village, he said.

### **Sivaganga**

In Sivaganga, Collector V. Rajaraman launched the Uzhavar Peruvizha at Sarugani revenue village in Devakottai block. The Collector also distributed prizes to farmers who had reared well free goats and cows distributed by the government.

The Collector flagged off 12 publicity and propaganda vans, one each for the 12 blocks on the occasion. Official sources said more than 2 lakh farmers in 521 revenue villages in the district would be covered during the Peruvizha.

### **Virudhunagar**

'Uzhavar Peruvizha' commenced in 505 villages in the district. District Revenue Officer R. Raju flagged off the propaganda vehicles. Sixteen departments are participating in the event.

### **Committee for drought assessment of non-Delta districts soon**

The Chief Minister will soon form a committee of Ministers to assess the impact of drought in non-Delta districts and announce a relief package for those farmers, Agriculture Minister S. Damodharan said. He was speaking at the launch of 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' in Sultanpet, near here, on Sunday.

The committee that visited Delta districts to assess loss due to drought would submit a report to the Chief Minister. These were challenging times for the farmers, who were forced to adopt new techniques to reap profit. The committee had come to the farmer's rescue at the correct time. Director, Agriculture Department, M. Rajendran said that by adopting a system having rice-intensification technique, the State planned to increase paddy production to 1.30 lakh tonnes.

Last year the target was 1 lakh metric tonne. The Department would encourage the remaining 70 per cent paddy farmers to adopt the technique. Collector M. Karunakaran, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy, and Joint Director, Agriculture Lakshmi Raj took part in the launch.



## **Help sought to distribute farm equipment free of cost to farmers**

### **Uzhavar Thiruvizha begins in Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri**

The second edition of the Uzhavar Thiruvizha (Farmers' Festival) was celebrated at Kengaleri village near Krishnagiri on Sunday.

K.M. Ramagoundar, State Secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, addressing the function, sought the government's help in distributing farm equipment free of cost to all farmers.

District Collector T.P. Rajesh flagged off a campaign and released farmers' hand book.

He also gave away welfare assistance and distributed farm equipment to the tune of Rs. 14.79 lakh to 96 farmers.

### **Participants**

C. Prakasam, District Revenue Officer, V. Gunasekaran, Joint Director, Agriculture, Periyasamy, Joint Director, Horticulture, P. Manoharan, Revenue Divisional Officer, S. Maheshwaran, Krishnagiri Tahsildhar, among others participated.

### **Farmers focus on revival of traditional crops**

### **Special mass contact programme conducted at Kenthorai**



For bountiful harvests: Farmers participating in a mass contact programme at Kenthorai near Udthagamandalam on Sunday.-Photo: Special Arrangement

With focus on the need to revive cultivation of traditional crops, an 'Uzhavar Thiruvizha' was organised by the Department of Horticulture at Kenthorai near here on Sunday.

While officials pointed out that it was a special mass contact programme to bring about a second green revolution in the state by doubling yield and tripling income, farmers said that they would extend their support and evinced interest in reviving cultivation traditional food items like ragi, samai, wheat, buck wheat and amaranthes.

Addressing the gathering, the head, Horticulture Research Station (HRS), N. Selvaraj, said that farmers should switch over to organic farming.

Cautioning that indiscriminate use of chemical inputs like fertilizers and weedicides is beginning to take its toll, he said that in places like Adhigaratty, signs of people getting affected have become visible.

The Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies R. Vanitha urged farmers to make use of the facilities being extended by the cooperative banks.

## **Cattle**

The Joint Director of Animal Husbandry in-charge Nagaraj said that since the population of cattle is decreasing here, people should go in for animal husbandry.

The Deputy Director of Agricultural Marketing, Shanthi, said that an attitudinal change should be brought about among the farmers. They should start catering to the requirements of the market.

They should also adopt post harvest technologies like food processing.

The Deputy Director of Horticulture N. Mani said that the programme which has started in Yedapally, Milidhane and Puliampara apart from Kenthorai will cover a total number of 54 villages over the next couple of weeks.

An exhibition and distribution of benefits formed part of the occasion.

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

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.

**Adopt new technologies in agriculture, farmers told**



## Uzhavar Peruvizha to be held in 685 villages in district

To increase productivity two-fold and profit margin three-fold, farmers must use technological advancements in agriculture and reap success. This was the message disseminated during the Uzhavar Peruvizha celebrations that began in the district on Sunday.

Collector K. Maharabushanam inaugurated the festival at Muthampatti village in Valapadi block and asked the farmers to utilise various government schemes and improve their livelihood.

Stalls put by departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Marketing, Seed Certification, Cooperatives, NABARD, and Animal Husbandry explained about various schemes available for farmers and the easy procedures for adopting them.

Celebrations would be held in all the 685 revenue villages in the district till May 20 as use of gadgets, hybrid seeds, and fertilizers, and procedures in availing bank loans and goat rearing would be explained.

Since drought situation prevails in most parts of the districts, farmers were asked to adopt drip irrigation system and use the crops that do not require much water and withstand humidity. Prizes were also distributed to beneficiaries who successfully carried out goat rearing in the past year.

As part of Chithirai Thiruvizha celebrations, students from Government Music School performed a music concert at the Collectorate.

Later in the evening, a Patti Mandram was also held.

District Revenue Officer S. Selvaraj, Joint Directors A.J. Sunder (Agriculture), Dr. T.J. Balasubramaniam (Animal Husbandry), and V. Laxmi (Cooperative), Deputy Director (Agriculture) Barani, Executive Engineer (Agriculture) S. Sivakumar, District Panchayat Chairman S. Sathish Kumar, Lead Bank Manager J. Ravichandran and farmers participated.

**Farmers sow now to reap higher festival price**

## Farmers in DK and Kasaragod started sowing in early April



The Saldanhas engaged in vegetable farming at Merlapadavu, Neermarga, in Mangalore.—

Photo: R. Eswarraj

Vegetable farmers of the district are in sowing mode now to cater to the high demand during the upcoming festival season.

To reap the benefit of the high prices during the season, sowing has to start soon, Billampadavu Narayan Bhat, who coaches farmers on how and when to grow vegetables, told *The Hindu* .

There is a huge demand for vegetables from June to October as many festivals, across religions, are celebrated, and also less fresh fish is available. Ramzan, Mariamma festival, Gowri-Ganesha, Nagara Panchami, Mahalaya, Navratris take place then.

While prices of all vegetables rise, a kilogram of lady's finger can set you back by Rs. 120, as against Rs. 40 to Rs. 60 during normal times. Especially for Chauthi (Gowri-Ganesha), the arrival of 'kaadu hagalkai' (spiny bitter gourd) is said to create much excitement at Car Street and its price can rise up to Rs. 400 per kilogram.

Mr. Bhat said 750 farmers in Dakshina Kannada, and 250 in Kasaragod grew vegetables and many of them started sowing seeds in early April. They sowed yard beans, all varieties of lady's finger, brinjal, tomato, and yam. Most of them are small-scale farmers, which is why the Kannada saying goes, *Thunda bhoomi alli hindu bele* (it is possible to grow a variety of vegetables on a small piece of land).

Mr. Bhat said those who grew vegetables at home, on their terraces or in gardens, could also start sowing now, if they have to avoid buying vegetables from market.

Jayaram Sheka, who grows vegetables in Kolnad, Bantwal, said he had prepared the ground and was waiting for the seeds to sprout so that he could begin sowing on Wednesday. He is growing thick and thin yard beans and white lady's finger both in his courtyard, and in the space between arecanut trees in the plantation. He said the vegetables would fetch a good price during Nagara Panchami, Krishnashtami, and Ganesh Chaturthi.

Though it was a joy to eat vegetables grown in one's backyard and it did save money, growing vegetables was not easy due to lack of labour, he said.

Not all vegetables command higher prices. Those that were easily grown at home were available throughout the year (such as the perennial "basale" green vegetable, rises from Rs. 14 to Rs. 20 a bunch in normal and festive time) or because people thought they did not possess superior qualities such as Ivy Gourd ("thondekai") which is Rs. 30 to Rs. 40 a kg and Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 during festival time.

"Hundred farmers around Merlapadavu Church in Neermaraga have been growing vegetables for the Mangalore market. They grow tomatoes, different kinds of green vegetables, cucumber with thorns on its skin, ridge gourd, snake gourd, and bottle gourd. They are a part of an organic farming project run by Canara Organisation for Development Programmes (CODP) and get trained on vermicompost and biopesticides," said Jeevan, project co-ordinator, CODP. Of them, 20 to 30 were growing completely organic vegetables, 20 use organic and chemicals, the rest use chemicals, he said.

Henry Saldanha said there was a high demand for lady's finger and yard beans during rainy season (which coincided with several festivals).

Francis Rebello, who planned to sow white lady's finger in a few days in Neermarga, said while it was sold for Rs. 40 a kg now, it would sell at Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 in September and October, especially on Ashtami. However, he said the trader got a larger margin of the profit than the farmer.

Mr. Bhat said at least 750 farmers in Dakshina Kannada grew organic vegetables. H.R. Yogesh, Deputy Director of Horticulture (D.D.H.), the Department of Horticulture, said: "It is not a big number, could be (possible). But they must be certified. Are they registered?" Mr. Bhat said they had not claimed that they were certified. However, they do not use chemicals, he said.

### **Agriculture campaign vehicles to tour villages**

#### **Latest technologies to be disseminated to farmers**



MISSION ON WHEELS: Campaign vehicles lined up in Tuticorin on Sunday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Campaign vehicles to familiarise development schemes of agriculture and its allied departments were launched here on Sunday.

As part of the month long 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' (Farmers' Festival) which commenced on Sunday, 12 vehicles (Agriculture Rathams) were flagged off by J. Bellah, Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, and N. Chinnadurai, Chairman, District Panchayats, in the presence of D. Ranjithsingh Dhanraj, Joint Director of Agriculture. Visuals and details of welfare schemes, development projects, technological advancements in agriculture were displayed on the vehicles that proceeded to the villages in 12 blocks of the district.

Schemes of allied departments of Horticulture, Agriculture Engineering, Agriculture Marketing, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, and Sericulture were also on display.

A series of programmes would be organised during the Uzhavar Peruvizha which ends on May 20, Mr. Dhanraj said.

The festival was aimed at improving the livelihood of farmers by familiarising them with ways and means to increase productivity. Field demonstrations about successful methods of drip irrigation and adoption of system rice intensification as part of water management system would be conducted. The farmers would also be sensitised on soil testing and better management practices to get better yield, he said.

D. Jawahar, Professor and Head, Agriculture Research Station, Kovilpatti; Ponkatha Perumal and Gurumurthy, Deputy Directors of Agriculture; S. Mathiazhagan, Assistant Director, Quality Control; C. Palanivelayutham, Assistant Director, Department of Horticulture and local body representatives were present.

### **Ramanathapuram**

Collector K. Nanthakumar launched 'Uzhavar Peruvizha' in the district by flagging off publicity and propaganda vans from the Collectorate here. The Collector flagged off 11 propaganda vans, one each for the 11 blocks in the district to disseminate to the farmers, the latest technologies in agriculture and sensitise them on the second green revolution programme unveiled by the State government to double crop production and increase three-fold income of the farmers. The teams would cover more than 1.2 lakh farmers by visiting all the 400 revenue villages till May 20.

### **Farmers' festival at 507 villages**

#### **Officials will offer technical guidance on various aspects of agriculture**



growth machine:Khadi and Village Industries Minister T. P. Poonachi handing over a subsidised farm machine to a farmer in Tiruchi district on Sunday.

Farmers' festival, which seeks to sensitise farmers to the latest farming techniques, new crop varieties, and government schemes will be held at 507 revenue villages in the district commencing Sunday. The festival organised for the second consecutive year will go on till May 20.

The festival aims to bring about a convergence of agriculture, horticulture, agricultural engineering, agri business and animal husbandry departments, and officials will offer technical guidance to farmers on various aspects of agriculture and allied activities under one roof.

Khadi and Village Industries Minister T. P. Poonachi inaugurated the festival at Navalurkuttapattu in Manikandam union on Sunday and distributed subsidised farm equipment and prizes to beneficiaries who had maintained the free milch animals, given to them under the government scheme, well.

Mr. Poonachi said the festival would be held at 16,995 revenue villages in the State during which latest scientific advances, mini exhibitions, and audio-visual programmes on success stories would be organised for the benefit of farmers.

Experts from different fields would offer technical guidance and support to farmers. Farmers attending the festival would also be provided free food.

Collector Jayashree Muralidharan said the festival was held at 470 villages in the district last year and nearly 1.15 lakh farmers attended them. Soil samples were tested during the festival and over 13,000 farmers were given integrated handbooks.

The festival, she said, was intended to encourage farmers to adopt latest cultivation techniques, improve productivity, and motivate youth to take to agriculture. The focus of this year's festival would be on doubling productivity, promotion of system of rice intensification technique, pulses cultivation, precision farming, drip irrigation, and eradication of weeds.

The Minister distributed cash rewards of Rs.5,000, Rs.4,000, and Rs.3,000 to the top three well-maintained cows given under the State government's free milch animals distribution scheme. For the best maintained goats, cash rewards of Rs.3,000, Rs.2,500, and Rs.2,000 were given.

M. Paranjothi and N. R. Sivapathy, MLAs, were present.

## Free cattle: 25 farmers get prizes



In Recognition: Beneficiaries of free cattle scheme at a prize distribution programme in Tuticorin on Sunday.— Photo : N. Rajesh

Concentrate feed (cattle feed) was given as prizes to 25 farmers, in recognition of their best methods followed in rearing cows and goats given under free cattle scheme of the government, here on Sunday.

The programme was organised by the Department of Animal Husbandry. J. Bellah, Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, gave away the cattle feed for the best farmers, in the presence of C. Gengaraj, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, Tuticorin.

The prizes were received by 10 milch cow owners and 15 goat owners. Cattle feed worth Rs. 5,000 was given as first prize to a cow owner of Valasamudram near Kurukusalai.

His cow yielded a maximum of 18 litres a day. Feed worth Rs. 4,000 and Rs. 3,000 were given to the those who came second and third respectively. Seven consolation prizes of feed worth Rs. 1,000 each was given, Dr. Gengaraj, said.

For those who reared goat, feed worth Rs. 3,000, Rs. 2,500 and Rs. 2,000 were offered as first, second and third prizes respectively. Based on kidding of goats, the beneficiaries were rated. Fifteen kids were yielded in a year from three goats of a beneficiary from Chidambarampatti in Kayathar block. Twelve owners of goats were given consolation prizes.

During 2012-13, 650 cows were distributed to landless farmers in villages across the district and 3,250 beneficiaries received four goats each. Monthly health check-ups were conducted for the



animals. The beneficiaries were identified by a village-level committee. They had been warned of stringent action if they were found guilty of selling the cattle, meant for generating income for them, Dr. Gengaraj said.

Under poultry farming scheme, 10 units had started functioning in the district. A target of 138 units had been set for Tuticorin district, he added.

## **Drought brings tears to onion growers**

### **13,000 farmers in Perambalur district affected**



seeds of hope:Seed onions kept ready at Mangoon village near Perambalur.— PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM.

Onion is one of the crops seriously affected in Perambalur district leaving more than 13,000 farmers high and dry.

The gross domestic product of Perambalur, one of the most backward districts in the State in terms of economy and agriculture, gets some support from crops such as maize, cotton, and onion.

To the high-level ministerial committee which visited Perambalur district on Friday to assess the drought-damage, District Collector Darez Ahmed pointed out that 1.58 lakh farmers in the district were affected because of the drought which had ravaged more than 90 per cent of the cultivated area of 84,000 hectares of land.



He said more than 50 per cent of the crop had been affected on 23,237 hectares of the total cotton area of 23,650 hectares and 45,715 hectares of the total millet area of 47,566 hectares.

The third and a very significant impact of drought had been on small onion too.

Of the small onion area of 5,964 hectares as much as 4,734 hectares had been affected. S. Sathesh and M. Baskaran, farmers of Mangoor in Siruvayalur panchayat, told *The Hindu* that as against the normal harvest of 80 bags (80 kg), this season they could get only 50 to 60 bags, that too thanks to the groundwater.

“We did not have any rain for months together in this region. Normally, this three-month crop is harvested during December — January. The next season starts in June which is likely to be harvested by August.

This depends upon summer rains and the south-west monsoon. Even three to five centimetres of rain would be of immense support to the crops.” They lamented that the groundwater level had plummeted.

“If we have to sink borewells, we will have to go to a depth of 500 ft.” They have a very big open well which caters to almost 150 families in the vicinity. “But if we have to deepen this further, we might have to spend Rs. 5 lakh which we can’t afford. Hence, we are extremely apprehensive of the ensuing season,” they said.

They admitted that they were storing the seed onion in the hope that it would rain in a month or two and thus save them from disaster. They were unhappy that the State government had so far announced relief only for the delta farmers. “We are keeping our fingers crossed about the announcement of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa providing us some relief as we are badly affected because of drought,” they said.

### **Ex-TUDA chairman goes an extra mile to help farmers**

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As a novel gesture towards the drought-hit farmers, the former TUDA chairman Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy threw open the daily vegetable markets at four villages in Chandragiri and Yerravaripalem mandals for a toll-free trade by the vegetable farmers.

Mr. Reddy, who has been tipped for Chandragiri's party ticket, took control of the four daily markets by personally paying the prescribed 'bid money' in the auction, so that the farmers and vegetable vendors entering the daily markets in the four villages sell their produce without paying the customary toll fee at the gate.

At a small function arranged here in this connection, senior YSRC leaders B. Karunakar Reddy, Tirupati MLA Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Punganur Congress MLA, who recently jumped to the YSRC bandwagon, took part and complemented Mr. Chevireddy for his nice gesture towards the farmers, whose cause the late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy held close to his heart.

*Pays the prescribed bid money in the auction to facilitate farmers enter the markets without paying toll fee*



### **Litchi supply to be doubled this year**

With the litchi season only a month away, the growers, traders and entrepreneurs are making hectic efforts to double the supply of litchi from here this season and send at least 5,000 tonnes of fresh quality litchi from Muzaffarpur to different metros through cold chain system and another 8,000 tonnes of juice to international markets through a couple of branded companies.

Motivated by [the National](#) Litchi Research Centre, Muzaffarpur, the growers have given more attention on maintaining quality of the fruit this year to get higher prices. For this, the farmers have first sprayed a particular hormone, then insecticide and finally, they are now spraying water on the trees to maintain the required temperature.

The prospect of the crop is expected to be fairly good this season though around 20% of the laden fruit on the top portion of the trees has fallen down during the week-long strong westerly wind. But those, who have followed the instructions given by the research centre, have suffered the least loss.

This year, on the pattern of Litchika International of Bela, another fruit processing workshop Litchika Product Pvt Ltd has come up in Narayanpur Anant area to store and pack fresh litchi and dispatch it in refrigerated vans to distant places of the country like Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai. Namdhari group of Bangalore too has established its packing centre here and assured Litchika International to supply second grade fruit to it for making juice. Litchika has decided to use its workshops for preparing and dispatching fresh litchi during the month long season from May 15 and then use it for storing packing fresh vegetables to distant places. Company's managing director and owner K N Thakur has joined hands with the prospective grower Bholanath Jha for the supply of fresh litchi and vegetables.

At present, no local trader is directly exporting litchi from here to international markets. Its pulp and juices are being sent by [Dabur India Ltd](#) and now Pepsi has shown interest to do the same business from this year. Many growers have assured them to supply second grade litchi for pulp and juice, it is learnt. The demand of litchi juice is learnt to have increased manifold in international markets.

### **Mysterious illness rocks poultry business**

Sudden death of lakhs of birds has rocked the poultry industry in coastal districts threatening the very survival of small and marginal farmers. As many as 40 lakh chicken died in the last six months, with half of the deaths occurring in the last one month alone.

Poultry farmers are already hit hard by skyrocketing prices of feed and falling rates of eggs. The unprecedented death of birds in different farms across the coastal Andhra districts has pushed many farmers into virtual death trap. Farmers are flummoxed as they are still unsure of the reason for the sudden deaths. Even veterinary doctors have not diagnosed the problem.

According to [National Egg Coordination Committee \(NECC\)](#) zonal chairman G Ramakrishna Chowdhary, the worst affected farmers hail from East and West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Visakhapatnam districts, where about 40 lakh birds died in the last six months.

In the last one month alone 20 lakh birds died in poultry farms located in East and West Godavari districts. The farms in areas surrounding Tanuku in West Godavari, and Amalapuram

in East Godavari, are the worst affected.

There is no mechanism to monitor the number of bird deaths. But Chowdhary believes that 40 lakh is a conservative estimate based on reports he has received from poultry farms. A thorough probe into the issue would put the number of deaths anywhere around 90 lakh birds.

K Narayana Raju, a farmer from West Godavari, points out that the birds die all of a sudden. The birds are usually in a healthy condition, but if one of them dies, other chickens in the cage too die within a few hours. "It has become a big headache for us as we do not know what medicine to administer. Even veterinarians are not sure of how to deal with the problem," he said.

Confirming the large number of chicken deaths, [Andhra Pradesh](#) Poultry Farmers Association, executive committee member MCH Venkataraju said "Farmers are unsure of the reason for the sudden death of birds. We have heard that some private agencies have taken samples for testing, but we do not know what happened to the results".

Venkataraju estimated that poultry farmers in the region had lost close to Rs 4 crore.

Chowdhary said the reports of the first chicken deaths started trickling in November 2012. But, farmers suspected that the cool climatic conditions could have played a factor.

Dr Gnaneswar Rao, joint director of Animal Husbandry Department, West Godavari, denied having received any complaints of bird deaths from farmers. He said veterinarians take care of birds in various hatcheries operating in the district.

With poultry farmers already hit by soaring feed prices and reducing rates of eggs, Venkataraju said the sector is badly affected. Farmers do not get even the minimum returns. He demanded that government should intervene and provide a moratorium on repayment of interest and loan installments until the poultry industry is able to wade through the crisis.

He also pointed out that wheat, rice or paddy, damaged during storage in warehouses, can be released to poultry farmers at a subsidised rate.

## **Ensure all wheat purchase centres are well equipped to handle rush'**

After officially implementing the state government's new bulk purchase policy to assist farmers in the state, the Uttar Pradesh government on Sunday ordered district administrations to ensure that all purchase centres set up at the district levels are well equipped to handle the rush, once the farmers begin to sell their produce.

Instructing district officials to monitor the preparations carefully, chief secretary Jawed Usmani said any discrepancy found will be severely dealt with. The government has also decided to institute a system where the food commissioner will be sent weekly reports from every check-point in the state.

So far, about 14 districts have failed to comply with the government's orders to the turn in weekly reports about the status of purchase centres. Expressing his dissatisfaction with the official red tape and unofficially declaring it a working Sunday for the concerned officials, Usmani will now, personally monitor the purchase of wheat across the state through video conferencing every Sunday morning and will also ensure that remedial action is initiated wherever there is a problem.

To live up the promise of being a farmer friendly government, the state has also decided to ensure the bulk purchase centres are flush with cash and each centre is expected to have a cash supply of at least Rs 15 lakh every five days in order to make immediate payments to the farmers who come to sell their produce. In orders issued to the district officials, the government has also said arrangements should be made to ensure there is no discomfort caused to the farmers who turn up. Putting in a mechanism to ensure that wheat is not sold below the Minimum Support Price (MSP), the government has, for the first time, also decided to depute additional district magistrates to oversee the daily auctions and to also ensure that mobile squads visit every mandi to ensure farmers are paid the MSP for their produce. The government has also said that all wheat purchase centres must be issued certificates by the district officials after ensuring they have the necessary infrastructure available.

Taking stock of the storage facilities available in the state, the government has also said UP is adequately prepared to meet its target to purchase 60 lakh metric of wheat.

With gunny bags and storage facilities already being made available, the state has also expressed confidence that farmers will not face any concerns this year.

Sunday's decision follows close on the heels of the state government's earlier farmer-friendly decision to launch the e-trading mechanism in which agricultural produce will be marketed through an electronic exchange. The move, a government release said, will attract more buyers to UP. Last week, the government also instituted the first-of-its-kind bulk purchaser policy to ensure farmers get better returns for their produce. Under this policy, bulk purchasers can apply for a licence and affiliate themselves with any one mandi in the state. The licence will permit them to open several purchase centres across the state.

### **Farmer sets ablaze 1,200 sweet lime trees**

A farmer from [Sanjkheda village](#), about 30 km from Aurangabad, burnt down 1,200 dry [sweet lime trees](#) on Friday demanding the state government to provide assistance of Rs two lakh per acre to look after the orchards. Several other farmers were also present.

Qamar Khan's sweet lime orchard consisted of 1,400 trees out of which 1,200 trees dried up due to scarcity of water.

"I have a family of 40 members which includes my seven brothers who are co-owners of the orchard. Our family is entirely dependent on the orchards. Also, I have a bank loan of Rs 17 lakh to pay off. How will I pay off the loan if the government does not help?"asked Khan. Following less rainfall in the region, Khan immediately started mulching, pruning and double trip irrigation to save the orchard spending about Rs 1.25 lakh per acre on the process. He has also been spending Rs 25,000 monthly for the maintenance of the plantation.

Vishnumalhar Hake, another horticulturist from the village, said, "I have 1,000 trees spread across five acres of land which have completely dried up. I have spent more than Rs four lakh to sustain the orchards. Looking at the present situation, we need at least Rs 50,000 per acre to maintain the orchard. But the government provided us with an assistance of Rs 15,000 per acre which is insufficient and insulting."

Hake said that the jowar crop he had planted in another farm was also lost on account of less

rainfall and he did not even get the insurance amount of Rs 10,000 which he had claimed for the month of November. "If the government continues being so careless, the farmers will switch to other crops," said Hake. The [Employment Guarantee Scheme](#) (EGS) has also failed to offer alternative income sources. The farmers are forced to migrate to other cities in search of work.

Jayajirao Suryawanshi, the president of sweet lime farmers association said that elected representatives have failed to take up the issue in the state assembly. "If the government does not increase monetary help, the horticulturists will protest by burning down sweet lime trees in front of the Mantralay in Mumbai," said Suryawanshi.

### **Progressive farmer from Barnala gets 32.4 quintal wheat yield**

A progressive farmer of Barnala has got [wheat yield](#) of 32.4 quintal in an acre. Normally a farmer gets the yield of 20-22 quintal in an acre. Balwant Singh Sekha, a farmer from Barnala by getting at least 10 quintal more yield has ensured to get Rs. 14,000 more than average in an acre.

The agricultural officer led by Barnala ADC(development) Parveen Kumar were present at Balwant Singh' farms when harvesting was conducted. Balwant said I had sown the refined wheat seeds using the latest techniques and was hopeful of getting more yield. He said "the technique I used will be shared with other farmers as well so that they too could get more money out of wheat sowing". He said that I had made three more farmers to sow the crop with the refined seeds and all three also have got more yield than the average.

ADC Parveen Kumar appreciating the move asked other farmers to follow suit. Earlier he made agricultural and revenue officials to measure the area and yield and it worked out 32.4 quintal per acre. A lot of farmers from the area also assembled and decided to adopt the techniques and seeds recommended by Balwant.



**WPI data, Q4 earnings to drive stock markets this week**



Corporate earnings from bluechips, including RIL and TCS, wholesale price index inflation data and foreign investor activity will set the tone for Indian markets this week, according to experts.

While domestic indices tomorrow may initially track the fall in US stocks last Friday on a set of weak macroeconomic indicators, analysts said there could be some pullback after the knee-jerk reaction due to Infosys results.

All eyes are now on the Wholesale Price index (WPI) for March 2013 that will come before mid-session on Monday. A positive surprise may cement hopes of a repo rate cut on RBI's May 3 meeting after retail inflation numbers showed a decline.

"Assuming slight moderation in food inflation and a continued correction in commodity prices, we expect March WPI inflation to be 6.16 per cent YoY," said Deepali Bhargava, Chief India Economist, Espirito Santo Securities India.

Among the key corporate results this week, Reliance Industries (RIL) announces Q4 earnings on Tuesday, TCS (Wednesday), IndusInd Bank (Thursday) and Wipro (Friday).

"Once bitten, investors will be twice shy of Infosys. While the IT major will take time to come out of woods, Sensex now looks set to reverse the downfall with Q4 earnings season. IIP and CPI data, though shrugged off by investors, are indicators of economy bottoming out and inflation cooling off," said Aditya Trading Solutions Founder Vikas Jain.



Foreign fund flows would decide the mood on Dalal Street and a mid-week rally cannot be ruled out, he added. The markets would be also closely watching the Foreign Trade Policy slated to be announced next week on April 18 to get sense of the government initiatives for boosting exports and alleviate the concerns pertaining to the widening current account deficit and growth, a fund manager said.

Stock markets will remain closed on Friday for Ram Navmi. Last week, markets continued to fall for the second consecutive week shedding another 208 points due to a sharp fall in Sensex-major Infosys and sustained selling by foreign institutional investors.

# HindustanTimes

Chennai - INDIA

## Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Apr 15

Max    Min  
33° | 27°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:56

Humidity: 71

Sunset: 06:21

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1009

## Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Apr 16

Max    Min  
36° | 27°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Apr 17



Thursday

Apr 18



Friday

Apr 19



Saturday

Apr 20



Sunday

Apr 21



36° | 27°

37° | 28°

36° | 28°

36° | 28°

36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Overcast

Cloudy

Overcast

Overcast

Airport Weather

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:56

Humidity: 71

Sunset: 06:21



Chennai

Wind: normal Barometer: 1009

# THE HINDU Business Line

Lack of rain delays jute sowing in Assam, Bengal



Inadequate rain: Jute growers busy trading their wares at a local weekly market in Gazole, 27 km from Malda town, West Bengal. — Ashoke Chakrabarty

Sowing of raw jute in early sowing areas of Assam and West Bengal has been slow and delayed due to poor rainfall.

Sowing of jute usually starts by March-end and continues till May-end.

Sowing requires a hot and humid weather with regular bouts of showers. Jute requires 5-8 cm of rainfall weekly and more during the sowing period, sources said.

However, this year, the State has not received adequate showers till now.

According to Manish Poddar, Chairman of Indian Jute Mills' Association (IJMA), it is still too early to estimate the quantum of sowing this year. "We need rain, the weather is very hot at present," he said.

The sowing of the crop in the south Bengal districts of Murshidabad and Nadia, which together account for almost 60 per cent of the country's total jute production, is yet to commence.

Sowing in these districts usually start in end April or early May, sources said.

## **FAVOURING FACTORS**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved a hike of Rs 100 a quintal in the minimum support price for raw jute this 14 season for the TD-5 grade. This is likely to encourage farmers to go in for a higher sowing of the crop this year, Poddar said.

Prices of certified seeds have also dropped by about 37 per cent to Rs 50 a kg this year. "There was ample stock of seeds from last year. This, coupled with the supply of fresh seeds, has brought down prices," said a senior industry official.

However, despite these favourable factors, sowing of raw jute could be slightly lower this year. "Farmers are looking to grow other remunerative crops such as corn (in north Bengal) and sesame seeds (in Hooghly district)," the official said.

Area under jute cultivation has remained constant at about 9 lakh hectares over the last few years. Bengal accounts for almost 67 per cent of the total area under cultivation at 6 lakh hectares.

## **Carryover stock**

The carry over stock is likely to be close to 27 lakh bales (of 180 kg) this year. "A number of stockists have been holding on to their stock in anticipation of prices appreciating further if rainfall situation does not improve. This has kept prices stable," an official said.

Raw jute prices are hovering around Rs 3,200 a quintal this month compared with Rs 2,700 in January this year, an official said.

## **Higher arrivals squeeze tomato**

A marginal increase in arrivals coupled with steady domestic demand pulled tomato prices down by Rs 70-200 a quintal for the different varieties, on Sunday.

Around 800 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 1,500 crates of varieties such as Anoop, Himsona, Trishul and Rajasthan arrived in Karnal markets .

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line*, that easy availability of stocks pulled tomato prices down.

Of the total arrivals, about 65 per cent stock was received from Rajasthan while just about 35 per cent stock of total arrivals was of local farmers.

Local arrivals have been falling and to meet their requirement traders are importing stock from neighbouring State, he added.

Local arrival of the new crop is likely to begin within a couple of weeks. Out of total arrivals, about 15 per cent stock was of low quality; around 25 per cent stock was of medium quality while about 60 per cent was of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality decreased by Rs 200 and quoted at Rs 1,800-2,000 a quintal. The prices of medium quality produce dropped by Rs 100 and quoted at 1,200-1,500 while low quality produce was at Rs 700-1,000 , Rs 70 down from previous levels.

The market has been ruling in a tight range over the last couple of weeks following steady demand and arrivals. Tomato prices may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuation next week, said Vikas Sachdeva.

### **Shortage of raws keeps India's share in cashew export market at 30%**

Indian cashew exports to the world market continue to hover at around 30 per cent of the total global exports for the past few years, while its main competitor Vietnam consistently maintains a share of 39 per cent, according to International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC).

Speaking to *Business Line*, Pratap Nair, Ambassador of the INC in India and member of the Board of Directors of the INC, Spain, said that India was enjoying the top slot until few years ago and later, Vietnam took over that position.

He attributed the slip to non-availability of sufficient quantity of raw nuts indigenously. Raw nut production in the country is below 50 per cent of the industry's processing capacity of about 20 lakh tonnes, he said.

He said that the total global production for tree nuts in 2012 totalled 3.5 million tonnes (mt), which represents a 5.5 per cent increase from the previous year.

Dried fruit global production totalled 9.5 mt, registering a 13 per cent increase from 2011.

World production of peanuts was at 36.5 mt last year recording a 2 per cent up from the previous year. However, quoting INC statistics, Nair, who is also Managing Partner of Vijalaxmi Cashew Company, Kollam, said that global trade of tree nuts in 2011 decreased by 4 per cent, which is attributed to an increase in local consumption.

World consumption of tree nuts in 2011 exceeded for the first time the barrier of 3 mt, with a total absorption of 30,20,492 tonnes, he said.

The INC, he said, represents and endorses activities that provide its membership with new opportunities for increasing global consumption of almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts, peanuts, dates, dried apricots, dried figs, prunes and raisins.

### **Teas fetch record prices at Coonoor sale**

New price records were set at Sale No: 15 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) auctions.

Teas of Vigneshwar Estate Tea Factory which have won this year's Golden Leaf India Award have fetched record prices.

"Our CTC Broken Pekoe speciality grade, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped the auction when Nisha Enterprises bought it for Rs 285 a kg. This was the highest price fetched by this grade since CTTA auctions started 50 years ago. It was also the highest price fetched by our factory since manufacturing started 26 years ago. Besides, our Super Red Dust grade topped the Dust Tea auction fetching Rs 261," Vigneshwar Managing Partner Ramesh Bhojarajan told *Business Line*.

Hittakkal Estate Tea Factory also fetched record prices.

“Our Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings speciality grade, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, fetched Rs 260 , Broken Pekoe Rs 255 and Super Red Dust Rs 230 ,” Hittakkal Managing Partner B. Rajesh said.

Homedale Estate, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, got Rs 176 and Cross Hill Estate Rs 173. In all, 83 CTC marks got Rs 125 and more.

Among orthodox teas, Chamraj got Rs 291, Highfield Estate Rs 195, Havukal Rs 177, Tiger Hill clonal Rs 176, Kairbetta Rs 173, Kodanad Rs 172 and Mailoor Rs 171.

### **India-EU FTA: Dairy sector seeks insulation**

The dairy industry, led by the country’s largest milk cooperative that owns the Amul brand, has opposed the proposed India-EU free trade agreement (FTA) on the ground that it would led to subsidised dairy products from Europe flooding India.

“This will rob the domestic dairy industry and 80 million farmers that are connected to it, from their rightful access to a growing market within India,” said R.S. Sodhi, Managing Director, Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation, in a press release.

Sodhi argued that the Government had encouraged the co-operative model in the dairy sector with active policy protection. “It does not make sense that now dairy trade will be opened up to unfair competition from subsidised European exports under this FTA, just when it shows potential to grow into a vibrant industry,” he said.

Farmer body Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) is also opposed to the proposed trade pact which, it claimed, would benefit the EU more as more than 60 per cent of Indian farm exports already go to the EU duty free.

So far, India has protected the dairy sector in all the free trade pacts signed including ones with the Asean countries, Japan and South Korea. Pressure is, however, mounting on it to open up the sector in the FTAs India is negotiating with Australia and New Zealand. These countries are keeping a keen watch on the India-EU FTA negotiations to see how much access they could push for in their own trade deals with India.

# Business Standard

## Five farm products that can change India's agriculture landscape

**The five products have been selected based on their crop size and relevance for consumers, growers and crop diversity**

Mango, banana, potato, soybean and poultry are the five main farm products which could form the bedrock of rejuvenation in India's agriculture and allied activities landscape in the next two decades.

This can be created by building a strong brand for these products in the international markets, reducing wastage by almost half and doubling the per hectare yields, according to the third Food and Agriculture Integrated Development Action Report titled: 'India as an agriculture and high value food powerhouse: A new vision for 2030, prepared jointly by CII and McKinsey and Company.

The five products have been selected based on their crop size and relevance for consumers, growers and crop diversity.

### **Mango**

The report said mango production has grown consistently at four per cent per annum since the past two decades only because of increase in area as yields have remained stagnant. To achieve a target of 37 per cent increase in per hectare yield, reducing wastage by 50 per cent in the next 20 years and increasing exports 10 times, the report said farmers should be trained to inculcate best practices to improve yield, enhance farm-gate infrastructure and also build clusters in major growing states of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar and Gujarat.

The clusters can be built with the help of cooperatives. To enhance the image of Indian mangoes worldwide a special brand should be built and export of packaged mango juice should be encouraged. A special impetus should be provided to fresh mango exports, the report said.



## **Banana**

Though India is the world's largest producer of bananas, its exports are minimal. It exported only 0.37 per cent of its produce in 2010, but produces almost 30 per cent of the world output, the report said. In 2010, India did not export any banana to Japan and Russia and exported just one tonne to China in 2010. However, it has immense potential.

The real potential for bananas in India is through branding both in the domestic and export market. India could increase total production by 75 per cent to about 50 million tonnes in 2030 to meet rising domestic demand and tap the export opportunity. The report also highlighted that India should aspire to have an efficient, globally competitive supply chain and aspire to export 1.5 million tonnes by 2030, which is 25 times the current export figure.

For farmers, the report said extensive tissue culture should be promoted through private participation, drip irrigation should be augmented and impetus provided for export of fresh bananas.

## **Potato**

India's domestic consumption of potato increased five per cent per annum for the past five years, though the per capita consumption is still about half of that of China and lags far behind most western countries.

India produced more than 40 million tonnes of potato in 2011, with more than 1.8 million hectares of area under cultivation and yields reaching 20 tonnes per hectare. There is also abundant opportunity to double the share of potato used in processing from the current seven per cent to 14 per cent or more. In addition, India could also aspire to export 1.5 million tonnes to two million tonnes of potato from the current 1.2 million tonnes, to become one of the top five potato exporters in the world, especially catering to the Asian countries.

To achieve this, the report said the scientific use of fertilisers, use of sprinkler or drip irrigation and adequate mechanisation to cut costs be adopted.

"For example, costs can be reduced by using prophylactic pesticides which prevent late blight disease in areas with low infestation rates, and cost just Rs 200 a kg, while treatment pesticides

are more than 20 times more expensive. Sprinkler irrigation increases yield by 15 to 25 per cent, and drip irrigation increases yield by 30 to 40 per cent, while saving up to 40 per cent of water,” the report said. It also suggested that industry could identify, test and promote new high yielding processing varieties from the available international basket.

A successful example of branding potatoes is that of Greenvale’s Farm Fresh potatoes in the UK. Launched with the USP of better and consistent taste and freshness, the effort was a success, and Greenvale’s potatoes are now available across the UK, the report said.

### **Soybean**

This is one of the fastest growing crops in India with exceptional price realisations. India currently exports 55 per cent of its soya meal and Indian prices are linked to global prices.

“India’s soya farmers and industry are ready to unlock an Rs 45,000 crore opportunity by 2030,” the report said. But, India’s soy industry is crippled by low yield, limited domestic demand for soymeal and inadequate irrigation facilities for crops.

The country can overcome these bottlenecks by doubling yields through mechanised sowing and harvesting, improving market access for high yielding seed varieties, and using drip irrigation in farms. The government on its part can boost consumption by promoting soya as an integral part of a high protein diet, branding soy oil for exports.

“Guaranteeing traceability and non-GM usage will ensure that India sustains 20 per cent premium over the GM soyaoils supplied by other countries,” the report said.

### **Poultry**

India is currently the third largest producer of eggs (by weight) and the sixth largest producer of chicken meat in the world. India’s broiler meat production has grown by a brisk 10 per cent and egg production by five per cent over the past 10 years. By 2030, over 40 per cent of India’s population will be urbanised and the number of working women is likely to double. This could significantly boost the market for frozen foods, including poultry products.

But, the potential is constrained by recurring incidents of disease in poultry products, no

awareness on frozen foods and rising feed costs. Giving an example, the report said that in India, the frozen meat market is just five per cent of the total poultry market, while the world over this is much more. To achieve its full potential, the report suggested that government should invest in mega processing hubs, increase profitability of poor poultry farmers through back-end feed manufacturing technologies and boost market for frozen foods.

### **India's vegoil imports down 7.5%**

#### **Country's March palm oil imports fall for 2nd month in a row**

India's imports of palm oil fell for a second straight month in March, as domestic supply improved and purchases by the world's biggest buyer continued to suffer from an import levy imposed in January.

The world's biggest importer of vegetable oils, buys mainly palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia and a small quantity of soyoil from Brazil and Argentina.

Palm oil imports dropped 12 per cent to 708,262 tonnes in March, Mumbai-based trade body the Solvent Extractors' Association, said in a monthly update.

Imports of all vegetable oils, including non-edible oils, fell 7.5 per cent to 896,714 tonnes in March, pulled down by the drop in palm oil imports, the data showed.

Higher domestic cooking oil supplies, as the rapeseed harvest season peaked last month, helped to curb imports. Rapeseed is the main oilseed crop grown in winter.

Buyers also drew on stockpiles, as import prices rose.

Stockpiles of edible oil at ports fell nearly nine percent during March to 850,000 tonnes, the trade body said, off a record of 930,000 tonnes on March 1.

"Stocks were still on the higher side despite the decline in monthly imports," said BV Mehta, executive director of the SEA.

Mehta said overall stocks -- including those in transit from ports to refineries -- could depress domestic prices before the summer oilseed planting season. Total stocks had edged up to an all-time record of 2.1 million tonnes by April 1.

<b>EDIBLE OIL IMPORTS</b>						(in tonnes)
Month	RBD Palmolein	Crude palm oil	Soy oil (degummed)	Other oils	Total	
Nov'12	76,519	534,556	14,160	50,999	676,234	
Dec'12	137,475	636,113	21,960	87,941	883,489	
Jan'13	153,060	721,258	103,033	155,280	1,132,631	
Feb'13	116,237	669,678	62,585	105,676	954,176	
Mar'13	137,407	558,810	46,990	107,699	850,906	
<b>Total</b>	<b>620,698</b>	<b>3,120,415</b>	<b>248,728</b>	<b>507,595</b>	<b>4,497,436</b>	

\* Others included 90,655 tonne crude sunflower oil imports  
 Note: Edible oil year starts in November Source: The Solvent Extractors' Association

Traders said the high level of stocks, both at ports and in transit, could keep imports capped between 800,000 and 885,000 tonnes for the current month.

India's imports of palm oil hit an all-time high in January as leading producers Indonesia and Malaysia made exports more attractive by varying tax levels.

To protect domestic refiners and oilseed growers, India retaliated with a duty of 2.5 per cent on crude palm oil in the second half of January, which had hit imports in February.

On March 21, Malaysian palm oil futures touched their highest since February 25, making imports more costly.

The country imports about 60 per cent of its cooking oil needs of 17 million tonnes. Palm oil makes up nearly 80 per cent of that. In 2011-12, the country imported 10 million tonnes of cooking oil.

The country's demand for cooking oils is rising as its population grows and becomes better off. New Delhi tries to encourage domestic oilseed production, partly by guaranteeing minimum prices to farmers, but has had limited success.

Soyoil imports also declined a quarter to 46,990 tonnes last month, as demand faded at the tail end of the marriage season.



## Gujarat reeling under severe drought

**Narendra Modi may be on a campaign selling his model of governance but Gujarat is reeling under severe drought that has left Saurashtra and Kutch regions parched and people battling odds to get even a pot of drinking water.**

An estimated 10 to 15 per cent of the cash crops may have failed because of the drought this year that has come on the back of 11 normal monsoons.

The water situation in half of the state has worsened with the onset of summer as big and small water reservoirs have dried up, forcing women in rural area to travel long distances, sometimes two to three kms, everyday for water.

Modi had, in his speeches in the national capital and in Kolkata recently, made claims regarding supply of piped water for long distances, thanks to Narmada projects.

But familiar scenes of people jostling to get a bucket of water when a tanker arrives once in a while in their village or urban area are common in Kutch, Saurashtra and some northern parts of the state.

"Our children are thirsty as there is severe drinking water problem. Officials here are merely giving us hollow promises. No steps have been taken for regular supply of water by tanker to us," said Saroj Makwana, a resident of Jetpur town in Rajkot district where water is supplied every 10 days.

"Ours is the remotest area where drinking water is being supplied once in 15 days. And despite our repeated representation to local municipal officers, the condition is unchanged," said a frustrated Champaben Rabari of Amreli city.

Protests and bandhs are order of the day in affected areas. Amreli city had observed a total bandh recently on the issue of non-supply of water.

Women taking out protest marches with empty water pots has become a common scene in affected areas.

Saurashtra, Kutch and North Gujarat had witnessed acute water scarcity in 1998 and 1999 when successive years of deficient rains had made life hell for the people of these three regions of the state.

But 11 good monsoons from 2001 to 2011 had made people forget those years of scarcity, driving Gujarat to double digit agriculture growth.

The state government also appeared to have taken the situation lightly when the rain gods were smiling as two major projects -- Sardar Sarovar Dam on Narmada river and Kalpsar project -- conceived to solve drinking water problems of scarcity-prone regions, have not progressed as per schedule. Modi took over as the Gujarat chief minister in 2001.

Seventy-five percent of the canal network of Sardar Sarovar Project still remains to be completed by the state government, which is an impediment in taking water of big dam constructed on Narmada river to the parched lands of state, as per the data presented in the state assembly.

While the Kalpsar project was conceived to build a reservoir with dam in the Gulf of Khambhat to harness flood waters of nine rivers during the time of Keshubhai Patel government in 1998, it is still in the study stage mode even after 14 years of conceptualisation.

On March 26, Revenue Minister Anandi Patel had declared water scarcity in about 4,000 villages and towns in 10 districts of Saurashtra, Kutch and North Gujarat. However, the opposition has said this is too little, too late.

"The state government should have anticipated the situation of scarcity last June itself as many areas of Kutch and Saurashtra had deficient rain and still it has done nothing to avert the situation," says Leader of Opposition Shankarsinh Vaghela, whose Congress party has launched a 12-day 'Jal Adhikar Yatra' to highlight the water woes experienced by this region.

The government, on the other hand, has been denying the existence of water crisis. It claims it has been supplying more water to this region for the last six months and is resolved to

implement on "war footing" a contingency master plan of Rs 134 crore to provide water to Saurashtra and Kutch.

Government spokesperson and Finance Minister Nitin Patel, while brushing aside Congress claims, charges opposition leaders with 'misleading' the people by 'spreading lies' on the water situation.

"We have already been providing enhanced water supply to cities like Rajkot, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Junagadh and Amreli," Patel said.

Narmada water and Sardar Sarovar Dam issues have also been raised by both the state BJP and opposition parties for scoring brownie points over each other.

Congress and Gujarat Parivartan Party have accused Modi government of 'inaction' to complete the construction work of the Narmada canals.

"Since 2006, the height of Sardar Sarovar Narmada Dam has reached to 121.92 meters and that was enough for the storage of water which could have been used for irrigation in 10 lakh hectare agriculture land and provide drinking water to 11,000 villages and cities, but they have not completed the canal network," Vaghela said.

However, state BJP has alleged that as the central government has been stalling the permission to raise the height of the dam to 138 meters and to build gates on the dam, people of Saurashtra and Kutch were facing acute water situation.

Rajkot, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Amreli and Bhavnagar are the worst-hit districts in Saurashtra where people are supplied water once in three to fifteen days in different areas. Around 500 villages and some towns in these areas have to depend on water supplied to them by tankers.

In Rajkot, water levels in 34 reservoirs and dams like Aaji, Nyaari, Bhadar, Setubandh, Alansagar, Machhu have receded to almost 3 per cent of its storage capacity.

Total water storage capacity of these 34 dams and reservoirs are 28,032.69 million cubic feet (MCF) whereas at present it is only 664.63 MCF there.

A similar situation exists in other districts like Amreli (8.92 per cent), Jamnagar (0.43 per cent), Junagadh (6.06 per cent), Porbandar (1.11 per cent), Bhavnagar (5.29 per cent), Surendranagar (7.15 per cent) and Kutch (14.04 per cent).

Deficient rain has also created problems for farmers and agriculture production has been hit.

"Though we are yet to ascertain production loss due to deficient rain, it must be between 15 to 20 per cent in cash crops and about 20 per cent in other crops including vegetables in Saurashtra and Kutch area," a state agriculture department official said.

He said the Rabi season has witnessed 15 per cent less sowing in comparison to the last year due to less rains.

Agriculture expert and former Director of Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) Dr Y K Alagh said "though the figure have not come out yet, if you compare the date of State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) of previous two years, you can at least very conservatively say that because of deficient rain 15-20 per cent crop has failed in the state".

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **Pakistan's onion shortage should not make New Delhi shed tears**

As rising [tomato prices](#) — 106% in the last 12 months — make consumers see red, Brazilians have been handed a juicy excuse to turn to humour and sarcasm to deal with the situation. Given the crucial role of the vegetable in that country's cuisine, popular reactions — from calling the tomato a luxury meal and status symbol to taking cartloads of it to parliament to reduce the government to pulp — are relatively mild by comparison. But as Pakistan sheds tears over the current local price of onions and the apparent inability of the caretaker government there to handle it, India would do well to ketchup with Brazil's tomato experience to know what could be in store.

There has been considerable heartburn over the cheaper availability of tomatoes across Brazil's southern border, adding a new "red" item to the contraband being smuggled in from Argentina



and Paraguay. Of course, Indian authorities should not be unduly worried if a vegetable becomes a more lucrative focus of clandestine cross-border trade than more traditionally coveted commodities such as guns and drugs, the possibility of domestic repercussions on either side cannot be disregarded. New Delhi can ill-afford to let Pakistan determine the fate of Indian onions, so a close eye needs to be kept on all underground activities.