

Date : 16.08.2013

THE HINDU

Creating awareness among students on local farm practices

Eco-clubs are promoting conservation and environment education in 18 villages



According to Mysore Amateur Naturalists, students in the eco-clubs learn about different native seeds and the Green Revolution and its fallout, while the focus is on achieving food security through local variety.— FILE PHOTO

Conservation education with focus on organic farming is gaining momentum in the vast mountainous regions around M.M. Hills that was once dominated by forest brigand Veerappan. The villages

Initiated by Anisha, an NGO working to popularise organic farming, Mysore Amateur Naturalists (MAN) is providing the education component and training teachers and educating students in 18 villages, including Gopinatham, the birthplace of Veerappan.

The other villages include Martalli, Vanakehalla, Bidrahalli, Voddaradoddi and Naalroad. K. Manu, of the MAN told The Hindu that 1,500 to 1,800 students from these villages were being covered by a unique eco-club movement in which locally relevant organic farming had been introduced as a key component in the school curriculum.

A total of two primary schools, eight high schools, four higher secondary schools, and two colleges are covered under this programme.

'Irrelevant'

“Conventional eco-club activities in urban areas include activities such as planting saplings. That is irrelevant to children living amidst nature. What is of immediate relevance to them is sustainability. Hence, MAN has devised a common programme for the entire cluster of villages and students to learn local agricultural practices, including identification of different varieties of horticultural crops, the knowledge of which is fast eroding,” said Mr. Manu.

Crux of problem

The crux of the problem in the region pertains to grazing inside the forests, which has been stopped following the declaration of large swathes of forest area as either elephant corridor or critical tiger zone. And the local community, living on the fringes of these forests, is grappling with livelihood issues as a result of the ban.

It is in this context that conservation and environment education has been taken up as part of a larger exercise to promote alternatives for self-sustenance.

The NGO hands over seeds of different crops to students’ parents for cultivation. The thrust is on organic farming and this is relevant as cultivation in the hilly terrain of M.M. Hills and surrounding regions is under rain-fed conditions, which cannot support conventional chemical farming without irrigation facilities, according to Mr. Manu.

“Students in the eco-clubs learn about different native seeds and the Green Revolution and its fallout, while the focus is on achieving food security through local variety,” he said.

Disconcerting

What was disconcerting was that traditional agricultural knowledge was fast disappearing among farmers even in remote areas. The eco-club activity was an attempt to reverse the trend. Agriculture and food was equated with rice, while minor millets had been ignored. Millet promotion was also embedded in the education programme.

Launched last month

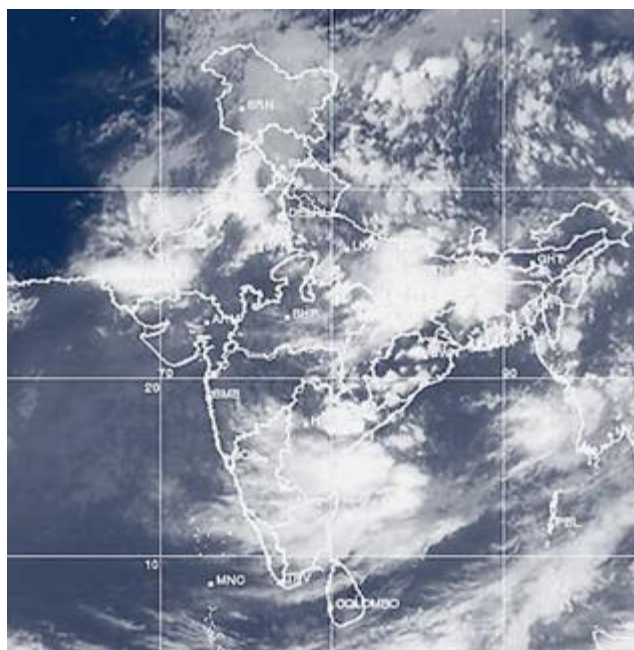
The programme was launched last month and will run till February by when the student community and the teachers will be well versed with local agricultural traditions.

What is more, participants, most of whom have small land holdings, would have cultivated at least 12 varieties of vegetables.

The first part of the training, including orientation for teachers, is over and they have visited the NGO’s resource centre at Aaladamara, near Martalli village, in Chamarajanagar district.

A majority of the students are children of migrant workers who worked in quarries and on asphaltting roads, but who are now not finding work.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on August 15th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	35	26	8	425
New Delhi (Sfd)	35	25	9	524
Chandigarh	33	25	8	635
Hissar	34	26	3	376
Bhuntar	31	19	9	361
Shimla	23	16	0	661
Jammu	24	22	91	915
Srinagar	19	16	18	201
Amritsar	29	24	56	501
Patiala	33	25	46	619
Jaipur	30	25	13	509
Udaipur	29	24	0	605
Allahabad	35	24	17	749
Lucknow	33	23	0	597
Varanasi	34	25	5	493
Dehradun	31	23	0	2321
Agartala	33	25	5	655
Ahmedabad	31	25	20	731
Bangalore	25	19	21	356
Bhubaneswar	33	27	6	597
Bhopal	30	23	tr	992
Chennai	26	23	46	385

Guwahati	31	25	19	623
Hyderabad	29	22	8	483
Kolkata	35	28	0	930
Mumbai	29	26	7	1991
Nagpur	32	24	0	1224
Patna	35	28	0	193
Pune	29	22	tr	531
Thiruvananthapuram	30	24	0	864
Imphal	27	22	8	711
Shillong	23	18	37	654

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

RAINFALL

South west Monsoon has been Vigorous over Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and west Rajasthan and active over Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The axis of monsoon trough on SLC passes through Anupgarh, Narnaul, Kanpur, Satna and thence south-east wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and west Rajasthan and at many places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (5 cm and above) HARYANA: Ujha Panipat 5, HIMACHAL PRADESH: Amb 9, Dalhausi 6 and Saloni 5, JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Katra 15, Udhampur and Samba 14 each, Jammu Airport 13, Kathua and Batote 11 each, Jammu 9, Baderwah and Banihal 7 each and Pahalgam 5 each, PUNJAB: Faridkot 13, Gurdapur and Malakpur 11 each, Kapurthala and Moga 8 each, Amritsar, Phangota and Ludhaiana 6 each and Madhopur, Shahpur Kandi, Phillaur, Muktsar and Patiala 5 each, EAST RAJASTHAN: Amet 9, Nasirabad 7, Sahada 6 and Rajakhera, Sambhar, Mount Abu and Niwai 5 each, WEST RAJASTHAN: Ramsar 20, Shiv 16, Shergarh 12, Ramgarh 10, Pilibhanga and Anupgarh 7 each, Barmer, Chotan and Pokhran 6 each and Fatehgarh 5, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Mau 10, Koraon 9, Karwi and Katerniaghat 8 each, Musafirkhana 7, Chhibramau and Kunda 6 each and Handia, Karchhana, Kaiserganj, Gonda and Tarabganj 5 each, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Sikohabad 9, Bilari 8, Aligarh 6 and Narora 5 and UTTARAKHAND: Barkot 11 and Keertinagar 5.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 17th August 2013 : Rain/thundershowers would occur at many places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi. Rain/thundershowers would occur at many places over Rajasthan during next 24 hrs and decrease thereafter.

HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING: Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during next 24 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 17th August 2013: Generally cloudy sky. Light rain/thundershowers would occur in some areas.

Botanical Garden to be beautified

The Union Department of Tourism has sanctioned a grant of Rs. 2 crore to the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University for beautifying the Botanical Garden here.

According to Vice-Chancellor of the university K. Ramasamy, the amount would be used to spruce up the garden to make it more attractive for visitors.

The university would use its own funds to a tune of Rs. 60 lakh to develop an eco-friendly park within the Botanical Garden campus soon, the Vice-Chancellor said.

“This will come up in an area of 12 acres and will be open to the public. Talks are on with the Coimbatore Corporation and Commissioner G. Latha has agreed to lay footpath from Lawley Junction to the university to enable safe walking space for the students. She will expedite footpath works within the Botanical Garden,” Mr. Ramasamy said.

Water level

The water level in Periyar dam was 133.50 feet with an inflow of 603 cusecs and a discharge of 1,949 cusecs on Thursday. The water level in Vaigai dam was 57.22 feet with an inflow of 1,370 cusecs and a discharge of 1,060 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 8,613 mcft. There was no rainfall in the region, PWD officials said.

Egg rate

The National Egg Coordination Committee egg rate was Rs. 3.10 on Thursday. – Staff Reporter

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 118.71 feet on Thursday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 11,499 cusecs and the discharge 12,009 cusecs.

Water level



Water level in the Papanasam dam on Thursday stood at 125.85 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 791.71 cusecs and 1,121 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 65.75 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 28 cusecs and 55 cusecs was discharged.

Nagercoil

Water level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 27 feet, while it was 65.70 feet in Perunchani, 11.64 feet in Chittar I, 11.74 feet in Chittar II and 30.18 feet in the Mambazathuraiyaru dam.

Farmers to get subsidy for setting up poultry unit

Government will also provide financial assistance for the purpose

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences will be extending financial assistance to farmers for setting up poultry units under the National Agricultural Development scheme with the objective of helping them in augmenting their income through allied activities, along with agriculture.

Under the scheme, a loan of up to Rs. 8 lakh and a subsidy of Rs. 1 lakh would be made available for layer birds (egg) and Rs. 1 lakh, comprising Rs. 50,000 each as loan and subsidy, for broilers (flesh).

As part of the programme to promote poultry as a viable allied activity in Bellary district, 18 persons, including 14 under general category, comprising two in each of the seven taluks, three under Scheduled Castes, including one each in Hadagali, Bellary and Hospet taluks, and one

under Scheduled Tribes category, could set up poultry units. The department would provide financial assistance of up to Rs. 9 lakh for maintenance of 1,000 layer birds.

Under the broiler category, 10 from each of the seven taluks could avail themselves of the benefits. The first instalment of subsidy of Rs. 25,000 would be given, when the beneficiaries start the unit and the second and final instalments of Rs. 25,000 each would be released subsequently.

Interested persons could apply by submitting relevant documents, including valid land documents, voter's photo identity card, caste certificates, in the case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, no objection certificate from nationalised/commercial/ primary land development/district central cooperative bank, advanced receipts for the loan amount received and the subsidy (in duplicate), agreement copy for investing the margin money, and other things, to the Assistant Director, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences Department in the taluk where the applicant wants to set up the unit.

Last date for submitting the application is August 21 for broilers and 23 for layers, a release said.

TNAU, NAF ink MoU

To collaborate on education, research and extension activities

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and National Agro Foundation (NAF), a public charitable trust in Chennai, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) here on Wednesday to collaborate on education, research, and extension activities.

Founded by late C. Subramaniam, the trust works for the socio-economic improvement of farming and rural community, in partnership with various stakeholders.

The partnership with TNAU is aimed at extending their activities to a larger section of farmers and helping the university to take its technology to the grassroots.

According to the university Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy, the initial activity that would take off as a result of the MoU would be identifying the weaknesses in agricultural production in Kancheepuram district and offer intervention to increase productivity.

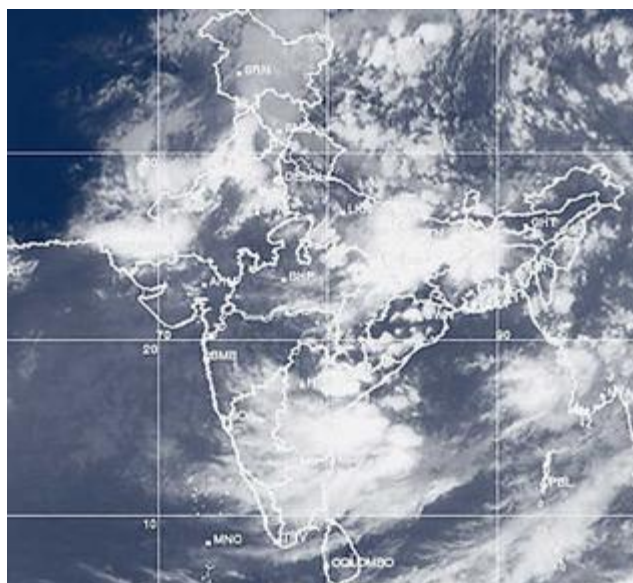
"To begin with we are focusing on a single district. This tie-up will be for three years with funding from the Department of Science and Technology. Initial assistance in identifying the weak areas using GIS systems will be got from experts in Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. Students from engineering colleges from neighbouring areas in the district will also be used for the purpose," the Vice-Chancellor said.

The facilities of NAF in Kancheepuram would be extensively used by TNAU for this work. Also, the food safety laboratory and research centres for soil health and other specialisations would also be used by students, research scholars and faculty of the university.

Brigadier (Retd.) R.I. Raghunathan, chief executive officer, NAF, said the trust was planning to take forward its pilot project that it implemented in nearly 300 villages involving 3,000 farmers, to a larger number of villages with the help of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University .

The Vice-Chancellor said the university was open to similar tie-ups with other NGOs for implementing development programmes in other districts.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on Aug. 15.

ANDHRA PRADESH			
Anantapur	31	23	177
Arogyavaram	31	19	162
Bapatla	32	24	432
Calingapatnam	33	26	257
Gannavaram	32	23	503
Hanamkonda	35	24	714
Hyderabad AP	29	22	483
Kakinada	33	25	373
Kammam	32	24	—
Kavali	33	23	240
Kurnool	31	23	286
Mahabubnagar	28	23	447
Machilipatnam	33	23	389

Narasapur	31	25	28	490
Nellore	34	24	14	362
Nizamabad	30	24	0	912
Ongole	27	23	10	213
Ramagundam	32	25	1	823
Tirupathi AP	28	24	25	275
Tuni	33	25	29	213
Vizag AP	34	26	tr	191
Vizag	33	26	1	207
KARNATAKA				
Agumbe	23	18	9	6599
Bengaluru AP	25	19	15	292
Bengaluru	25	19	21	366
Belgaum AP	26	20	1	528
Bellary	30	21	1	216
Bijapur	31	21	0	322
Chitradurga	26	21	tr	216
Chickmagalur	25	18	0	407
Chintamani	27	19	8	149
Gadag	28	21	0	151
Gulbarga	30	23	0	360
Hassan	27	20	0	601
Honavar	29	25	3	2815
Karwar	32	26	3	2250
Madikeri	21	16	7	3323
Mangalore AP	29	23	12	2853
Mysore	26	19	0	176
Mandya	27	19	tr	86
Panambur	31	27	2	2586
Raichur	31	22	12	202
Shirali	30	25	6	3025
KERALA				
Alappuzha	29	24	1	1984
Kannur	30	24	tr	3135
Kochi AP	32	23	tr	2249
Kottayam	29	23	0	2009
Kozhikode	31	24	1	2273
Punalur	30	23	0	1358
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	30	23	tr	876
Thiruvanantha				
-puram City	30	24	0	863
Vellanikkara	30	23	0	2261
TAMIL NADU				
Adiramapattinam	33	26	tr	66

Coimbatore AP	32	22	tr	31
Coonor	20	13	tr	122
Cuddalore	29	24	13	352
Chennai AP	26	23	46	395
Chennai	26	24	58	287
Dharmapuri	31	21	0	21
Kanyakumari	33	23	0	222
Karaikal	31	26	4	201
Kodaikanal	17	11	0	229
Madurai AP	35	24	0	81
Nagapattinam	31	24	27	136
Palayamkottai	33	26	0	23
Pamban	33	28	0	5
Parangipettai	29	23	6	212
Puducherry	28	24	16	410
Salem	31	22	8	287
Thanjavur	33	26	0	68
Tiruchi AP	33	26	0	55
Tirupattur	28	19	24	130
Tondi	31	26	0	151
Tuticorin	36	25	0	5
Ooty	19	10	0	352
Valparai	23	17	3	3230
Vellore	27	23	31	276
LAKSHADWEEP				
Amini Divi	30	26	1	817
Minicoy	31	26	1	865
OTHER STATIONS				
Kolkata (Alipore)	35	28	0	926
Mumbai	29	26	17	2057
New Delhi	35	25	0	516

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall in mm since June 01, 2013.

WIDESPREAD RAIN IN COASTAL A.P.

CHENNAI: Southwest monsoon has been active over Rayalaseema.

Rainfall occurred at most places over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema, at many places over coastal Karnataka and at a few places over Kerala, Telangana, south interior Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Isolated rainfall occurred over north interior Karnataka. Mainly dry weather prevailed over Lakshadweep.

The chief amounts of rainfall recorded in centimetres are:

Tamil Nadu: Chembarabakkam (Tiruvallur Dist) and DGP office (Chennai Dist) 7 each.

Andhra Pradesh: Nalgonda (dist Nalgonda) 11 and Nagarjunsagar (dist Nalgonda) 6.

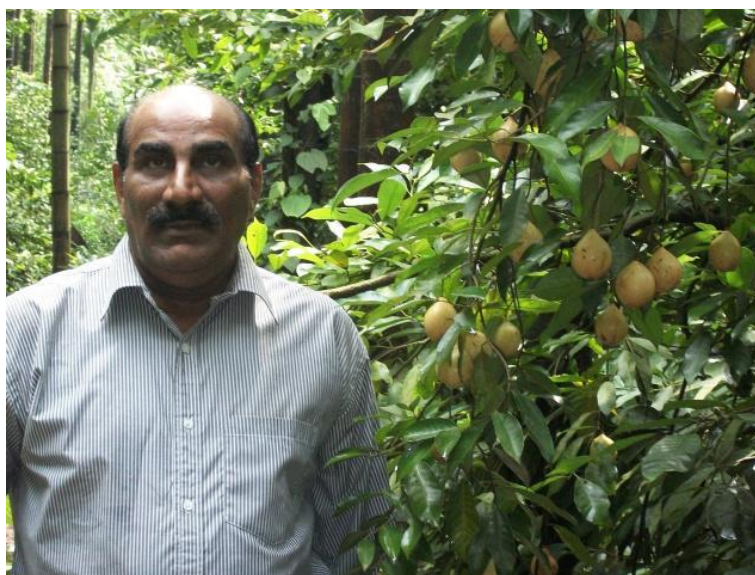
Kerala: Peermade (Idukki district) 2.

Karnataka: Gabbur (Raichur dt) 5; Nelamangala (Bangalore Rural dt) 4. and Kadra (Uttara Kannada dt), Madhavara ARG, GKVK (both Bangalore Urban dt), Devanahalli (Bangalore Rural dt) 3 each.

Forecast (valid till Saturday morning): Rain or thundershower would occur at most places over coastal Andhra Pradesh, at many places over north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, coastal Karnataka, Telangana and Rayalaseema and at a few places over Kerala, interior Karnataka and Lakshadweep. Isolated rain or thundershower may occur over south Tamil Nadu.

Heavy rainfall warning: Isolated heavy rain may occur over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and north coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry during next 48 hours.

Growing different crops to script a success story



The planter in his garden. Photo: Special Arrangement

Hard work, dedication and some innovative thinking to make use of available resources for getting maximum benefit are practised by few farmers.

Mr. Poornaand Venkatesh Bhat from Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka is an exception.

A contractor-turned-farmer by choice, he started cultivation in 21 acres but soon had to give it up since his land was bought by the Government to set up a naval base.

He invested the money he received from the Government in 19 acres of barren wasteland.

Through sheer hard work he transformed the barren land in a few years into a big arecanut, nutmeg and pepper based intercrop plantation.

Today almost all leading agricultural scientists and students across the country are visiting his farm to learn more on arecanut, pepper and nutmeg growing techniques.

“His contributions towards plantation crops in general and spices like nutmeg in particular are noteworthy. Majority of nutmeg plants during seedling stage are males though sporadically some female seedlings are also found.

No technique

There is no other way to identify the sex of the nutmeg plant during seedling stage. It takes a minimum of five years after planting to know the gender of the plant.

But Mr. Bhat has succeeded in detecting the sex of the plant at seed stage and he intends to patent this process of sex detection,” says Dr. S.Prabhu Kumar, Zonal Project Director, ICAR, Bangalore.

For nutmeg varieties

He has also identified and developed four varieties of nutmeg and has about 2,500 nutmeg trees in his garden, which is considered to be the world’s largest nutmeg conservatory according to scientists from The Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode.

Each tree in his farm bears about 1,000 fruits a year (from sixth year of planting). One kg of nuts contains about 170 dry fruits along with the hard outer shell and one kg of mace.

The farmer is able to get an income of Rs. 1,600 per kg of mace and Rs. 500 per kg of nuts.

Not stopping with mere selling of the nuts, he has also gone into value addition of the produce. His nutmeg jams and pickles are quite popular in the market since they are rare and tasty.

Many technologies

“This innovative farmer-scientist has developed many technologies in nutmeg like harvesting and separation of fully matured nuts, washing, blanching, drying, storage, processing, grading, storing and value addition. These things are usually done by research and development institutions,” says Dr. Prabhu Kumar.

He is also an expert in arecanut and black pepper cultivation.

He gets double the average yield from both these and is also involved in black pepper processing to manufacture white pepper, which has great demand in the export market.

Till date 6,000 to 7,000 farmers from Karnataka, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have visited him to learn this process.

His arecanut, pepper, nutmeg , coconut nurseries are popular among farmers. In fact many farmers who have such plantations have bought the seedlings from his nursery. “Before starting nutmeg-arecanut cultivation I grew only turmeric. I was able to get about 20 tonnes of turmeric from an acre. In fact this was considered quite a feat in the region and I had many visitors to my place after local media reported it,” says Mr. Bhat.

Monthly expense

About 25 workers permanent workers help Mr. Bhat in his daily farm work and his monthly expense for their salaries works out to Rs. 35,000. His annual income from his farm is more than Rs. 80 lakh.

“Even CEOs in some big companies do not get such a big income. He is an example of dedication, innovation and hard work to make the best use of available resource to reap the maximum benefit,” according to Dr PrabhuKumar.

Both his sons — a lawyer and a banker — have left their jobs to help him. He is a good example for those interested to take up farming.

Advice to growers

“Be it one acre or 50 acres never put your entire investment or attention on a single crop. Grow different varieties and plan it in such a way so that once harvesting of one crop is over, harvesting of the other starts. This way a farmer can get some sort of continuous income,” seems to be his advice for other growers.

The farmer has been conferred several awards both by the state and central government for his sterling work.

Mr. Poornanand Venkatesh Bhat can be reached at Shriram Siddhi Estate, At Post Aversa – 581316, Ankola, Uttara Kananda, Karnataka, Phone :08388-292199, email : siddhinath.bhat86@gmail.com, Mobile : 9448066998.

Devastating effect of black caterpillar on coconut

Coconut is a major crop in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu. Except during the North East monsoon season the region has dry weather throughout the year.

This weather condition is very much favourable for black headed caterpillar attack on the trees. Severity of attack is evidenced during February-August.

Infestation

The caterpillars feed on the chlorophyll content of the leaves from the lower surface. Infested leaflets turn greyish brown in colour and dry. Severe infestation presents a burnt up look for the tree. Pest intensity reduces during the onset of monsoon.

The female moth lays white coloured eggs on the lower surface of the leaves. Newly hatched larva is greenish brown in colour with brown stripes which and constructs galleries on the lower surface of the leaflets.

Grown up larva is light green having dark brown head. Pupa is dark brown in colour and adult is a greyish white small moth. The total life cycle is completed in about two months.

Control measures

Remove and burn infested leaves during summer season. Release larval parasitoids under the trees periodically from January at fortnight's interval (4-6 releases) to check the population of the pest.

In case of severe outbreaks first go for insecticide treatment to reduce the pest population up to 50 per cent and release parasitoids after three weeks. The parasitoids are available at Coconut Research Station, TNAU, Aliyar Nagar on demand basis.

Spray malathion 50 EC at 0.05 per cent or dichlorvos at 2 ml with 1 ml of sticking agent per litre of water on the undersurface of the leaves in case of severe infestation.

Root feeding

Root feeding with monocrotophos 36 WSC 10 ml diluted with 10 ml of water helps to minimise the infestation (harvest the nuts 45 days after root feeding). Make a slanting hole in the stem about 1.5 m above ground level and inject 10 ml of monocrotophos 36 WSC and plug the hole with clay mixed with copper oxychloride.

(Dr. J. Ramkumar, Assistant Professor (Agrl. Entomology) and Dr. R. Durai Singh, Programme Coordinator Krishi Vigyan Kendra, TNAU Ramanathapuram - 623 503, E.mail: arsramnad@tnau.ac.in ; Ph. No: 04567-230250).

Will Nanjangud rasabale find an alternative home?



Enthused by the successful efforts of a farmer from Bharamasagara of Chitradurga in cultivating the exotic Nanjangud rasabale, the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore (UAS) has decided to closely monitor his next crop. They want to see whether Bharamasagara can be developed as an alternative area for cultivation of this almost-extinct variety of banana, which is exclusive to areas in and around Nanjangud of Mysore district.

According to scientists at the UAS, they will monitor the crop for the next two years to check for various aspects, including incidence of fungal disease and quality of fruits, before exploring the possibility of developing Bharamasagara as an alternative area.

Nanjangud rasabale, which has been given the Geographical Indication tag, has been almost devastated by fisarium wilt, a fungal disease. So severe has this disease been that it has reduced the cultivation of the crop to about 10 acres of land.

To revive this variety, the UAS took up a programme to collect disease-free plant material and multiply them through tissue culture. About 12,000 such plants were distributed to interested farmers last year, along with a package of scientific practices for controlling the fungal disease. Of them, Bharamasagara farmer Shantaveerappa had grown a bumper crop from 1,000 plants and registered a profit of about Rs. 5.2 lakh.

A high-level team of UAS scientists visited Mr. Shantaveerappa's farm in Bharamasagara on August 8 to assess the situation and explore the possibility of developing Bharamasagara as an alternative cultivation area.

B.N. Sathyanarayana, head of the UAS, Bangalore, Horticulture Department and Plant Tissue Culture Lab, says: "Despite this variety being a Geographical Indication crop, we are examining the possibility of developing Bharamasagara as an alternative site for its cultivation, mainly because it is difficult to grow this variety in Nanjangud due to high infestation of fisarium wilt in the region. The environmental conditions in Bharamasagara appears to be similar to Nanjangud and the fruits grown here have excellent quality and comprise all the original traits such as taste, aroma and lump-free material. The intention is to ensure availability of such exotic varieties of bananas and preventing their extinction."

T.H. Ashok, head of the university's Department of Plant Biotechnology, notes with caution that some of the plants being cultivated by Mr. Shantaveerappa have been infested by the fisarium wilt.

In this context, he felt the university would adopt a long-term approach and monitor the crop condition before taking a call on developing this as an alternative site for cultivation.

T. Narendrappa, head of the Department of Plant Pathology, pointed out that about one-fifth of the crop had contracted fungal disease. "But it is possible to control the spread of this disease through the scientific package of practices. We will give training to interested farmers on the methods of controlling this disease," he says.

Weather

▼

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Friday, Aug 16

Max | Min

28° | 24°

Rain: 6 Sunrise: 05:56
 Humidity: 89 Sunset: 06:30
 Wind: normal Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast

Saturday, Aug 17

Max | Min

29° | 24°

Cloudy

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Aug 18	Monday Aug 19	Tuesday Aug 20	Wednesday Aug 21	Thursday Aug 22
29° 24° Cloudy	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast	32° 26° Overcast

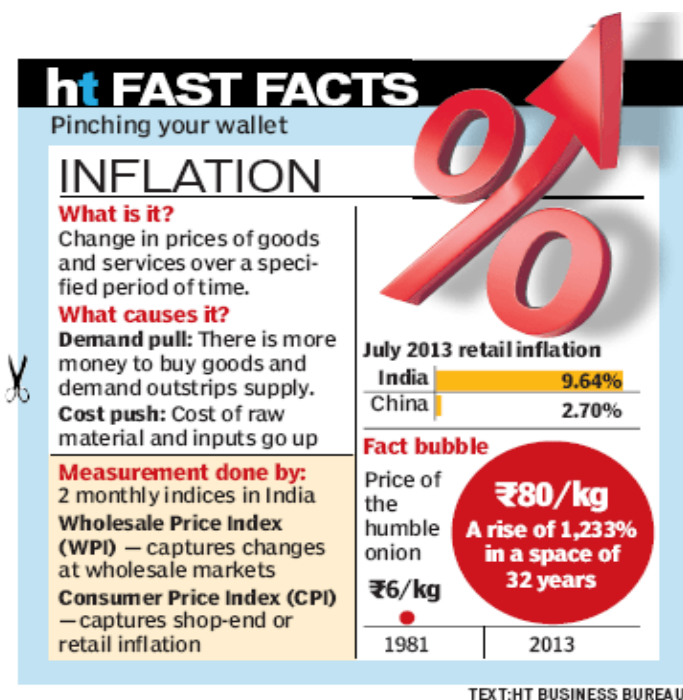
Inflation shoots up to 5.79% in July as vegetable prices soar

Skyrocketing onion and vegetable prices and costlier staples such as rice and wheat pushed India's wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation to a five-month high of 5.79% in July, putting more pressure on policymakers to take credible steps to reduce a crippling external deficit.

The headline inflation rate, which is likely to hit family budgets hard, is above the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) comfort zone of 4-5% for the first time since March. So, loans are unlikely to become cheaper anytime soon.

The latest spike in WPI inflation, which was at 4.86% in June, has largely been driven by high food prices that grew at 11.91% in July compared with 9.74% in June.

Overall on a country-wide average, vegetable prices grew 46.79% in July — up from 16.47% in June — as heavy rains and floods in Uttarakhand and other regions affected crop and disrupted supplies.



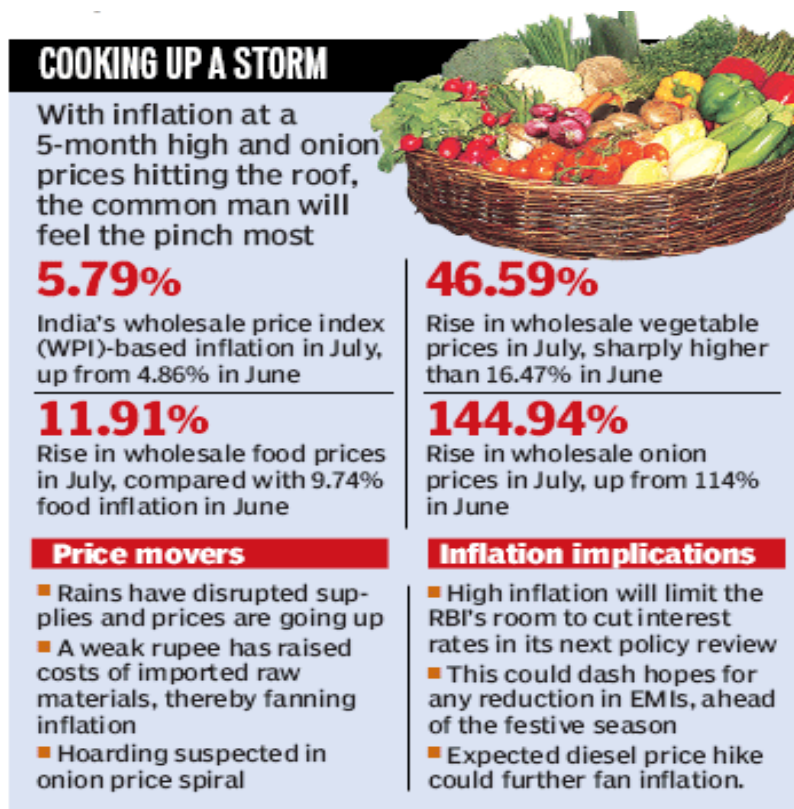
Onion prices grew 144.94% in July from 114% in June while cereal prices jumped 17.66% during the month compared with 11.18% growth in June. The government, however, expects inflation to stabilise in the coming months.

“With currency appearing to stabilise, I don’t expect this (effect on inflation) to continue,” said Montek Singh Ahluwalis, deputy chairman, Planning Commission. “I think if we can get moderation on food front once the impact of good monsoon becomes available, I think we will end the year between 5 and 6% which we have predicted earlier.”

Higher prices are putting pressure on family budgets, especially at a time when companies, squeezed by costly input and borrowing costs, are offering meagre salary hikes and holding back expansion and hiring activities.

“Earlier we used to budget for a month. Now we have to revise the budget almost every day,” said Manju Malik, a Delhi-based homemaker. The sharp slide in the rupee, which has fallen nearly 15% since May, is likely to knock up prices of almost everything from farm to fork, effectively negating gains from a potentially bountiful summer harvest.

The rupee is hovering above 61 to a dollar, despite a string of recent steps taken by the Reserve Bank of India to stem its fall. India's factory output fell 2.2% in June, its second monthly decrease, underlining how India is stuck with the toxic combination of low growth and high inflation. Making borrowing more expensive by raising interest rates may address the issue of higher prices and would help arrest a fall in the rupee, but would likely hurt growth further.



According to analysts, consumers, hit by flat income growth and costly bank lending, are putting off purchases of durables such as cars and TVs. This will help temper down demand and tame inflation.

Retail price data, which was released last week, broadly mirrored similar trends with shop-end prices of vegetables and cereals soaring sharply in July.

"Even as demand remains weak, a weaker rupee is resulting in a sharp rise in input costs," said Sonal Varma, economist at broking and research firm Nomura. "We do not expect a sustained rise in WPI inflation due to very weak demand."

Competition panel to probe hoarding, onion price rigging

Your packet of onions may come under regulatory scanner, again.

With onion prices soaring to Rs. 80 per kilo in several places including the national capital, and household budgets feeling the pinch, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) is all set to look into the possibility of cartelisation and hoarding by traders and other entities to see if they have manipulated prices using unfair means.

The commission had instituted a probe earlier to examine if there was any cartelisation among traders when onion prices had touched R80 in December 2010.

Though the fair trade regulator did not find sufficient evidence of market manipulation two years ago when it conducted a similar investigation, sources within the CCI said that since hoarding was a common practice, the watchdog had decided to probe the matter once again.

All vegetable prices have shot up in the last few months, but onion has been the worst hit.

“There is a significant possibility that there is some market discrepancy and hoarding, which has pushed prices to this level and the CCI would look into the matter,” a source in the regulator's office said.

CCI chairman Ashok Chawla did not respond to messages and phone calls made by HT.

A study commissioned by the CCI last year had suggested that some cartels could be at play in the onion market and hoarding was done to keep prices high. The study, conducted by the Bangalore-based Institute for Social and Economic Change, found clear imperfections, including cartelisation and hoarding.

“Results of seasonal indices, correlations, daily, monthly arrivals, their prices, etc, indicated existence of anti-competitive elements in the onion markets. A few big traders having well-connected networks with market intermediaries in other markets seem to play a major role in hoarding for expected high prices,” the study said.

The CCI is likely to seek details and data from state governments as well. The regulator has also decided to look into the operations of the agriculture markets to ensure that there is no cartelisation or unfair play leading to determination of vegetable prices, including tomatoes and potatoes, which have also risen.

“We are collecting all the details and data to analyse the pricing pattern and role of traders to see if there are any discrepancies,” a CCI member said.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Seemandhra stir hits fish business

HYDERABAD: The ongoing [Seemandhra agitation](#) is hitting foodies hard. After onion and other vegetables, fish supply to the city has dwindled, leaving sea food-lovers and traders fuming. In case, the transport stir continues for a few more days, fish prices may go the onion way.

The city, especially the Musheerabad wholesale market, used to get 20 to 30 truckloads (each truck of five tonne capacity), of sea food per day on an average from the coastal districts. However, with truck operators and workers joining the agitation, the supply has dwindled to just a couple of trucks per day. As a result, the usually bustling wholesale fish markets at Musheerabad and Begum Bazaar are devoid of customers and retailers.

Most sea and tank fish varieties like Murrel (Korameenu), 'Katla' (bocha), 'Pomphret' (White chanduva), 'Hilsa' (Pulasa), 'Labeo fimbriatus' (fringed-lipped carp), Mackerel (Vanjaram), Lates calcarifar (Pandu koppa), prawn and crabs come to the city from coastal areas like Visakhapatnam, Machilipatnam, Ongole, Nellore, Kakinada and Eluru.

Mogra price up by Rs 850/kg in a week

BANGALORE: It's festive season and flower prices have predictably hit the roof. Over the past one week, the prices of some flowers, including roses and lily, have gone up by 100%, say wholesale traders. Mogra prices have been climbing and are up by 250% in just a week. Traders also blame it on scant rainfall in Tamil Nadu, one of the biggest producers of jasmine.

"Flowers have been in huge demand for two-three days now. Till Thursday afternoon, the prices were soaring and stabilized a bit only later. Yet, prices of some of the flowers have doubled. Mogra is selling the most and is the costliest. The price of 1 kg of mogra was Rs 350 last week. It touched Rs 1,200 on Thursday morning and is now stable at Rs 800/kg," said Mohammad Ilyaz, a flower trader at Russell market. According to Ilyaz, the prices have retreated a bit as

there are not many takers for the evening stock. "People prefer fresh flowers and they would have already stocked it for festivals like Varmahalakshmi Puja. The prices are expected to decline now," said Ilyaz. The skyrocketing flower prices are also being blamed on less rain. "We get flowers from outside Karnataka too. When it comes to jasmine, we bring it from Tamil Nadu. Because of scant rainfall there, there is less production while the demand has soared due to festivals. This has caused a huge rise in the prices," said another flower trader at KR Market.

Spurt in cotton prices bleed flag makers

COIMBATORE: City manufacturers of the national flag generally look forward to Independence Day, given the boost in sales. This year however, they are not a happy lot as the hike in cotton prices has cut their profit margins. K Jayakumar, proprietor of Gandhiji Khadar Stores said that cotton prices have increased by 15 per cent when compared to last year.

"However, due to prevailing market conditions we are unable to increase the price of the national flag," he said. This khadi shop situated near Town Hall area is the famous shopping destination where many government offices and educational institutions in the district source their flags. "As per guidelines, the national flag must be made using cotton. Thus, despite the price increase, we continue to use cotton," Jayakumar said. This year, they have manufactured a total of 70,000 flags for sale. Besides the national flag, their khadi shop also manufactures flags for political parties. "But political parties prefer polyester over cotton due to its durability," he said. There are three grades of cloth used to make the flags. "Prices for the national flag ranges anywhere between Rs.5 and Rs.120 and the response from customers has been good," Jayakumar said. Even though his profits are not as high, he continues to produce the national flag. "My forefathers were freedom fighters and I am doing this as a small tribute to them as well as my country," he added. Of late, flag manufacturers have also started producing fancy wrist bands, head bands and badges that feature the tricolour. These products are very popular among young people. They display their patriotism by wearing t-shirts or caps with the tricolour. Around 10 products including bands, badges and souvenirs have been newly introduced by shoppers this year with prices ranging anywhere between Rs.3 and Rs15.

Tea Board asks factories, estates to follow quality norms

GUWAHATI: With complaints against poor quality of green tea leaves and discrepancies in fixing prices of the raw material rising, the Tea Board (TB) has asked tea estates and bought leaf factories (BLF) in the northeast to strictly abide by the quality parameters and price-sharing formula set by the board. The Jorhat-based zonal office of the board, in its August 6 circular, pointed out that some estates and BLFs are unilaterally fixing price for green leaves purchased from small tea growers, procuring poor quality green leaves and are even not disclosing the payable price of green leaf on the display board of factories.

BLF means a tea factory which sources not less than two-thirds of its tea leaf requirement from other tea growers during any calendar year for the purpose of producing tea.

The board said it has come to its notice that some estate and bought leaf factories engaged in outsourcing green leaves from small tea growers are restoring to these practices which are in violation of Tea Marketing Control Order (TMCO) guidelines of 2003.

The board has also warned of canceling registration under TMCO for non-compliance of the guidelines stated in the latest circular. In the circular, the board has instructed the estates and BLFs that the district-wise minimum price of green leaf payable for the month should be determined after taking into account the average price of CTC (crush, tear, curl) tea sold through auction during the previous month and no "downward variation" should be made for the entire month. "For example, for the month of August 2013, the minimum benchmark price payable would be guided by the district average for July, 2013. The district-wise prices for previous month would be uploaded in TB's website at the beginning of each month. This would also form the basis for the district price monitoring committees for notifying green leaf price," TB explained. TB has also reiterated for displaying the payable price in the display board of factories.

Business Standard

Broker raised IPO money to invest in NSEL products just before crisis

Just before the National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL) crisis escalated, a broker, GCM Commodity and Derivatives, raised funds from the equities market to invest in the products of the now beleaguered bourse. Terming NSEL's product offerings a "unique, low risk, high return investment opportunity in the commodity market for Indian resident investors", GCM Commodity raised money from a little more than 350 investors through its Initial Public Offering (IPO) earlier this month. As the offering was made on the BSE SME exchange (for small and medium enterprises), the platform meant for companies with low paid-up capital, the amount raised by GCM Commodity was just Rs 7 crore. Surprisingly, the public issue attracted investors and it managed to sail through, though it coincided with the breaking of the NSEL crisis. The 3.5 million-share offering of GCM Commodity opened for subscription on August 1, the same day NSEL announced suspension of trading in most of its contracts. Later, the issue escalated into a full-blown payment crisis, with unsquared settlements of Rs 5,500 crore. GCM Commodity, which operates out of Mumbai, is predominately engaged only in investing in NSEL, either on its own proprietary account or for its clients. "We are engaged in the business of investing in NSEL investment products for arbitrage opportunities and commodity broking. Of our issue proceeds, we will use Rs 600 lacs (Rs 6 crore) for the purpose of working capital...Net proceeds will be used towards maintaining adequate levels of margin with NSEL and MCX and also for investing in NSEL investment products," its offer document states. It has further stated that the company managed to almost double its operating profit in 2012-13 compared to the previous year, "mainly on account of revenue from investment in NSEL investment products".

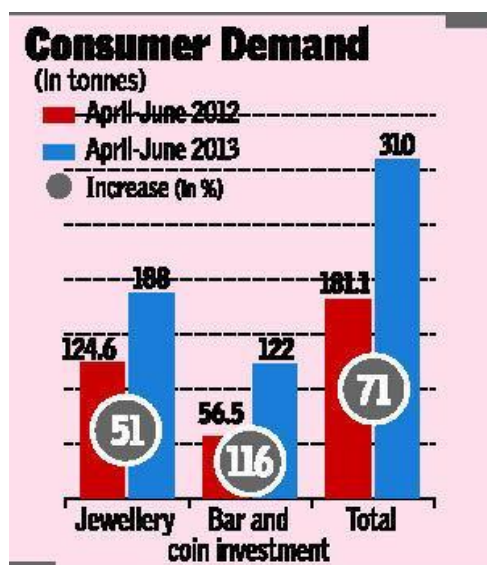
Queries sent to the company on utilisation of its IPO proceeds and current dues from NSEL remained unanswered. As on June, its investment in NSEL products stood at Rs 8.4 crore, up from Rs 4.7 crore at the end of the previous quarter. SME IPOs have less stringent regulatory and disclosure requirements and just need a stock exchange nod, and not of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, the market regulator, to launch the offering.

An official with BSE SME, where the company has listed, said they don't check a company's business model before giving approval. "We just have to ensure whether all the disclosures and

other regulatory requirements have been met.” GCM Securities, the parent company of GCM Commodity, had raised Rs 12 crore through an IPO on the BSE SME platform in March.

THE HINDU Business Line

Gold demand surges to 10-year high in Q2



Amid all the efforts being made by the Government to curb gold imports, demand for the precious metal in India zoomed to a 10-year high (310 tonnes) in the three-month period ending June 30, according to the World Gold Council.

“We see a notable dampening of Indian demand in the coming months, more than would normally be expected during the usual Q3 slowdown, as the market digests import regulation changes. Indications for the fourth quarter so far remain positive,” the council, a body of gold producers, said in its report ‘Gold Demand Trend for Second Quarter (April-June), 2013’ released on Thursday.

The report said that total demand rose by 71 per cent compared with the second quarter last year. During the period, jewellery demand surged by 51 per cent, while the demand for bar and coins increased 116 per cent.

The introduction of restrictions on payment terms for gold imports in May and an increase in import duties in early June created an uncertainty in the market. However, it had a limited

impact on end-user demand, which was met by stocks that had been built up to healthy levels following the price drop in April. Nevertheless, imports tailed off in June, with demand slowing sharply as the market entered its seasonal quiet period, even as the Government extended the restrictions on imports and further raised import duties to 8 per cent.

In recent weeks, the change in emphasis from restricting payment terms to linking import quotas to exports is likely to create further confusion and exaggerate the normal Q3 (July-September) lull in Indian demand ahead of the Q4 (October-December) festival and wedding season, the report observed.

However, it is interesting to note that price premiums in India have recently spiked higher again, suggesting that demand is healthy. “A good monsoon season so far also bodes well for demand later in the year, with the assumption that the market will, by then, have had time to digest and acclimatise to the recent restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI),” the report said.

The report comes within two days of further tightening of import norms. First, the Government raised import duty to 10 per cent (third since January) on Tuesday, while it banned import of coins and medallion on Thursday. It has also been decided to tighten the norms related to gold. Out of the total import, 20 per cent will need to be exported, while 80 per cent will be used for domestic consumption. The import can be done only on the basis of full upfront payment. The same norms will be applicable on imports of gold ore and monitoring will done be at the refinery level.

81% of tea offerings sold at Coonoor sale



About 81 per cent of the 16.50 lakh kg offered for Sale No: 32 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions was with average prices dropping by a rupee a kg.

Only two grades fetched over Rs 200 a kg.

Of them, Pekoe Dust of Homedale Estate, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market when Jaykay Enterprises bought it for Rs 202.

The Orange Pekoe orthodox teas of Chamraj fetched Rs 252 and continued to top the auction for the eighth consecutive week.

Among other orthodox teas, Highfield Estate got Rs 192, Havukal and Kairbetta Rs 180 each, Kodanad Rs 178 and Corsley Rs 173.

In all, 33 marks got Rs 125 and more .

Among other CTC teas, Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 176, Crosshill Estate Rs 173, Shanthi Supreme Rs 169 and Hittakkal Estate Rs 168.

In all, 50 marks got Rs 125 and more .

Exporters to Pakistan paid Rs 67-103 a kg and to the CIS, Rs 67-86.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 63-68 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 115-150 for brighter liquoring sorts.

They ranged Rs 66-72 for plain dusts and Rs 120-160 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Bulk buyers keep away from rice market

The rice market witnessed a steady trend with prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice ruling unchanged from previous levels on Thursday, despite restricted trading.

With not much trading taking place in the market, rice prices were unchanged said, Amit Chandna, Proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company. Bulk buyers are keeping themselves out of the market and they don't want to take fresh position as they are waiting for the prices to fall, he added.

According to the trade experts, market may witness only need-based buying with marginal fluctuation in prices in the coming days.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) sold at Rs 8,000 a quintal, while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 7,650-7,700 .

Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 8,650 . Duplicate basmati (steam) sold at Rs 6,550 .

For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Dubar quoted at Rs 3,600, Tibar sold at Rs 4,250 while Mongra was at Rs 2,900 a quintal.

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati (Steam) sold at Rs 4,500-4,600 while Sharbati (Sela) quoted at Rs 4,300 .

Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,300-2,350 while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,300 . PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 2,900 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,750 .

PR14 (steam) sold at Rs 3,100 .

Bountiful monsoon drives sales of seed, agri-chem firms

Monsoon Magic		(In Rs crore)		
		June 2013	June 2012	YoY Growth (%)
Insecticides (India) Ltd	Revenue	19763	14883	33
	Net Profit	14.17	11.72	21
Dhanuka Agritech	Revenue	166.18	10786	54
	Net Profit	1734	11.20	55
Rallis India	Revenue	409.31	338.31	21
	Net Profit	27	24.17	14
Monsanto India	Revenue	230.45	208.14	11
	Net Profit	56.24	48.63	16
Kaveri Seed Company	Revenue	736.03	479.90	53
	Net Profit	162.31	101.11	60.52
Bayer CropScience	Revenue	9877	921.3	7.16
	Net Profit	878	88.7	-1.05
Excel Crop Care	Revenue	262.52	214.47	22.40
	Net Profit	1963	1096	79

Timely and bountiful monsoon showers which gave a fillip to kharif plantings across the country have propelled the earnings of companies producing agricultural inputs such as seeds and agro-chemical makers, in the June quarter over corresponding period last year.

Companies such as Kaveri Seed Company Ltd, Monsanto India, Advanta India, Bayer CropScience, Insecticides (India), Dhanuka Agritech, Rallis India among others have reported higher sales in the June quarter this year.

“The sentiment is quite upbeat and the demand is pretty good. We have witnessed record sales in June this year,” said Rajesh Aggarwal, Managing Director of Insecticides (India) Ltd, a Delhi-based agro-chemicals producer.

The country received about 13 per cent more rains till August 14, since the onset of the South-West monsoon on June 1. Except for the North-East, which has received deficient rains this year, the monsoon has either been excess or normal in other parts of the country.

Kharif planting is complete in more than three-fourths of the targeted 1,068 hectares for the season.

Sowing of oilseeds, such as soyabean and groundnut, cotton and pulses is almost over, with acreages being higher than last year.

Excess rains have affected standing crops mainly in parts of central India, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, where agro-chemical makers witnessed a rise in sales of insecticides, herbicides and fungicides.

“Our growth was driven by sale volumes both in corn seeds and Roundup (herbicide brand),” said Gyanendra Shukla, Monsanto’s CEO for India region, stating that demand looked good for the season ahead.

Monsanto saw a 12 per cent growth in its June quarter sales. Insecticide (India)’s Aggarwal expects the strong demand for herbicides and fungicides to continue in the second quarter.

Though political tensions in regions such as Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, violence in Jammu and Assam are seen as minor irritants, the overall sales trend has been good, he said.
