

THE HINDU

Water release drill begins in Idukki

People alerted; dam shutters greased for opening

The Idukki dam will have to be opened with the water level just 6.72 feet shy of the full reservoir level and the good inflow continuing despite the slackening rain.

A senior Kerala State Electricity Board official said the dam would be opened this week or by next week. It was only a question of when.

The people living in the downstream areas have been alerted. Since the water will be released in a controlled fashion, a flood risk does not arise, officials say. But still, large river areas of the Periyar have been occupied by settlers. A control-room official told *The Hindu* that the shutters of the dam had been greased and other preparations made for releasing water. The dam has five shutters, and the central gate will be opened first followed by the two flanking it in a phased manner to keep the level at the full reservoir level of 2,403 ft. The water level on Sunday evening was 2,396.28 ft. District Police Chief M. Sheik Anvaruddin Sahib visited the Cheruthoni dam area on Sunday to review the steps taken and held talks with the officials of the control room.

It speaks of the windfall monsoon this time that the water level has gone so high to warrant preparations to open the dam for the first time in August. On Sunday, the inflow through the Periyar and other tributaries was 509 million cubic feet per second. The catchment area recorded only 12.62 mm of rainfall on Sunday. But the inflow shows only a slight fall.

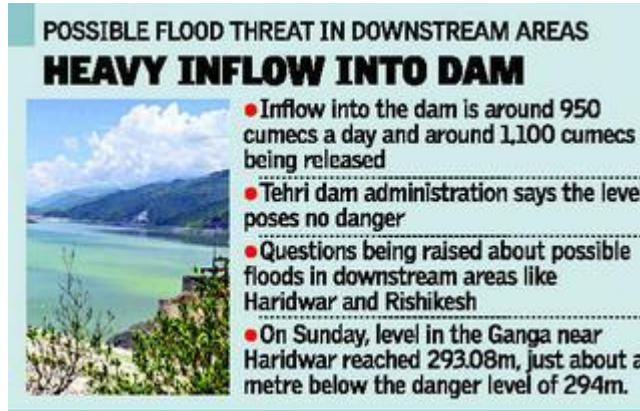
Mullaperiyar level

The water level in the Mullaperiyar dam upstream of the Idukki reservoir fell to 134.9 ft from 135.2 ft on Saturday. The maximum level maintained is 136 ft. Tamil Nadu has stepped up drawing of water and the rain has weakened in the catchment areas, helping reduce the level. This has reduced the threat of a sudden spurt in the inflow through the Periyar. However, even at this level of inflow, the Idukki dam has to be opened, an official said. An expert team led by

K.K. Karuppankuty, Chief Engineering, Dam Security, which visited the Kulamavu dam of the Idukki reservoir, said the structure faced no threat from a breach of a neighbouring road.

Rising level in Tehri dam a cause for concern

Questions being raised about possible floods in downstream areas



The level in the Tehri dam in Uttarakhand on Sunday reached 818.50 metres against the permissible mark of 825 metres, Tehri District Magistrate Nitesh Kumar Jha told *The Hindu*.

According to Northern Regional Load Despatch Centre (NRLDC) data, the level rose by 8 metres since August 1.

Mr. Jha said that for the past three to four days the inflow was around 950 cumecs (cubic metre per second) a day and around 1100 cumecs was being released daily.

Danger level

According to a forecast of the Central Water Commission, on Sunday the level of the Ganga near Haridwar reached 293.08 metres. The danger level is 294 metres.

While the Tehri dam administration sees this as no danger, many have raised questions about the storage and release of water from the dam.

According to the NRLDC data, between June 15 and 18 when rivers in the State rose owing to heavy rain, the level in the dam increased by about 29 metres and reached 776.8 metres on June 18.

“It was because of the Tehri dam that the downstream areas were saved from the probable mid-June flash floods,” Mr. Jha said.

However, Vimal Bhai, a member of Matu Jan Sangathan that works on dam related issues, said: “The Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) authorities claim to have saved the areas downstream of the dam from probable flash floods in June; what about the present situation?”

Now that the reservoir is almost about to reach its permissible limit of 825 metres, will the dam not become a cause of floods in downstream areas like Haridwar and Rishikesh?"

Himanshu Thakkar of South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP), said, "looking at the data trend in the past month, it seems as though the THDC is preparing to repeat the disaster the Tehri dam created in 2010."

Till August 2010, the permissible Full Reservoir Limit (FRL) of the dam was 820 metres. This limit was reached on August 27, 2010. According to Mr. Thakkar, the level reached 830 metres on September 19, 2010 and the Ganga at Haridwar reached the highest flood level of 296.3 metres. The level in the dam reached 831.45 metres on October 22, 2010.

An article published in SANDRP in 2010 states that other than 'creating avoidable disaster in the downstream area, the sudden release of huge quantity of water from the Tehri dam by the THDC submerged hydropower machines, including transformers of the under construction 400 MW Koteswar dam.'

The THDC, the State government, the Union Ministry of Water Resources, the Central Water Commission and the National Disaster Management Authority must look into the issue and take required steps for saving the areas downstream of the dam from probable floods in case of heavy rainfall, Mr. Thakkar said.

Collector warns fertilizer shops against over-pricing

District Collector M. Karunakaran has warned shops and dealers against over-pricing the fertilizers sold to farmers. In a statement issued here, he said that the district had been witnessing widespread rains that would enable farmers to take up agricultural activities. The Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies and Banks had stocked 2,256 tonnes of urea, 1,466.6 tonnes of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), 409 tonnes of potash and 1,693 tonnes of fertilizer mixture for the benefit of farmers.

The price of 50 kilograms of urea was Rs. 270.64, spic DAP - Rs. 1,250, IPL DAP - Rs. 1,125, and Zuari DAP - Rs. 1,200. As for Zuari potash, the rate fixed for the same quantity was Rs. 802.50, for IPL potash Rs. 850.

Stringent legal action would be initiated under the fertilizer control rules against fertilizer shops and dealers found selling above the rates fixed by the State Government, he said. Farmers can lodge complaints on this regard to the local agriculture department official, he added.

Water release stepped up in Thovalai channel

The Public Works Department has increased the quantum of water released to Thovalai channel from the Pechipparai dam for the benefit of farmers in the tail-end areas to carry out agriculture operations in full swing.

According to the Executive Engineer, PWD (Water Resource Organization), Kodayar Basin Division in Nagercoil, U.Subramanian, farmers in tail-end areas of the district — Seethappal, Nilapparai and the surrounding areas — have raised paddy crops on over 350 acres.

Due to heavy rain, release of water from major dams, including Pechipparai, was closed recently and again the release of water from the dams was restored for the benefit of farmers. However, as the standing crops in the tail-end areas have started withering, the farmers sought increase in the the quantum of water released to the Thovalai channel.

Hence, 283.26 cusecs of water was being released to the Thovalai channel.

Meanwhile, people living in the western coast of the district panicked after sea water entered their fishing hamlets and coconut groves, owing to rough weather for the last two days.

People living in the fishing hamlets at Thoothur and Mullurthurai moved to safer places as giant waves washed away two anti-sea erosion walls.

Egg rate

The National Egg Coordination Committee egg rate was Rs. 3.20 on Sunday.

Forty-year-old coconut trees now just firewood

Drought for over ten months took a toll on these majestic trees



Cut down:Coconut trees that have been felled and sawn into logs, lie in a field at Chinnasoragai in Mettur taluk in Salem district.- PHOTO: P. GOUTHAM

Once standing majestically over 30-metres-tall for over 40 years, and each of their parts used by living beings, coconut trees have been deprived of their lives and are currently being chopped up for use as firewood in brick units.

The drought that prevailed for over 10 months in the district has played havoc in the lives of farmers who cultivated coconut trees and thereby reaped a rich harvest of coconuts in past years. They have been forced to sell the trees for just Rs. 250 each.

Gopalsamy (55), a farmer in Chinnasoragai in Mettur Taluk, told The Hindu that he had already sold 100 of his trees as they failed to withstand the drought and had gone dry.

“The income from selling coconuts from these trees has served my family for two generations. But today it is just a wooden log,” he says, with tears welling up in his eyes.

After wells went dry, farmers in the area depended on borewells.

But their plight worsened after the borewells also went dry, leaving them no way to obtain water. Their efforts to procure water through tanker lorries proved too costly and the trees lost their lush look.

Cutting the trees and transporting logs to the units nearby, would cost Rs. 120 for each tree and farmers could get only Rs. 130 for each tree, adds Gopalsamy.

He added that the roots of the coconut trees would be removed and corn cultivation would be carried out.

“We believe the soil and depend on the rain,” he added. Farmers said that a few trees were over 60 years old and had been serving many generations.

“It takes at least seven years for a tree to bear fruit. But it took just a minute to fell the tree,” said the farmers.

They wanted the government to chart out long-term plan so that the existing trees and the new saplings could withstand severe drought conditions.

Farmers say they have been forced to sell withered trees for Rs.250 each

Delta farmers frustrated as Cauvery water goes waste

Sudden release of water exposed lack of water management: farmers

The water level in Mettur dam touching as low as below 20 feet mark a couple of weeks ago against its maximum reservoir level of 120 feet, the government machinery, farmers, and the other sections of society were in for a great distress.

While farmers ruled out the prospect of Samba crop, the residents of the central districts were worried because of acute drinking water scarcity.

With no sign of the onset of monsoon in the near future, the water crisis worsened not only in rural areas, but in the towns.

The copious rain in the catchment areas of the Cauvery in Karnataka came as a pleasant gift to the entire State. Aided by heavy inflow, the water level suddenly shot up in the Mettur and the dam was full within a week. The inflow was so heavy that water had to be released into the Coleroon river from the Cauvery to prevent floods. This was only the third instance of water being discharged into the Coleroon in the last one decade.

The heavy inflow of water in both the Cauvery and the Coleroon brought relief to the government, farmers, and the common people. However, a substantial portion of the water released has drained into the sea.

The water managers and farmers are worried as the water that flowed in the Coleroon could not be saved. No comprehensive scheme has been implemented for utilising the waters to the optimum extent. The Coleroon runs through the drought-prone areas of Ariyalur, Thanjavur, and Nagapattinam districts before entering the Cuddalore district.

No doubt, the surplus discharge from the Krishnaraja Sagar Reservoir has eased the drinking water supply in Tiruchi and a series of the Combined Drinking Water Supply scheme utilising the Cauvery waters, has been augmented. The release of water in the Coleroon has helped in a big way in recharging the water table, which has gone down alarmingly, causing extra stress for the local bodies in ensuring drinking water supply.

But the sheer wastage of the Cauvery water into the sea has caused dismay among the environmentalists. The current discharge, they said, had exposed the absence of water management scheme in the State – for a prolonged period, despite witnessing such phenomenon once in five years or so. “Several schemes have been drafted for the efficient utilisation of the surplus waters from the Cauvery but not implemented so far,” said Ayilai Siva Suriyan, District secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam.

He said the State government had drafted a plan for taking the waters from the Mettur to the Coleroon through Thuraiyur and Mannachanallur.

“Through this 183-km route, 185 tanks will get assured water supply. The wastage of water into sea will be prevented to a great extent, a phenomenon which is witnessed once in four or five years,” he said and added adding that the plan, evolved as early as 1972, had been put to cold storage.

C. Masilamani, district president of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said that not all water let into the Coleroon got into the sea.

Water Level



Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 128.45 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 998.96 cusecs and 1,504.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam. The water level in the Manimuthar dam stood at 65.97 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 47 cusecs and 55 cusecs was discharged.

Nagercoil

Water level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 27.30 feet, while it was 66.25 feet in Perunchani, 11.74 feet in Chittar I, 11.84 feet in Chittar II and 29.53 feet in the Mambazathuraiyaru dam.

130 farmers get implements

Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has adopted Valanadu to promote latest agriculture technologies and practices. IFFCO will also supply fertilizers to the farmers of the village through the primary agricultural cooperative society and supply farm implements at subsidised rates. About 130 farmers were given implements at a function held recently at the village in the presence of G. Rajendra Prasad, Joint Registrar, Cooperatives, and Subramanian, regional manager, IFFCO, an official release said.

Water level improves in Thirumoorthy Dam

Inflow of water to the dam stands at 530 cusecs



Copious flow of water at Panchalingam Falls at Thirumoorthy hills in Tirupur attracting tourists. -

Photo: Special arrangement

The water level in Thirumoorthy Dam has started rising slowly following the release of water from the upstream through Contour Canal and the Public Works Department (Water Resources Organisation) is expecting to release the water for irrigation by the month-end.

PWD (WRO) sources told The Hindu that the water would be released from the dam, after obtaining the necessary government orders, once the level at the dam site touched 55 feet against the total height of 60 feet.

The water level at the dam stood at 3.07 feet at 3 p.m. on Friday. The inflow of water, mainly through Contour canal, stood at 530 cusecs and the outflow at 13 cusecs at 3 p.m.

“The present meagre outflow from the dam is through Dhali channel and meant for drinking purposes,” PWD (WRO) officials said. The officials added that once the water level at the dam touched the targeted 55 feet, the water would be released for irrigation both through Dhali channel and Parambikulam main canal to cater to almost 94,000 acres of farm land.

The water through Dhali channel would also be feeding eight irrigation tanks namely Ottukulam, Periyakulam, Chengulam, Dhinaikulam, Chettikulam, Karisalkulam, Ammapattikulam and Valayapalayamkulam in the downstream areas.

With thick sheet of water cascading down from Panchalingam Falls at Thirumoorthy Hills, the tourists could be seen in plenty in the area. One of the smaller tributaries of River Palar that flows into the Thirumoorthy Dam makes the Panchalingam Falls.

New method for improving red gram yield

Transplantation methodology for improving the red gram yield, a relatively new tool, is all set to be implemented on a large-scale in the district following the success registered in its implementation on a trial basis during the last fiscal.

A total outlay of Rs. 3 crore is going to be spent by the Department of Agriculture for raising the crop in poly bags under nursery conditions and then transplant it to the main field and for adoption of micro irrigation.

Under the project, vital inputs like seeds, micro nutrient mixtures and growth promoters will be provided cost-free to the farmers.

To add novelty, the department will provide cellulosic hydrogel developed by Indian Agricultural Research Institute to the farmers so that they could apply it in the root zone of the soil and retain water received. “The water retained will be released by the hydrogel to the plant as and when the soil moisture gets depleted,” Joint Director of Agriculture Mohammed Kalimullah Sherif told *The Hindu*.

According to him, the main advantage of the transplantation method is that it enables sowing even before the onset of monsoon and input costs could be reduced. “Besides it, optimum plant population can be maintained and pod borer insect damages to the plant can be avoided, both of which automatically leads to higher productivity,” he said.

'Hike duty drawback for salt export'

To curb a gradually declining trend in salt export, feel Tuticorin traders



A huge collection of salt in a pan in Tuticorin on Sunday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

To bolster salt export trade, duty drawback needs to be hiked at any cost. Salt export trade is gradually witnessing a declining trend. Hence, it needs a boost to achieve market certainty, according to B. Prabakaran John, a Tuticorin-based salt export trader.

Though salt production surged ahead over the past years considerably, its export market was uncertain.

“As per Foreign Trade Policy, duty drawback for salt is only one percentage of Free on Board (FOB) value of exports and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry should volunteer to hike the drawback to three or four percentage to flourish this trade through the salt industry,” Mr. John said here on Sunday.

Overseas shipments are normally being made to Korea, Indonesia, African countries, Sri Lanka, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries based on demands.

Bulk consignments of salt to the tune of 26, 020 metric tonnes have been shipped to South Korea in two consecutive days in July, 2013 through logic support of V.O. Chidambaranar Port, Tuticorin.

Korean importers had been diverted from purchasing the large quantities of consignment from Gujarat to Tuticorin, a major contributor of salt production in Tamil Nadu, the second largest producer in India.

On salt export trade, M. Jayabal, Assistant Salt Commissioner (in-charge), Tuticorin, when contacted, said export volume had dipped slightly with a marginal difference of thousand tonnes when compared to records during 2011-12 and the previous fiscal. In 2012-13, export growth slowed with a volume of 1, 54, 000 metric tonnes whereas in 2011-12, a total of 1, 55, 000 tonnes of salt was shipped to countries abroad.

But during 2010-11, salt industry catered to meet higher export demand with a volume of 3,58,000 tonnes.

Salt production is 19.2 lakh tonnes in 2012-13 and over its corresponding previous fiscal, the production level dropped to 18.53 lakh tonnes. With a record of 17.18 lakh tonnes in 2010-11, production plummeted further.

With the existence of 13, 448 acres of land, production was being done in an organised manner and 10,665 acres of land, where production was found unorganised, according to a survey by Salt Department.

To compete with Gujarat, the leading salt producer in India and also with Australia in the international market, salt manufacturers had been oriented to the latest techniques to improve

its quality at model salt farm at Marakkanam in Villupuram district, where the facility was established at Rs.30 lakh, Mr. Jayabal said.

15 MW bagasse-based power plant coming up at sugar mill

Industries Minister opens additional class rooms

A bagasse-based cogeneration power unit of 15MW capacity will be set up at the Moongilthuraipattu Cooperative Sugar mill, according to P. Thangamani, State Industries Minister.

Addressing a meeting of the sugarcane officers during his visit to the mill on Saturday, the Minister asked the officials to speed up work on the power plant and make it operational by December.

Lamenting that there was a shortfall in the sugarcane area coverage under the mill, he asked the officials to set it right soon. The sugarmill had been given the target of bringing a total of 15,400 acres of sugarcane crop under its purview, but so far only 14,717 acres had been covered. The onus was now on the sugarcane officers to persuade more number of sugarcane growers to enrol with the sugar mill, he said.

Farmer's contributions

Earlier, Mr. Thangamani inaugurated the additional class rooms built at a cost of Rs. 25 lakh and a community hall constructed at a cost of Rs. 10 lakh on the premises of the sugar mill. He pointed out that these structures had come up by the contributions made by the farmers attached to the sugar mill.

He underscored the point that only with public participation the success of any organisation could be ensured, and the Moongilthuraipattu farmers had set an example in this regard.

Referring to the good performance of the sugar mill-run school Mr. Thangamani said, "Nowadays the government-run schools outperform the private schools."

He pointed out that for improving the standard of education, the State government had earmarked a sum of Rs. 17,000 to the education department.

It was felt that the prerequisite for achieving good academic results was to fill up the teacher vacancies. Accordingly the government had recently appointed 50,000 teachers, he said.

Mr. Thangamani, along with Rural Industries Minister P. Mohan, visited the Kallakurichi-II Cooperative Sugar mill also.

Both the Ministers inspected the functioning of every section of the mill, including the sugarcane stockyards, the boilers and packaging sections.

Awards for tobacco farmers

The 14th tobacco farmers awards will be presented on August 18. The award, according to The Tobacco Institute of India, was being given since 1999 for promoting scientific and progressive agricultural practices among the cigarette leaf tobacco farmers from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The award function will be held at Saraswathi Convention Hall, KHB Colony, Hootagalli, Belawadi Post, Mysore, at 10 a.m. — Staff Reporter

Alamatti dam records full water-level



With the water-level reaching full capacity, all the crest gates of the Alamatti dam were closed on Saturday.

The Alamatti dam, one of the major reservoirs of the State, reached its full capacity on Saturday with the water-level recorded at 519.60 m, with the maximum storage capacity at 123.081 tmcft. Last year, the dam filled to its brim in September. This year, the water-level has reached the full capacity in August itself.

According to officials of Krishna Bhagya Jal Nigam Limited (KBJNL) the dam could have filled even earlier.

However, the officials kept releasing water from the dam to avoid floods in both the upper and the lower regions of the dam.

A few days ago, the dam was receiving over 2 lakh cusecs of water following heavy rain in the Krishna basin.

Due to the heavy inflow, the officials kept the outflow high by releasing water to the Narayanpur dam in Yadgir district.

About a fortnight ago, all the 26 crest gates of the reservoir were opened to discharge excess water.

Now, as the inflow has reduced, the officials are storing water helping the dam reach its full capacity.

The officials said that as the inflow was not constant, the water-level was being monitored.

On Saturday, inflow was recorded at 74,437 cusecs, while the outflow was 53,383 cusecs. The excess water was discharged through canals to the power generating unit of Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL).

Better management

The better management of the water-level by KBJNL is believed to have helped avoid floods this year.

Deputy Commissioners of Bijapur and Bagalkot district say that they kept a constant watch on the water released from dams in Maharashtra and also the increased inflow owing to rain. A proper coordination between the officials of Maharashtra and Karnataka ensured that the water-level was maintained at the appropriate level thereby avoiding floods in the two districts, they said.

Better management of the water-level has helped avoid floods this year

Root-knot nematodes infect paddy seedlings

Infestation has been noticed in several nurseries in K.R. Pet taluk; it could have a severe impact on yield



Paddy seedlings in several nurseries in K.R. Pet taluk have been infected by root-knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne spp*). The infestation could have a severe impact on yield.

Symptoms of the infestation have also been noticed in paddy nurseries in Mysore, Tumkur, Ramanagaram, Chickballapur, Kolar, Davangere and Chitradurga districts.

Paddy seedlings in Maduvina Kodi, Akki Hebbalu, Alambadi, Hariharapura, Somanathapura and a few other villages in K.R. Pet taluk have been infected, M.K. Prasanna Kumar, Plant Pathologist (Rice Section), V.C. Farm, told *The Hindu* here on Saturday.

“We have noticed the infestation in entire K.R. Pet taluk. It will severely affect the growth of the crop,” Dr. Kumar said.

Root-knot nematodes have affected Jyothi, BR2655, MTU1001, Jaya and other popular paddy varieties in K.R. Pet taluk. Paddy seedlings which were ready for planting have been affected. In a majority of the places, 15-to-20-day-old seedlings have been affected, resulting in yellowing, stunted growth and death of the seedlings, Dr. Kumar said.

Researchers and plant pathologists at the Zonal Agricultural Research Station (V.C. Farm), who noticed the infection, have launched a massive programme to educate farmers on tackling it.

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore has also sounded an alert and has requested farmers to be vigilant. Dr. Kumar, D.K. Sidde Gowda, Entomologist (Rice, V.C. Farm), and other experts have already visited the villages and educated farmers on tackling the root-knot nematode infestation.

Galls (outgrowths) have developed on the roots of the seedlings, which is characteristic of the infection. The farmers have been advised to apply Carbofuran 3g to the seedlings in the nursery itself as the infection spreads through irrigation water from affected plots.

Advisories sent out

Meanwhile, K.T. Rangaswamy (professor, Plant Pathology) and team members of the UAS-B have started sending out advisories to registered farmers in Mandya, Mysore, Tumkur, Ramanagaram, Chikaballapur, Kolar, Davangere and Chitradurga districts.

Farmers can contact the V.C. Farm on (08232) 277008 for information.

IT-based system for better crop productivity

CWRDM expected to develop a model for budgeting of soil nutrients

Farmers and agricultural experts in Kerala will soon have access to a powerful scientific tool enabling them to diagnose soil health problems and come up with cost-effective strategies to enhance crop productivity without disturbing the environmental equilibrium.

The Decision Support System (DSS) for sustaining soil fertility will be one of the outcomes of an India-Austria collaborative research project on sustaining and improving rural livelihoods through adaptive approaches to land, soil, and water management.

Approved by the Technology, Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, the Rs.1.8-crore project will involve the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM), Kozhikode, along with the National Institute of Hydrology (NIH), Institute of Rural Management (IRMA), Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR), and International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Austria.

As part of the research project, the CWRDM is expected to develop a model for budgeting of soil nutrients. Scientists from the institution will carry out a survey among farmers and conduct field experiments on select crops such as banana, tapioca, coconut, and vegetables in Kozhikode district to identify the agricultural practices and socio-economic conditions responsible for depletion of soil fertility.

“Productivity of almost all crops, except rubber, is low in Kerala compared to other States,” points out U. Surendran, Scientist, Water Management (Agriculture), CWRDM, and principal investigator of the project. “Improved agricultural productivity is imperative to sustaining the livelihood of small and marginal farmers in the light of the increasing pressure on natural resources, declining soil fertility, low groundwater levels, deterioration of water quality, and inadequate policy support for resource management, and climate change factors impacting crop yield,” he says.

The proposed DSS will be an interactive software-based mechanism to help policymakers diagnose soil nutrient problems at the local level and prescribe appropriate solutions. “Calculation of nutrient balance is the most cost-effective technique to assess the decline in soil fertility. It provides an early indication of potential problems like toxicity or acute deficiency responsible for declining yield,” Dr. Surendran says.

The DSS will integrate the data provided by the partnering institutions to factor in elements such as climate change and development scenarios, changes in land use and cropping systems, and water management alternatives and sustainable soil nutrient management practices. It will be submitted to the governments of India and Austria to help in policy decisions. P.S. Harikumar, Head, Water Quality, CWRDM, and K. Madhavachandran, Scientist, Water Management (Agriculture) are co-investigators of the project.

Science expo begins

A three-day district-level science exhibition-cum-competition featuring thought-provoking projects on varied themes relating to science and technology besides environmental protection got under way at SFS High School here on Sunday.

The exhibition-cum-competition is being organised under the Union Ministry of Science & Technology sponsored Innovation in Science Pursuits for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) programme.

Students belonging to over 400 government and private schools are participating in the event.

Some of the projects highlighted the efficacy of renewable energy sources like solar power to meet the ever increasing energy needs of the country.

Minister for Horticulture R. Venkat Reddy inaugurated the three-day exhibition.

RAINS-UP

Rain continued to lash Uttar Pradesh on Sunday as the monsoon remained normal over most parts of the State, particularly the eastern region.

Many major rivers flowing through the State are in spate at a number of places, a Central Water Commission report said. —PTI

'In poultry market, branding of shop helps'



For Coimbatore-based Suguna group, the growing market for chicken in the country has opened up opportunities across the poultry sector. During the last three decades, Suguna has built its

capacities across the entire poultry vertical — from feed to processed and packed chicken. Its market has crossed boundaries. Started as a poultry company in Udumalpet, near Coimbatore, in 1984, it is today a Rs.5,000 crore plus group exploring opportunities in the food and agricultural space. Suguna Foods, the flagship company in Suguna Holdings, is into production of broiler, processed meat, ready-to-eat products, eggs, and poultry feed. The company exports its products to West Asian countries, and has operations in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Under the contract farming model, it has partnered over 18,000 farmers across the country for broiler and egg production. The company supplies day-old chicks and feed to the farmers. It also helps take care of the health of the birds. The farmers get “growing charges” and the company takes back the fully-grown birds for sale.

B. Soundararajan, Managing Director of Suguna Holdings, elaborates on the market, opportunities, and trends in the Indian market for the poultry sector. Excerpts from his interaction with **The Hindu**.

How has the Indian market evolved for poultry products during the last one-and-a-half decades?

Almost one-third of the Indian population either does not have access to, or cannot afford to buy chicken. Another one-third of the population is vegetarian. So, just one-third of the population consumes chicken. What was once a festive dish is now a weekly dish. In future, it will become a daily dish. That is the opportunity we are seeing in this business.

When we started (in the 1980s), chicken was known as country chicken and the Indian average of annual per capita consumption was 200-300 gm. Gradually, organised poultry came in, prices became affordable, and availability went up. This increased the availability of chicken at retail points. In Coimbatore, in the 1980s, there was just one bulk buyer in the city, and he used to purchase 2,000 kg of chicken a day. Now, the average daily consumption (institutional and retail) here is one lakh kg.

The annual per capita consumption of poultry in the country is now 3 kg. In developed countries, the total per capita consumption of meat is 70-80 kg. Even in developing countries, where meat is a daily food, it is 30-40 kg. Compared to these markets, Indian consumption is less.

The number of hotels serving non-vegetarian food has gone up. It shows the consumer interest and preference. Food habits are changing, especially among the younger generation. In the coming days, the consumer base will increase. That is the opportunity.

What is the market for processed meat?

The market for processed meat is just 4-5 per cent of the total chicken consumption segment. While the poultry sector is growing at about 10 per cent annually, the processed meat sector is growing at nearly 30 per cent.

It has three major buyers — quick serve restaurant chains (they buy only processed meat from certified plants), 5-10 per cent of restaurants have moved towards processed chicken, and retail consumers (4 or 5 per cent).

For the retail consumers, the limitation is availability of processed chicken according to their need. Very few modern retail outlets sell processed meat. Further, consumers' preference differs according to the cooking style and dish.

In such a market where customisation plays a major role, how do you think branding helps?

Sale of unpacked, but customised products in branded shops will succeed, rather than branding the product. For another 5-10 years, this will be the trend. Dairy has moved to packed concept mainly because availability of fresh products has reduced and customer trust of the product in the packed form has increased. In poultry, even in metros, consumers do not store meat in the refrigerator and use it over a period of time. They prefer to buy the product fresh from a meat shop and cook it immediately. In such a market, branding of the shop helps.

Now, tell us a little bit about competition

Competition is intensifying. Especially, existing players are growing.

What is the export potential?

We have gone to Bangladesh. But, we do not sell the end-product there. We sell feed and chicks (which are not fully grown birds). In Sri Lanka, we produce poultry feed. We export processed chicken to West Asia but not on a regular basis.

In the poultry sector, Brazil is a raw meat exporter across the world. Another major exporter is the U.S. which markets select chicken products to several countries. Thailand is a major exporter of cooked meat. It is difficult to compete with these countries. Our corn and soya prices are higher, and it is difficult to be cost-competitive. Further, these countries are looking at opportunities in India, which has a growing market.

Price of several agricultural products has shot up during the last one year. How is it affecting the feed sector?

We are an integrated company, producing from feed to packed chicken. We entered the feed sector in 1990. Livestock feed has three major categories — poultry, cattle and aqua. Farmers, who are in the layer segment (eggs), buy corn and soya and make the feed in their farm. In broiler, the farmer buys the feed from the market. Corn and soya are two main products for

poultry feed. Availability of these is not an issue. The country has an annual corn production of 22 million tonnes and nearly 12 million tonnes is consumed by the poultry sector. But, corn is pre-dominantly rain dependent. So, if monsoon fails, prices shoot up. Since 2008, every year there is a 15 per cent increase in corn prices.

In the case of soya, 95 per cent of production is dependent on rain. Even internationally, the price of this commodity has gone up. Hence, feed cost has also shot up. Feed constitutes 80 per cent of the poultry production cost.

What are the challenges for the sector?

There are two major challenges — commodity price fluctuation and the sales side. In other countries, at the end of the crop season about 15 per cent stock of the produce is available. In India, where the crop season starts in October, the stock is almost nil by the end of the season. In September, availability comes down. This escalates the cost of production and the chicken price.

The next is the sales side. Chicken is not a product that is stored and sold. Hence, whatever the price on a given day, the product is sold.

What about bird flu?

As much as 80-85 per cent of eggs and chicken produced in the country are estimated to be from the organised sector. The organised sector includes contract farming and independent farming. In India, 70 per cent of production is from contract farming. Bird flu has not had an impact on the organised poultry sector.

How is poultry part of allied activities in farms?

Farmers should have allied activities so that they are not dependent only on crops for revenue. The input cost for agriculture will come down when they have poultry or cattle as allied activities. In an integrated farm, the need for fertilisers will come down. Several farmers are taking poultry farming as an alternative source of income compared to direct agriculture income.

Broiler production is a commercial activity and several farmers evince interest in it. Income from poultry farming is sustainable to them. Further, poultry manure is good organic manure. Poultry is a focussed activity and can be taken up by those who are at the farm every day.

Bt cotton replaces indigenous varieties in flag-making



The Indian tricolour may have lost its indigenous connection with the 'desi' cotton variety, with the use of Bt cotton — a proprietary technology of an American seed company.

Jayadhar, a popular variety of cotton grown in Karnataka that was also earlier used in making flags, has been replaced by Bt cotton.

Now, flag-making units at Bengeri in Hubli city and Garaga in Dharwad district, which meet the nationwide demand for the tricolour, have been using wholly or partly the khadi derived from Bt cotton.

“Quality of cotton is determined by length, strength and appearance, and Bt cotton provides all these qualities. The national flag needs to be stronger. We mainly process Bt cotton and buy other varieties if they are available,” an official at the Central Spinner Plant in Chitradurga said.

The staple in indigenous varieties is shorter than Bt cotton, the official explained on the choice of cotton.

The plant, a unit of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, supplies about 1,000 kg cleaned (after a process called roving to remove dust particles and short fibres) cotton to Garaga Kshetriya Seva Sangh in Dharwad that till 2008 was the sole flag-making unit in the country. The cotton is then hand spun to yarn using a charaka and woven into khadi in handloom. However, sangha secretary Suresh V. Davande said that he was not aware of the Bt cotton being supplied.

At the Karnataka Khadi Gramodyoga Samyukta Sangha at Bengeri where flag making started in 2008, the tricolour is manufactured using khadi made out of a combination of Jayadhar and Bt cotton. “To make the flag stronger, we mix Bt cotton with Jayadhar in a ratio of 25:75,” sangha secretary H.N. Antin said. Machinery is not used in the entire flag-making process, he added.

While the sangha at Garaga manufactures about 20,000 flags annually, about 10,000 flags are made annually at Bengeri. The size of the flags — all coming with BIS marking — range from one-and-a-half inch x one inch to 14 ft x 21 ft and the cost ranges from Rs. 115 to Rs. 16,945. The two-and-half ft x three ft flag is most popular in the country.

According to Mr. Davande, every thing that goes into the making of the flag have to meet BIS standards.

“It is unfortunate that the cotton developed by an American company is being used to make the Indian flag” — a symbol of pride for the countrymen — when there are many indigenous cotton varieties that were earlier used for flag making,” said Krishnaprasad of Sahaja Samruddha, which is trying to revive local cotton varieties.

“Before the advent of Bt cotton, only Indian varieties of cotton were being used. Why is it that indigenous varieties are not used now,” he asked.

GM Free India activists have urged the Prime Minister to hoist the flag made from organic cotton this Independence Day.

Government promises facilities for veterinary colleges

Written assurance given to Veterinary Council of India

The State government has submitted a written assurance to the Veterinary Council of India (VCI) that it will provide infrastructure to veterinary colleges in Bidar, Shimoga and Hassan within a year.

This is to convince the VCI authorities to issue conditional clearances to allow Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University (KVAFSU) to admit students to these colleges.

However, the government has not kept most of its promises made eight years ago to develop the university.

T. N. Chaturvedi, the then Governor and Chancellor, who inaugurated the university, had announced the government’s plans to provide civil and technological infrastructure and human resource to it.

He had expressed the hope that the university would turn out to be a friend of farmers.

‘New institution’

“Please don’t think we are upgrading the veterinary college into a university,” Mirajuddin Patel, the then Minister for Animal Husbandry, had said. “This is a completely new institution that we are committed to build,” he vowed.

He had promised a land grant of over 350 acres, transfer of 30 properties from the University of Agriculture Sciences and appointment of over 800 teachers and non-teaching staff to the university within a year.

Empty promises

However, such statements turned out to be empty promises.

“Successive government have promised more than they could deliver,” R.N. Srinivas Gowda, the first Vice-Chancellor, said.

The land transfer, construction of buildings and laboratories, and appointment of officials and teachers have not been as fast as expected.

That explained why the VCI withheld permission to admit students to the colleges, he said.

Teaching posts vacant

KVAFSU officials said over 25 per cent of teaching posts were still vacant. They should have been filled in the first two years.

Even the appointment of 122 teachers has not resolved the issue. It has attracted a legal challenge too after an inquiry by the Regional Commissioner. All the recruitment letters carry a conditional clause that they were subject to a court judgment.

Officials hopeful

University officials however, are hopeful. “The government has agreed to our requests to fill up 90 teaching posts and 700 non-teaching posts in phases,” C. Renuka Prasad, Vice-Chancellor, said. To start with, post graduates working in the Department of Animal Husbandry would be deputed to the university.

Senior officials have asked us to go ahead with recruitment, he said. The first round of appointing 108 non-teaching staff was already complete. “We are drawing up plans to recruit more staff in the next year. We are also building the teaching veterinary clinical complex,” Dr. Renuka Prasad said.

M. K Shankarlinge Gowda, Principal Secretary, Animal Husbandry, said there was no dearth of funds.

“We will meet all the requirements of the institution. We also plan to release research and extension grants of Rs. 10 crore under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana,” he added.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0
Humidity: 84
Wind: normal

Monday, Aug 12

Max Min

31° | 24°

Sunrise: 05:56
Sunset: 06:31
Barometer: 1006

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Aug 13

Max Min

36° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Aug 14



36° | 26°

Cloudy

Thursday
Aug 15



36° | 25°

Overcast

Friday
Aug 16



36° | 25°

Overcast

Saturday
Aug 17



36° | 25°

Overcast

Sunday
Aug 18



36° | 25°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Chennai

Delhi

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:48
Humidity: 84 Sunset: 07:03
Wind: normal Barometer: 1004



THE HINDU Business Line

Pepper market buoyant despite limited activities



Pepper market – both futures and the spot – was buoyant last week despite limited activities due to tight supply and lack of buying interest.

Even though the pipelines were understood to be empty in the upcountry markets, buyers were seen inactive as they were “anxiously waiting /anticipating for the release of an estimated 800 tonnes of pepper held in warehouses in Saharanpur (UP),” market sources said. bSimilarly, some in the market believe that some part of the stocks held in the warehouses in Kochi would be released in the near future once they are cleared by the Food Safety authorities after checking in the designated laboratories.

This feeling has created a bearish sentiment in some section of the market.

Availability was tight last week because of the Ramzan holidays and the incessant rains, floods and landslides disrupting movement of goods from the growing areas in the high ranges.

Consequently, supply has fallen sharply. Tamil Nadu dealers were reportedly buying actively from Kerala. Erode, Cumbum, Theni and Gudalur have become major pepper trading hubs in Tamil Nadu because of tax benefits, they said.

Many of the inter-State dealers have shifted their operations to Karnataka due to availability of pepper there.

“Possibility of exporting is remote as the Malabar is out priced, while there is no material available also,” market sources told *Business Line*.

IPSTA sources said: “according to the order of FMC, we have implemented daily fluctuation from Rs 500-1,000 with effect from July 31 and margin has been raised to 20,000 a tonne.”

Notwithstanding, trading during the weekend was of negligible volume, they said.

All the active contracts last week increased on the NMCE.

Aug and Sep contracts went up by Rs 508 and Rs 644 respectively a quintal to Rs 41,700 and Rs 42,100.

Total turnover decreased by 110 tonnes to 154 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 12 tonnes to 75 tonnes.

Spot prices moved up by Rs 100 to Rs 39,100 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,100 (MG 1) a quintal.

No export demand was seen and those committed earlier were also appears to have gone slow.

In the international market, everybody was buying from Sri Lanka.

Anticipating the arrival of Brazilian new crop in Sep, Indonesia started offering, said an overseas report.

Europeans were on summer holidays last week.

Indian parity last weekend was at \$6,975 (c&f) for Europe and \$7,225 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained out priced.

Maharashtra farmers switch over to cash crops

The area under cash crops such as soyabean and cotton has seen a surge in Maharashtra. Simultaneously, the area under food crops is down 14 per cent compared to the average area of such crops.

Experts are alarmed by this development as they fear that the falling food crop acreage will further fuel food inflation.

Cash crops are most sought after by farmers.

This year farmers have chosen to plant soyabean because they received the highest rate of Rs 4,500 a quintal (100 kg) for their produce last year.

Currently, the area under the oilseed has risen 38 per cent to about 38.72 lakh hectares (lh) compared to an average of 27.99 lh earlier. The area under cotton crop has increased by 14 per cent to 38.46 lh.

Agriculture Commissioner of Maharashtra Umakant Dangat told *Business Line* that the area under cash crops is increasing in the State. Farmers are following market trends and therefore they cannot be persuaded to grow food crops, he said.

Among the food crops the worst one to suffer is jowar, which is a major staple food across the State.

This year farmers have merely sowed about 6.12 lh of jowar, which is a 46 per cent decline, over the average area of 11.44 lh.

Even bajra has declined by 30 per cent to 7.8 lh from 11.33 lh.

Former Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat-based Anand Agricultural University M.C. Varshneya said that the decline in food crops a very alarming situation. The acreage of these crops is declining but the prices are shooting up continuously. Additional area under cash crops is providing more money in the hands of the farmers. But the people from the middle class are suffering as the prices of food grains have increased considerably, he said.

“Jowar grains, which were available at Rs 15/kg until recently, have now shot up to Rs 35. The middle class are forced to buy from the market as they cannot even access cheap grains from the public distribution system,” Varshneya said.

Demand for branded seeds shooting up, says Rallis MD



Growing promise: V. Shankar, MD, Rallis India Ltd. says the company sees opportunity in green products and contract farming. — Shashi Ashiwal

The copious south-west monsoon this year was the only saving grace for an embattled economy plagued by a huge current account deficit and slowing industrial activity. Though the cost of farming has gone up manifold, a bumper kharif crop is expected to bring some relief for consumers.

The Government has lent a helping hand to farmers by increasing the minimum support price for kharif crops such as soybean, maize and red gram. The recent gas price has pushed up fertiliser prices. With production cost going up, agriculture-focused companies are keeping their fingers crossed.

V. Shankar, Managing Director, Rallis India, a Tata Group company, said in an interaction with Business Line that farmers were affected by three major costs — labour, fertiliser and diesel. While diesel costs may ease due to better monsoon, high labour and fertiliser costs are here to stay this year.

Excerpts from the interview:

Do you expect food inflation to come down?

No. I do not think there will be a sharp fall in commodity prices though there may be improvement in crop output and yield this kharif season. Commodity prices are not expected to go below the minimum support price. However, it may soften a bit as the increase in support price was significantly lower compared to the trend seen in the last three years.

Will the good monsoon help Rallis?

Yes. We are seeing better demand for our products. Our seeds business is shaping up well. The demand for branded seeds is growing faster. We are almost done with the process of realigning our product offering to ensure sustained cash flow throughout the year. We now have a more balanced revenue flow round the year compared to earlier. Typically, Metahelix and seeds business contribute during the first quarter, while crop protection and fertiliser demand peaks in the second and third quarter. Our international business chips in during the fourth quarter.

You have stopped red triangle (pesticide) products. What is the impact?

All our products are now of greener variety. We want to make sure our products are good for farmers, soil and consumers. The crops grown with our green products leave no residue on the end product. It's true that some of the greener products are expensive, but they ensure better quality and yield for farmers.

Are farmers convinced with greener products?

It is a continuous process. We are in the process of educating farmers in value creation. We have a database of one million farmers and touch the life of about seven million farmers under our Kisan Kutumb programme. If I tell this to non-Indians they almost faint — it's the population of their country. But in India, we have 110 million farmers. Unlike olden days, farmers are now generating cash and affordability is not an issue.

How is your contract farming shaping out?

It cannot be called contract farming as such. We are working closely with farmers in pulses. Last year we touched about 1.6 lakh farmers and in the next four to five years we plan to work with 10 lakh farmers.

We intend to influence 15-20 per cent of pulses production in the country. This programme increases our engagement with farmers and educates them on the benefits of our products. We will also procure a portion of yield improvement that happens out of this programme.

Do you face any difficulty in executing buyback deals with farmers?

It is a learning process. We have to do it cautiously. There is no binding on farmers to sell their produce to us. Since we hand-hold them from the beginning, they invariably give it to us. The price is determined by the market. Procurement and managing price risks need a different competency. We procure pulses say once or twice a year, but we have to sell them throughout the year. This involves a huge price risk. Managing working capital also becomes a challenge. Storing it in the right way to ensure quality for consumers is the key.

What are the challenges in contract farming?

The main challenge is to make farmers execute your instructions. If it is not followed, yield may vary tremendously. Secondly, even if he listens to you, there is no guarantee that he will buy your products. He may buckle under dealers' advice.

Now we have to see how to convert the economic demand I create into a commercial demand.

If I don't, all the investments I make and resources I deploy go to others.

Demand heats up prices at Kochi tea sale

Demand perked up prices of almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi Tea auction. In sale no. 32, the quantity on offer in the Dust CTC grades was 8,16,000 kg.

The market for good liquoring and popular marks was fully firm to dearer by Rs 3-5 as the sale progressed. AVT stepped up its buying and prices appreciated to the tune of Rs 10 and more.

Others were irregular and sometimes dearer. The arrival for orthodox grades in the auction was low and the quantity on offer was only 3,000 kg. In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs 109/129, RD grades ruled Rs 127/160, SRD stood at Rs 130/167 and SFD at Rs 128/175.

However, there was a mixed trend in leaf sales. The quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 71,500 kg.

The market for select best Nilgiri barely remained steady, while others were irregular and lower following quality.

Well-made, clean, black, medium orthodox sold around last week levels, while others declined in value. Of the quantity of 77,500 kg on offer in CTC leaf grades, the market for good liquoring varieties was dearer. Others were irregular and lower. Plainer and browner teas found some difficulties in sale and witnessed heavy withdrawals.

Blacker and good liquoring teas were absorbed by exporters and upcountry buyers.

In the dust category, Mayura SFD and Waterfall SFD quoted the best prices of Rs 176 . In the leaf grades, Pascoes Hyson Green Tea fetched Rs 301 .

Basmati exporters see trade barrier design in US' red flag

Undefined Residue Limits In US			
Chemicals	EU MRL	Japan MRL	US MRL
Isoprothiolane	5 ppm	10 ppm	0
Tricyclazole	1 ppm	3 ppm	0
Buprofezin	0.5 ppm	0.5 ppm	0
Carbendazim	2 ppm	2 ppm	0



Rice exporters have alleged that the United States is erecting non-tariff barriers on Indian basmati shipments by raising the issue of fungicide traces to curb imports at the behest of their local producers.

By not fixing the maximum residue limits (MRLs) on fungicides, such as tricyclazole, isoprothiolane and carbendazium, the US is trying to indirectly curb imports from India, they allege.

The US started rejecting shipments after traces of tricyclazole were detected since late 2011.

The average rejection rates for basmati consignments have seen a sharp increase to about 50 per cent from zero in the past two years.

“It appears that we are being singled out, although the fungicides are used by other rice-growing nations, including Thailand and Pakistan,” said Rajen Sundaresan, Executive Director, All India Rice Exporters Association (AIREA).

India’s basmati exports to the US have grown to about one lakh tonnes last year from 40,000 tonnes three years ago.

Growing shipments

But, the actual shipments would be much lower, after factoring in rejections.

Indian basmati is considered the most expensive rice in the US, as it commands an almost three times higher price than American domestic long-grain rice.

Tricyclazole is a systemic fungicide used for controlling blast disease of rice and preventing rice spike and leaf paste.

It has low toxicity, low residue and is effective to control rust and powdery mildew.

It is used in major rice producing countries, such as Japan, Thailand and India among others.

“It is not a problem of contamination, as these pesticides have been used safely for decades in major rice- growing countries and are out of patent protection,” Sundaresan said.

fungicide traces

He added that fungicide traces detected in basmati were well within the MRL and safety limits prescribed by other OECD nations such as Japan and the EU. Exporters said fungicide traces get diluted when the rice is cooked, as the cereal cannot be consumed directly.

Though there is provision within the US Environment Protection Agency regulation for conducting tests on processed foods to check the residue, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) refuses to test cooked rice.

“The manner in which this plant protection chemical is being handled by the FDA leads us to believe that the regulations have been designed to trip good faith trading partners and act as a non-tariff barrier to curb imports” said R.S. Seshadri, Secretary-General of AIREA, voicing the view of the governing body of rice exporters.

Barring the odd exception, most chemical companies abandon off-patent chemicals and allow registrations to lapse or do not file for fresh registration.

It is not in their interest to promote the usage of generic, safe plant protection chemicals that have been in use for several decades.

“Yes, there is a sense of victimisation as, in our opinion; the responses from FDA may have been consistent but neither substantive and logical nor consistent with previous stances when American interests were at stake.

FDA decisions must be blind to the provenance of the commercial interests,” Seshadri said.

“The basmati issue could just be a beginning, but the same logic could be extended to other exports from India, such as the textiles and leather among others,” Seshadri added.

Though shipments to the US form a fraction of India’s total basmati exports of 3.5 million tonnes, the exporters are worried about the impact of negative publicity in the US spreading over to other markets.

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Tomato gains on low arrivals

Tomato arrivals are unlikely to improve and prices may continue to rule around current levels in the coming days, said market experts.

Fall in arrivals coupled with good domestic demand pushed tomato prices up by Rs 500-1,000 a quintal on Sunday.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that lower arrivals mainly pushed tomato prices back into positive territory. After witnessing a fall earlier this week, tomato prices have gone up in the last couple of days, he added.

On Sunday, just around 500 crates (of 25 kg each) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted between Rs 1,400 and Rs 4,400 a quintal. Around 1,000 crates of varieties such as Himsona and Hybrid were received.

Out of total arrivals, about 10 per cent stock was of low quality; around 30 per cent stock was of medium quality while about 60 per cent of total arrivals were of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality increased by Rs 1,000 and quoted at Rs 4,000-4,400. Medium quality produce went up by Rs 800 and quoted at 3,000-3,300 while Low quality produce was at Rs 1,400-2,600 , Rs 500 up from previous levels.



POLL SOP: CM LAUNCHES HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME FOR FARMERS

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday slammed the UPA Government at the Centre for its “anti-farmers’ policy” and asked his BJD members to reach out to the grassroots level to let the people know about “the pro-farmer initiatives” of the State Government.

Addressing a workshop organised by the newly-constituted Krushi O Krushak Committee of the BJD at the party headquarters here, Patnaik was critical of the Union Government for its failure to control the rise in prices of oil and fertilisers which impacts the farm sector adversely.

On the Food Security Bill introduced in Parliament by the UPA Government, Patnaik said his party would firmly oppose it if it envisages a provision of less of ration given at present to the poor and old people. He said that as per the Bill, the family head has been taken as beneficiary and the family would get less of ration and old people would be worst-affected.

In an attempt to attract the farming community towards the BJD in the upcoming elections, Patnaik announced launching of a Health Insurance Policy for farmers’ families. The State Government has decided to introduce the health insurance policy under the Biju Krushak Kalayn Yojana for the benefit of all farmers, irrespective of APL and BPL categories, he said.

Over two crore farmers would be benefited under this policy, Patnaik said, adding that the farmers would avail of the insurance cover up to Rs 1 lakh for their treatment. In case the treatment cost goes beyond Rs 1 lakh, it would be reimbursed out of the State Treatment Fund, he said. The function was presided over by chairman of Biju Farmers’ Committee Pradeep Maharathy. Ministers, party MPs, MLAs, district presidents, and senior leaders participated in the seminar, which finalised the future programme of the committee.

The BJD Krushi O Krushak Committee would start its visit from western Odisha districts after the Winter Session of Assembly.

Among others, Finance Minister Prasanna Acharya, Agriculture Minister Debi Prasad Mishra, Rural Development Minister Bikrak Aruk, Sports Minister Ramesh Majhi, BYJD president Sanjay Dasburma, party vice-president Prafulla Ghadai and MP Prasanna Patsani, addressed the seminar.

GM CROPS WILL RAISE FARM PRODUCTIVITY, SAYS FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Farmers' associations of Punjab and Haryana on Friday demanded allowing use of biotech crops in the country, claiming that genetically modified (GM) crops would raise farm productivity as well as their income.

"We face several challenges related to farm productivity like lack of availability of timely farm labour, high labour costs, insects, weeds diseases, unpredictable water and nutrient availability," said PS Pangli of PAU Kisan Club. He added, "GM crops can offer us solutions to these problems. Above all, GM crops will help in raising yield of our crops as witnessed in case of Bt cotton and income of growers." Farmers representing All India Coordinate Committee of Farmers Association, Fatehabad Kisan Club and Naujwan Kisan Club and other farm outfits also suggested that GM crops could be introduced in pulses, mustard, corn and maize as yield of these crops was quite low in the country.

They said that GM crops have in-built protection capability against harmful insects, enabling farmers to efficiently get rid of weeds and other diseases, thus leading to higher output. Citing an example of Bt Cotton, Ravi Kant, a cotton grower, in Fazilka said that because of Bt cotton seeds, country's cotton output has doubled while usage of pesticides dropped sharply.

"Our pesticides usage has reduced as we spray much less pesticides to tackle bollworms, the main pest which attacks cotton used to cause maximum yield loss. But now our yield has gone up manifold with the use of Bt cotton seeds," he said.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Festival season increases sugar demand, prices remain subdued



"The demand from kirana stores and banyas had reduces due to continuous rainfall," Ashok Jain, President, Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association said.

PUNE: Sugar mills across the country are upbeat that the festival season starting from the month of Shravana, coupled with clear skies, will help increase sugar demand. Although, the increase in demand will not help improve sugar prices much, it will help mills clear the stocks and get the much needed liquidity. Continuous rainfall in July, had reduced the demand for sugar, which becomes moist in rainy atmosphere. "The demand from kirana stores and banyas had reduces due to continuous rainfall. They are likely to stock more sugar due to the break in rainfall," said Ashok Jain, President, Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association. Break in rainfall will make the movement of sugarcane easier.

The festival season will begin from month of Shravana, which is just a few days away, increasing demand for sugar, till Dussehra in October. "Sugar prices have decreased to Rs 2800/quintal.

We now expect the sugar demand to go up from Shravana. It will help the mills clear the stocks which are upto 50%," said SM Taware, managing director, the Malegaon SSK, Baramati near Pune.

For the sugar mills in second largest sugar producer Uttar Pradesh, competition from imported sugar has reduced now. Shyam Lal Gupta, secretary, Uttar Pradesh Sugar Mills Association said, "Sugar demand will definitely go up during festivals. But it will not help much the sugar prices which are governed by sugar stocks. Sugar prices have dropped from Rs 31/kg to Rs 30/kg in July," said Mr Gupta. "We sold sugar at ex-mill Rs 2810/quintal to the exporters last week," said Rajendra Girme, chairman and managing director, Sasvad Mali SSK. Exports are also not helping improve sugar prices as exporter are quoting very low prices. " Even if the sugar prices rise slightly due to increased demand, they will come down immediately as there is no control on how much quantity the sugar mills can sell after removal of the quota restrictions," added Girme.
