

## Using information technology to keep track of disease in wheat



IARI scientists conducting wheat trials at the Regional Station in Wellington on Monday.—

Photo: M. Sathyamoorthy

Tucked away in a remote corner of Wellington in the Nilgiris but playing a significant role in ensuring the food security of the country ever since it came into being about six decades ago, the Regional Station of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) identified locally as Wheat Breeding Station is now in the process of adopting a mobile solution for surveillance data collection developed by the Sathguru Management Consultants.

While pointing out that the Information Technology solution in tracking rust pathogens would be of considerable use, the head of the station Jagdish Kumar told *The Hindu* at Wellington on Monday that the focus of the station was on developing wheat varieties which are rust resistant.

Pointing out that the conditions at Wellington are ideal for developing new varieties of wheat, he said that about 80 to 90 institutions in various parts of the country are using the IARI facility for wheat trials.

Where as it takes eight years to develop a variety in places like Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, in Wellington it can be done in four years since wheat can be cultivated round the year here.

Stating that the dreaded rust disease could be screened naturally here, he said that the station was created with a mandate to produce rust resistant varieties of wheat, particularly dicoccum wheat for widespread cultivation in South India in general and Southern hills in particular to cut down the initial wheat rust inoculum build up in the country. The first dicoccum wheat in India named NP 200 was developed at Wellington. At present, efforts are on to keep out the UG 99 rust which emanated in Uganda.

To a question, Dr. Kumar said that so far the station has developed about 20 varieties.

Senior Scientist of the station M. Sivasamy said that due to the sustained research activities, steps taken to control diseases and conducive weather wheat production was a record 94.6 million tonnes during last year.

The level of production was expected to be the same during 2013. About a decade ago it was only around 80 million tonnes.

Lamenting that not many here are aware of the work being done in the station extending over 42 acres, he said that wheat which was widely grown in the Nilgiris was now hard to come by.

Pointing out that it can be grown separately or as an inter-crop, he said that apart from meeting the requirements of the growers, it would also fetch good returns.

Since it was a short duration crop farmers can grow wheat in pruned tea gardens. The dicocum wheat can fetch five times the price of the ordinary variety. The potential for cultivating organic wheat in the Nilgiris was very good.

Information Specialist, Sathguru Management Consultants N. Anantha Murthy said that now data on rust was available in electronic form and it can be kept track of with a tablet or even a smart phone.

### **From Bengal Famine to Right to Food**



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The year 2013 marks the 70th anniversary of the Bengal Famine which resulted in the death of an estimated 1.5 to 3 million children, women and men during 1942-43. A constellation of factors led to this mega-tragedy, such as the Japanese occupation of Burma, the damage to the *aman* (kharif) rice crop both due to tidal waves and a disease epidemic caused by the fungus *Helminthosporium oryzae*, panic purchase and hoarding by the rich, failure of governance, particularly in relation to the equitable distribution of the available food grains, disruption of communication due to World War II, and the indifference of the then U.K. government to the plight of the starving people of undivided Bengal.

Famines were frequent in colonial India and some estimates indicate that 30 to 40 million died out of starvation in Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Bengal during the later half of the 19th century. This led to the formulation of elaborate Famine Codes by the then colonial government, indicating the relief measures that should be put in place when crops fail.

The Bengal Famine attracted much attention both among the media and the public, since it occurred soon after Mahatma Gandhi's "Quit India" call to the British in 1942. Agricultural stagnation and famines were regarded among the major adverse consequences of colonial rule. I wish to narrate the impact of the twin developments, namely, Bengal Famine on the one hand, and the "Quit India" movement on the other, on the minds of students like me. I was studying at the University College, Thiruvananthapuram, during 1940-44, when gruesome pictures of starving children, women and men on the streets of Kolkata and in other parts of Bengal appeared in *The Hindu*, the *Statesman* and other newspapers. The goal of my University education was to get into a medical college and equip myself to run a hospital in Kumbakonam left behind by my father, M.K. Sambasivan, who died at a young age in 1936.

### **Role models**

Unlike today, when students have to search hard for role models, those of my time had many leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose whom we worshipped. A few of my college mates and I used to meet to discuss the role we could play when the British quit India. During my B.Sc biology course, I fell in love with the science of genetics. Therefore, in a meeting of students where the topic of discussion was our role in

independent India, I announced that I had decided to shift my interest from medicine to agriculture, so that I could contribute to Gandhiji's goal of making famine and hunger problems of the past. Though there was disappointment in my family that I would not be following my father's footsteps and managing the hospital, it fully supported my decision to join the Coimbatore Agricultural College to do a B.Sc. degree in agriculture before proceeding for post-graduate studies in agricultural genetics and crop improvement.

### **Three factor**

I am narrating this event in a crucial stage in my life only to point out the life-changing impact the Bengal Famine and Gandhiji's vision of a hunger free India had on young minds. Looking back, I am glad I made this change and also that I am living today when a historic transition from the Bengal Famine to Right to Food with home grown food is taking place. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Bengal Famine, Parliament is likely to pass the National Food Security Bill which will be the world's largest social protection measure against hunger. How did this transition come about? I would like to pick up three factors which played a significant role in changing our agricultural destiny from the "ship to mouth" situation which prevailed during 1950-70, to the "right to food" commitment of 2013.

First, the Nehru era marked the development of the scientific infrastructure essential for improving farm productivity, such as major and minor irrigation projects, fertilizer factories, agricultural universities, farm extension services and marketing facilities. To get the benefit from the investment in these areas, an Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) was started in 1960-61. By 1963-64, IADP covered 15 districts. Unfortunately, the impact of IADP on yield improvement was not up to expectation. My analysis showed that the package of practices missed one important ingredient, namely a genetic strain which can respond to the rest of the package, particularly irrigation water and fertilizer.

It is this missing ingredient that I helped to provide by undertaking a search for genes for non-lodging plant habit. This search led to our getting seeds of semi-dwarf wheat germplasm from Dr. Orville Vogel of the U.S. and Dr. Norman Borlaug of Mexico, and semi-dwarf rice strains from Taiwan and the International Rice Research Institute, the Philippines. The new plant architecture helped to convert nutrients and water more efficiently into grains. Consequently, they came to be referred to as high-yielding varieties. In 1962-63, it became clear that food self-

sufficiency was an idea whose time had come. I prepared a plan early in 1963 titled “Five Years of Dwarf Wheats”, outlining a road map for achieving a substantial rise in production by 1968. An important component of this Plan was launching a large Lab to Land programme in the form of national demonstrations in the fields of small and marginal farmers. Agriculture is a risky profession and predictions are difficult. However, the strong public policy support extended by C. Subramaniam, supported by Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi, led to the fulfilment of our expectation that 1968 would mark a new beginning in our agricultural history. Indira Gandhi released a special stamp titled “the Wheat Revolution” in July 1968 to mark this event.

The second transformational factor was procurement of food grains from farmers at a minimum support price fixed on the basis of the advice of the Agricultural Prices Commission. A small government programme titled “High Yielding Varieties Programme” became a mass movement owing to the enthusiasm generated among farm families both by the yield revolution and the opportunities for assured and remunerative marketing. Wheat production has continued to rise since 1968 and has now reached a level of 92 million tonnes. A third important factor was the synergy brought about among scientific know-how, political do-how and farmers’ toil, often referred to as the “green-revolution symphony”. While we can be legitimately proud of our progress in the production of wheat and rice and other cereals and millets leading to the commitment of government of over 60 million tonnes of foodgrains for implementing the provisions of the Food Security Bill, there is no time to relax since dark clouds are gathering on the horizon.

I would like to touch upon three threats to the future of food production and our sustained capacity to implement the provisions of the Food Security Bill. First, prime farmland is going out of agriculture for non-farm purposes such as real estate and biofuels. Globally, the impact of biofuels on food security has become an increasing concern. A High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the World Commission on Food Security (CFS), which I chair, will be submitting a report shortly on Biofuels and Food Security. In this report, we are pointing out that if 10 per cent of all transport fuels were to be achieved through biofuels in the world, this would absorb 26 per cent of all crop production and 85 per cent of the world’s fresh water resources. Therefore, it will be prudent for all countries to accord food security the pride of place in the national land use policy.

## **Adverse changes in temperature**

The second threat comes from global warming and climate change. It is now clear that the mean temperature may rise by at least 2 degrees centigrade during the next few decades. Adverse changes in temperature, precipitation and sea level are all causes for concern. Both anticipatory research to checkmate the adverse consequences of climate change, and participatory research with farming families for developing adaptation and mitigation measures will be important. A third threat comes from the proposal to provide cash instead of grain to those needing protection against hunger. Such a shift may lead to a loss of interest in procurement and storage by public agencies like the Food Corporation of India. Most of our farm families have small holdings and have very little holding capacity. They want to sell as soon as their crop is harvested. If procurement goes down, there will be distress sales and production will go down. We should remember that the green revolution has been sustained only by assured and remunerative marketing opportunities. The Public Distribution System will suffer if procurement by public agencies goes down. National and global price volatility will increase, adding to the misery of the poor. The government, therefore, should always remain at the commanding height of the food security system.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Bengal Famine, we should derive strength from the fact that we have so far proved the prophets of doom wrong. At the same time, we need to redouble our efforts to help our farmers to produce more and more food and other commodities under conditions of diminishing per capita availability of arable land and irrigation water. This will be possible if the production techniques of the evergreen revolution approach are followed and farmers are assisted with appropriate public policies to keep agriculture an economically viable occupation. This is also essential to attract and retain youth in farming. If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right.

## **KMF milk procurement likely to decline further**

The milk procurement by the Karnataka Milk Federation, which has declined by almost 10 lakh kilograms a day in the last few weeks, is expected to decline further. This also comes in the light of farmers in several districts in south Karnataka selling their cattle due to scarcity of fodder, water and high cost of feed.

While the daily procurement had reached a record high of 55 lakh kilograms a couple of months ago, it has now fallen to 45 lakh kilograms daily. “We are anticipating a further decline to less than 40 lakh kilograms daily,” a senior KMF official told *The Hindu*.

A decline in the lean season is normal, he said and added that the situation this year is being compounded by the scarcity of fodder and water in several districts.

Sources, however, said that even if it falls to around 40 lakh kilograms, the federation would be able to meet the demand.

At present, the federation sells about 31 lakh litres of milk, and uses about 9 lakh litres for curd, buttermilk, panner, cova and sweets, among others.

The deficit rainfall has added to the woes of the farmers who are resorting to distress sale of cattle due to fodder and water shortage.

K.B. Bommegowda, a resident of Kajjikoplu in Pandavapura taluk, Mandya district, who owned six cows, has sold four of them. “I sold the cows to an agent for a price ranging from Rs. 4,500 to Rs. 12,000,” he said.

“The cost for a tractor load of hay, which was between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 8,000, now costs between Rs. 14,000 and Rs. 20,000. There is also scarcity of water,” he added.

Similarly, many others in his village have sold their cattle unable to feed them.

Confirming that distress cattle sale is taking place in big numbers to agents from Tamil Nadu, B. Nagbhusan, Secretary of Doddhindvadi Milk Producers Cooperative Society, in Kollegal taluk of Chamarajnagar district, said that cattle was being sold at throwaway prices. “We were collecting about 1,000 litres of milk daily till recently and it has now come down to about 700 litres a day. This is mainly due to cattle sale and also due to the lean season,” he said and added that milk procurement by the milk union in Kollegal taluk has come down to about 70,000 litres a day from about one lakh litres a day. The KMF officials, who acknowledged that they were aware of such distress sale due to fodder and water shortage, however, attributed the decline in procurement to the lean season.

**Milk price to be reduced by Re. 1 from today**

Nandini milk consumers will get some relief from Wednesday with the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) on Monday announcing a Re. 1 reduction in the price for a litre of milk. Current prices, which came into effect on February 9, ranges between Rs. 28 and Rs. 30 a litre in different parts of the State.

From Wednesday, a litre of milk in Bangalore, Mysore, Mandya, Tumkur, Kolar, Hassan and Shimoga districts will cost Rs. 27, Rs. 28 in coastal Karnataka, Raichur, Bellary, Dharwad and Belgaum districts, and Rs. 29 in Gulbarga and Bijapur districts. The price of curd will come down from Rs. 34 to Rs. 33 a litre.

The decision was announced by KMF Chairman G. Somashekar Reddy on Monday after a meeting with Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, who is learnt to have sought a reduction in price by Rs. 2 a litre.

Farmers, who are currently getting between Rs. 17.50 and Rs. 21 (plus Rs. 2 from the government) for a litre of milk will get up to Rs. 2 more following Monday's decision, he said.

While the KMF has agreed to bring down the price, in exchange it has asked the government to provide subsidy on cattle feed, which will help farmers as well as the milk unions.

"The government has agreed to release around Rs. 60 crore till the end of March. After that, we have requested the government to give Rs. 4 a kg of cattle feed; the government is yet to respond," he added.

### **Stock limit imposition on rice boomerangs: Jeevaraj**

Food and Civil Supplies Minister D.N. Jeevaraj on Tuesday told the Legislative Council that his department's move to enforce stock limit for rice and paddy, in an effort to bring down rice prices, appears to have boomeranged.

#### **Aftermath of raids**

After the department conducted raids in Davangere district recently, there were reports that paddy from godowns of Raichur, Koppal and Bellary districts were being transported in a hurry to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, he said, responding to Mahantesh Shivanand Kaujalagi, who had sought the government's response on rising rice prices.



The government has to balance the interests of both the farmers and the consumers, the Minister said. Since there is no summer paddy crop as a result of drought, one has to store paddy for the coming days and hence the department is going slow on enforcing stock limit, the Minister said.

To Mr. Kaujalagi's question on banning inter-State movement of rice and paddy, Mr. Jeevaraj said it cannot be done in a federal set up. The State government has already written to the Centre to ban rice export to bring down prices. Allowing rice export was a good decision in February 2011 when there was surplus production, but at present it is not, as reservoirs in southern States have dried up and the production drastically reduced, he said.

### **Akki santhe**

He said the department has taken steps to make available rice at reasonable prices through 'Akki Santhe' (rice shandy) after holding discussions with rice merchants. Fine quality Sona Masuri is being made available at Rs. 37 a kg while the retail price was Rs. 52. While one shandy was recently held in Tumkur, it will be held in other district headquarters, including Bangalore, Mr. Jeevaraj said.

### **Too much emphasis on commercial crops endangers food security: Nammalwar**

Focussing too much on commercial (cash) crops will endanger food security, proponent of organic agriculture Nammalwar has said. In a statement, he said industrialised agriculture does not lead even to breakeven situation. That was why farmers switched over to commercial agriculture.

For example, Tamil Nadu has 38 sugar mills each one having a registered cane area of about 20,000 acres. In other fertile lands, cash crops such as banana, coconut, turmeric, cotton, flowers and tobacco are raised.

All the governmental assistance such as free electricity and fertilizer subsidy go only to commercial crops. Thus food production faces serious threat, he added.

Pointing out that 80 per cent of the farmers in the State own less than two acres each, he lamented that they are forced to rely on income from other sources for their livelihood. Their

farming activities are totally dependent on rivers and rains. And the skirmishes between the States regarding water, drought due to climatic changes and floods, affect them directly.

“Industrialised agriculture contributes 35 per cent to global warming,” he observed.

He said that industrialised agriculture required items from industries and hence would require quite a lot of energy. Thus it becomes “high energy input agriculture.” But organic agriculture, which is given several names including ecological farming, bio-dynamic agriculture, and natural way of farming, is one with “low external input and sustainable agriculture (LEISA).” Farmers and non-governmental organisations which wanted a change found LEISA method to have a number of solutions to the complexities of agriculture.

That’s why organic farming is considered both producer-friendly and consumer-friendly, he added.

Mr.Nammalwar said as early as 2006 the National Commission for Agriculture pinpointed the problems faced by Indian agriculture. Even the commission’s chairman and the father of Green Revolution M.S.Swaminathan had said that if proper solutions were not found, agriculture would reach an irredeemable stage, he warned.

The organic scientist said farmers at present are meeting too many problems and are incurring huge expenses. A large number of them are committing suicide. Only 28 per cent of them are able to get loans from the nationalised banks while the rest are still at the mercy of private lenders.

While groundwater level is going down year after year, salinity in cultivable lands has increased. Nutritional deficiency is found in almost all the fields.

Farm produce do not fetch remunerative price. And there is no scope for improving the productivity of the lands that offered food grains for the public distribution system at the initial stages. And consumers become victims of diseases such as jaundice, diabetes, and cancer. Both pregnant and lactating women suffer nutritional deficiency. Even children are born with low weight and poor physical and mental growth. Crops with high nutrient content like cholam, cumbu, ragi, varaghu, kudiraivali, samai, thinai and panivaraghu require less water. But the lands where these are raised have been rendered fallow and hence considered orphan crops.

Quoting Mr.Swaminathan, Mr.Nammalwar says “in late 1960s we were awaiting the arrival of ships for food. Now we don’t have even such an opportunity.”

As African countries are facing serious drought and suffering, the entire focus of the world has turned towards them.

The problems of Indian agriculture need a deep and long-term research and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has the facilities to do so and the NGOs can involve the public both in research and growth.

Hence, he is confident that if both these organisations were to act in unison it could bring about a sea change in agriculture in the State.

### **Sharp increase in procurement price of paddy**

Paddy, a crop cultivated in the district, has fetched higher procurement prices this season indicating an increase in the price of rice in coming months.

Procurement price of fine paddy variety has been hovering between Rs.1,100 and Rs.1,200 a bag (61 kg) due to a sharp dip in production in Theni and in other parts of the State. Some traders pay even more to farmers at Palanichettipatti, at the far end of the Cumbum Valley.

The procurement price last year hovered between Rs.550 to Rs.650.

Following crop failure in major production centres, particularly in delta areas and Madurai district, paddy availability is limited to Theni district.

Traders from Virudhunagar, Madurai, Thanjavur, Theni, Tiruchi and Tiruvarur and Thiruvannamalai camp at Cumbum, Uthamaplayam, Chinnamanur and Theni to procure the entire production. Traders from other areas are ready to pay cash to farmers, whereas local traders seek credit, says S. Palanivel, a local trader.

### **Farmers unhappy**

Despite an acceptable procurement price, farmers are not happy. The hike does not reflect our profit in view of the rise in overhead costs. It is not sufficient to settle accumulated debt, says P. Mani, a farmer of Uthamapalayam.

### **'Better post-harvest management of cut flowers vital to boost exports'**

Better post-harvest management of cut flowers is the need of the hour to boost exports, said Rajesh Puri, a cut flower exporter and partner of Irish Biotech near Bagalur, here.

#### **Subsidies**

Though the government and other agencies are encouraging small farmer to take up cultivation of cut flowers by providing subsidies to set up green houses, drip irrigation and other inputs, no efforts have been taken to provide them cold storage, packing, supply chain management and upfront export market facilitation, Mr. Puri told *The Hindu* .

To bridge this gap, a group of three to four cut flower exporters from this region had proposed to help small farmers in terms of scientific methods of cut flower cultivation, packaging, he said .

Mr. Puri said that cut flowers have good export market throughout the year, but the boom period was three months ahead of Valentine's Day and a month after the day.

Red roses occupy 60 per cent of the exports and for other colour flowers the market potential is 40 per cent.

#### **Scope**

He said that there was good export scope for pink and white roses during the Mothers' day in UK and white roses in Arabic countries. Every exporter of the roses should understand the taste of the end user and try to export as per the requirement.

While each cut flower costs anywhere between Rs. 6 to Rs. 14 during Valentine's Day which falls on February 14, during normal days each flower costs Rs. 3.50 to Rs. 4, he said.

The cut flowers produced in and around Hosur are being exported to Holland, Japan, Middle East, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Australia, UK and other European Countries. The Taj Mahal rose

fetches the highest rate of Rs. 17 per stem, said cut flower farmer M. Munivenkatappa of Dasarahalli near Bagalur. He has his own cold storage facility and cultivates flowers in his 2.5 acre land.

D. Bala Shiva Prasath, an MCA graduate, cultivates cut flower in the land belonging to his father, a retired Headmaster.

Prasath, who exports flowers to Malaysia, recently sent two consignments of 40,000 and 25,000 cut flowers. He was guided by Dr. Jawahar, Head of Department, Floriculture, at the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University in Coimbatore.

### Area of cultivation

An official attached to the Office of the Joint Director, Horticulture told *The Hindu* that the total area of cultivation of cut flowers and vegetables in the district was 33.20 hectare, of these 60 per cent was cut flowers and 40 per cent was vegetable.

### Salubrious climate

Hosur, Shoolagiri, Kelamangalam, Thally Panchayat Unions have salubrious climate to cultivate cut flowers and vegetables, he adds.

So far, 1600 cut flower and vegetable farmers were given subsidy for setting up green houses in the district from the year 2006-2007, the official said.

### Egg price goes up

*in rupees*

Price rise of egg in 2013	
January 24	- 3.20
January 28	- 3.30
January 31	- 3.40
February 4	- 3.45
February 7	- 3.55
February 9	- 3.65
February 11	- 3.70

The table price of egg scaled to a new high price of Rs. 3.70, its highest price in Namakkal Zone, on Monday. This is five paise more than the previous highest price of Rs. 3.65 in September 2012 and came down to Rs. 2.70 in about a month due to various reasons.

The wholesale price has now climbed by 50 paise in two weeks. On Saturday, the egg rate once again equalled its previous highest price when it climbed by 10 paise from Rs. 3.55 on Thursday. “The decision to increase the price to the highest price was taken by the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) on Monday”, its Namakkal Zone Chairman Dr. P. Selvaraj told *The Hindu* .

Dr. Selvaraj said that the domestic consumption of eggs has also gone up in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. “This is because the price of chicken meat has gone up drastically, making egg affordable despite its price hike. Its (egg) price is also good in other zones and we expect the price to go up further in the days to come till the winter continues in the North”, he added.

NECC sources and poultry farmers pointed out that another main reason for price of egg going up was the drop in production of egg.

### **Machine to help make dehusking areca nuts easier**

The gadget priced below Rs.3,000 and weighing around 4 kg can be operated sitting on a chair



C.V. Premarajan, a mechanic at Bovikkanam in Kasaragod, demonstrates the working of the machine.

Over the years, areca nut growers have been struggling with escalating labour charges and acute shortage of semi-skilled labourers. C.V. Premarajan, a small-time mechanic running a workshop at Bovikkanam, has now found an answer — a user-friendly areca nut dehusking machine.

The hand-operated machine, weighing around four kg and priced below Rs.3,000, is expected to reduce dependence on semi-skilled dehusking labourers, who are becoming increasingly hard to find.

The machine can de-husk an arecanut in seconds and process around 25 to 30 kg raw areca nuts in an hour, says Mr. Premarajan, a resident of Bovikkanam in Muliya village near here. He says even children can operate it, with the small gadget firmly placed on a table or on an elevated platform.

The relatively cheaper gadget, which can be operated sitting on a chair, can save the user from back ache and physical strain. The conventional knife-fitted wooden board requires the labourer to sit on it in a crouching position and work for long hours to get the work done.

As many as 80 small and big areca nut growers from as far as Wayanad, Kannur, Kasaragod, and nearby Putthur in Karnataka have placed orders for the gadget, Mr. Premarajan, who is running a water-pump service centre, tells *The Hindu*.

The 52-year-old mechanic is planning to manufacture the machine probably by next week. He also plans to enhance its capacity. Mr. Premarajan is not inclined to set up a large-scale manufacturing unit; he intends to assemble the gadget by himself in order to cater to the pending orders from various farming communities. Mr. Premarajan, a matriculate, has not received any formal training in devising machines.

He had taken part in a camp organised by Campco (a cooperative venture of the States of Kerala and Karnataka) at Puthur in November 2009 where he had demonstrated a pesticide-spraying machine for arecanut without climbing the tree. He said several brands of electrically

operated areca nut dehusking machines were on display at the camp. However, such gadgets were affordable only to large-scale farmers.

### **Training in homestead water management**

City Police Commissioner G. Sparjan Kumar inaugurated a two-day training programme in homestead water management and organic spices cultivation for 'Niravu Vengeri,' the selected resident's association, on the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM) campus at Kunnamangalam on Tuesday. This is part of the National Horticultural Mission's decision to offer training programmes for progressive farmers, Kudumbasree workers, and selected residents' associations in organic farming and water management.

Papers will be presented on topics such as water availability and homestead water management, fertilisation and plant nutrition, and organic farming of spices by experts. Practical training in preparation of organic insecticides and different farming and irrigation methods will be part of the programme. Farmers will share their experiences with the participants at the camp.

CWRDM director N.B. Narasimha Prasad presided.

### **'Take steps to promote organic agriculture'**

The Malai Maavatta Siru Vivasayigal Sangam has urged the government to promote, in a big way, organic farming in the Nilgiris.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Tuesday, Thumboor I.Bhojan, president of the Kotagiri-based sangam, said that the conditions in the district are ideal for organic farming.

Appreciating the government for declaring all the districts except Chennai as drought-affected, he appealed to the government to look into the difficulties being faced by the farming community in this hill-station.

Over the last few years, rainfall has been erratic and the cost of inputs has gone up. While on the one hand the wages of labourers have shot up, on the other, getting them has become a very difficult task.

### **Shortage**



A major contributory factor for the shortage of labour is the 100-day employment scheme.

They are skipping farms and going for road work though the highways department has its own workers.

Regretting that wild animals are adding to the woes of the farmers, he said that protecting crops from raiding gaurs, wild boars and monkeys has become a major challenge for the people in the region.

Expressing the hope that the government will compensate farmers whose fields have been raided by the wild animals, he said that a scheme to erect solar fences should be implemented.

Since wild animals have also become a threat to the people, licenses to own weapons should be given.

### **Farm loans**

Farm loans should be waived, it was pointed out. Tree cultivation should be encouraged by simplifying cutting rules.

### **Irate farmers detain irrigation officials**

The personnel of the Irrigation department are feeling the heat of the growing unrest among the delta farmers over the worsening water crisis in rabi in the backdrop of dwindling levels in the Godavari river.

In a dawn-to-dusk protest at Undi, Divisional Engineer Rama Rao and Assistant Engineer Gangadharam were detained for several hours in the divisional office of the Irrigation department on Tuesday by the protesters seeking to protect the standing paddy crop.

A large number of farmers blocked all the entries leading to the office, cooked food and dined on the premises as part of their protest.

The paddy crop is reportedly withering in 4,000 acres in a cluster of villages such as Cherukuvada, Ardhamuru, Palamuru, Pamulaparru and Kavitapakala for want of regular and adequate supply of water from the Undi canal. The agitating protesters relented following an

assurance from the Superintending Engineer Venkateswarlu to take all the measures to protect the crop.

The farmers staged a rasta roko at Ganapavaram on the Undi-Narayanpuram road, expressing similar concerns. The crop in over 10,000 acres in Kesavaram, Mallapurajupeta, Appannapeta, Jalli Kakinada, Undurru, Sagupadu and Vardhavaram is reportedly withering away. The fields at both the places receive water from the Undi canal.

Even as the Irrigation authorities release 600 cusecs of water from the Undi canal to meet the irrigation needs under the ayacut. But the farmers complain that the quantum was quite insufficient to meet the requirement.

It may be recalled that the district administration has stabilised the full ayacut with an assurance for water for the rabi under pressure from the public representatives regardless of the statements over the non-availability of water in the river. B. Balaram, secretary of the district branch of Andhra Pradesh Rytu Sangham, who led the protest, held the government responsible for the plight of farmers.

The government has failed to negotiate with the Odisha government for water release from the Sileru and the official machinery has not yet begun the process of bund construction across the drains for utilisation of the drain water for irrigation, he criticised.

### **Problems galore keep rabi cultivation low**

The rabi season of cultivation has failed to enthuse farmers who are already let down by the nature and power shortage during the kharif season. As a result, sowings/transplantation of different crops in rabi has fallen below the normal extent of cultivation.

Transplantation of paddy, the major crop cultivated in rabi, has been about 4-lakh hectares below normal till January-end.

Officials of the Agriculture Department stated that paddy was cultivated in 7.68-lakh ha till the last month-end against the normal extent of 11.6-lakh ha during the period.

The total extent of paddy grown in rabi is 14.84-lakh ha.

Insufficient water in irrigation projects, depletion of groundwater table and severe power shortage have affected the paddy cultivation during the season, a senior officer of the department said.

Going by the slow pace of transplantations and poor water levels in reservoirs it would be difficult to reach the normal area of cultivation in the remaining one month period, he explained. Paddy cultivation in rabi season was 13-lakh ha by the end of January in 2011 and 9.84-lakh ha in 2012. Its coverage was also below normal by over 3-lakh ha in the recently-concluded kharif season too.

With the paddy production going down by about 8-lakh tonnes in kharif, lesser cultivation of the crop in rabi would have serious impact on the price of rice in the market, the official said.

However, the below normal cultivation of paddy in rabi has pushed up the cultivation of coarse grains such as maize, pearl millet, finger millet, sorghum, wheat and others.

As against the normal extent of 4.99-lakh ha for the rabi season the crops were sown in over 6-lakh ha so far this season.

### **Pulses**

Cultivation of pulses has also picked up in rabi with different crops sown in 12.53-lakh ha against the normal of 11.68-lakh ha for the entire season.

Cultivation of oilseeds is also not much encouraging in rabi since they are sown in 4.38-lakh ha so far against the normal extent of 5.62-lakh ha for the period.

Oilseeds' extent was also poor in kharif at 14.92-lakh ha against the normal of 17.62-lakh ha.

### **Cashew industry to shun Kochi Port**

To promote Tuticorin Port for importing raw cashew nuts



A view of the International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT), Vallarpadam, at Kochi Port.— PHOTO: K. K. MUSTAFAH

The Cashew Manufacturers and Exporters Association, at a meeting held here on Monday, has decided to boycott the Kochi Port, and instead promote the Tuticorin Port in Tamil Nadu for importing raw cashew nuts and exporting processed cashew kernels.

The association had already given directions to three container ships carrying 18,000 metric tonnes of raw cashew from the Mtwara Port in Tanzania destined for the Kochi Port to skip the latter port and call at the Tuticorin port.

The ships — Kota Hormat, Kota Hungal and Kota Akbar — have already steered clear of the Kochi Port, and are heading for the Tuticorin Port.

A spokesman for the association told *The Hindu* that the decision had been taken in the wake of the growing trade union problem at the Kochi Port. Since the past ten days, there has been no container movement from the Kochi Port because of a strike declared by drivers and cleaners of container trucks.

The divers and cleaners demand an increase in the batta (extra allowance) following the hike in freight charges effected by container truck owners due to an increase in fuel prices.

The association feels the demands of the union are unjustified.

The Labour Minister, Shibu Baby John, and the Ports Minister, K. Babu, held talks with the representatives of trade unions at Thuvananthapuram on Monday to sort out the problem but the union leaders were adamant and walked out of the meeting.

This has led to non-movement of about 50,000 metric tonnes of raw cashew nuts, meant for the processing industry here, and a huge quantity of processed kernels for export.

As per existing rates, the batta for a container reaching Kollam from Kochi and back is Rs.3,000 for the driver alone. This is exclusive of the salary. The demand now is to hike that batta to more than Rs.5,000. At the same time, the batta for Tuticorin-based container truck drivers and cleaners together for a trip to Kollam and back is just Rs.1.800. Hence, the decision to promote

the Tuticorin Port where attractive incentives are offered to exporters and importers, says the association.

### **Dhenkanal to be made mango hub**

The State government on Tuesday reiterated its resolve to make Dhenkanal as a mango hub.

The executive committee meeting of Odisha Horticulture Development Society held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Bijay Kumar Patnaik directed the line departments to inform farmers about different varieties of mangos to grow. Officials were asked to assess mango varieties which have high demand in market.

### **More NABARD credit flow for farm sector**

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on Tuesday projected the overall credit potential of the State at Rs. 32,649 crore for priority sectors during the year 2013-14.

Agriculture and allied sector has been given priority with a projection of Rs. 16,659 crore constituting more than 50 per cent of total credit plan outlay.

“The ground level credit under priority sector for the year 2013-14 is higher by around Rs. 3,000 crore over the current year’s projection which is Rs. 29,927 crore,” say NABARD sources.

In view of growth potential of agriculture sector in the State, the pace of credit flow needs to be accelerated with banks required to gear up and come out with a strategy to improve ground level credit flow to agriculture sector in particular, the top development bank said.

The ground level credit flow for agriculture sector (crop loan, term loan and allied agriculture taken together) which was Rs. 1316 crore in 2003-04 has increased to Rs. 8,520 crore in 2011-12 and it is likely to touch Rs. 14,000 crore during the current year. The credit potential for different sectors and critical infrastructure gaps in agriculture were discussed in detail in the State Credit Seminar 2013-14 here on Tuesday.

The State Credit Seminar has focused on infrastructure development as critical factor for rapid economic development of the State.

NABARD has assessed district wise investments required for key and critical infrastructure which was put at Rs. 2,600 crore for the State during 2013-14.

As per the State focus paper, Odisha's economy has been following a high growth trajectory in recent years. Quick estimates put Odisha's real growth rate at 8.6 per cent during 2010-11.

The growth rate estimated during the year 2011-12 is 7.2 per cent.

### **Second round of vaccination for cattle, buffaloes under way**

The month-long second round of vaccination for foot-and-mouth disease for over 6.8 lakh head of cattle in Mysore district began on February 11 and will end on March 12.

The first round of vaccination was taken up during August-September last year, covering nearly 85 per cent of the cattle.

No incidence of the disease was reported from any part of Mysore district in the last three years, Prasadmurthy, Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry, Mysore district, told *The Hindu*.

The non-prevalence of the disease should also be counted as one of the contributory factors for the recent rise in milk production in the district, he said.

The affected animals lose fertility, and milk production comes down drastically. Such animals would die of starvation, he added.

A team of five to seven members, led by an Assistant Director, three veterinary inspectors and group D personnel would visit the villages to vaccinate the animals.

Enough quantity of vaccine had been procured from Indian Immunologicals, a subsidiary of the NDDDB, he said.

As per available statistics, there are 6.16 lakh head of cattle and 66,235 buffaloes in Mysore district.

Mr. Prasadmurthy agreed that cattle let into forest for grazing stood the risk of contracting the disease. The cooperation of the Forest Department had been sought to vaccinate animals in the fringe areas of forests.

To a certain extent, animals brought to Karnataka from neighbouring States were found to be the carriers of the disease in the past, he said. They too were being covered under the drive.

Some farmers were refusing to vaccinate bullocks owing to the fear that they would be ill and can't be used in daily work.

### **Take steps to promote organic agriculture'**

The Malai Maavatta Siru Vivasayigal Sangam has urged the government to promote, in a big way, organic farming in the Nilgiris.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Tuesday, Thumboor I.Bhojan, president of the Kotagiri-based sangam, said that the conditions in the district are ideal for organic farming.

Appreciating the government for declaring all the districts except Chennai as drought-affected, he appealed to the government to look into the difficulties being faced by the farming community in this hill-station.

Over the last few years, rainfall has been erratic and the cost of inputs has gone up. While on the one hand the wages of labourers have shot up, on the other, getting them has become a very difficult task.

### **Shortage**

A major contributory factor for the shortage of labour is the 100-day employment scheme.

They are skipping farms and going for road work though the highways department has its own workers.

Regretting that wild animals are adding to the woes of the farmers, he said that protecting crops from raiding gaurs, wild boars and monkeys has become a major challenge for the people in the region.

Expressing the hope that the government will compensate farmers whose fields have been raided by the wild animals, he said that a scheme to erect solar fences should be implemented.

Since wild animals have also become a threat to the people, licenses to own weapons should be given.

### **Farm loans**

Farm loans should be waived, it was pointed out. Tree cultivation should be encouraged by simplifying cutting rules.

### **'Go in for gingili to make the most of 'Masi pattam''**



After sowing, gingili may not require water even for 15 to 20 days.—file photo

Farmers, not only in the delta region, but even in other places could immediately go in for gingili as “Masi pattam” is the ideal season for the crop, says Kapisthalam R.Ramanathan, veteran farmer and a close friend of G.K.Moopanar, founder of the Tamil Maanila Congress.

Mr.Ramanathan, who has been into agriculture since 1953, told *The Hindu* “Masi pattam starts on Wednesday. Farmers have no reason to be distraught over samba crop loss. Those who have already harvested could immediately start operations for raising gingili with the available moisture in the soil as it fetches Rs.90 a kilogram at present. This is a price I have never heard in my lifetime,” he adds.



While he could get 280 kg yield per acre under rain-fed conditions, Mr.Ramanathan says that anyone raising the same in irrigated conditions using proper agronomy practices would be able to get not less than 400 kg.

After sowing, it may not require water even for 15 to 20 days. Thereafter it would need a couple of wettings.

At the same time, he admits that the risk factor is groundwater and it is for the farmer to decide on that.

Meanwhile, even the summer rains could be of help to this crop.

Mr.Ramanathan says even short-duration summer cotton could be raised now and there are any numbers of varieties available.

Though nothing much could be done during Panguni, Chithirai pattam (from April) would be ideal for raising green gram, black gram, cholam, and other millets.

The farmers who are sure of groundwater potential and who are raising cash crops alone are prosperous. "And there is a vast scope for such crops," he added.

### **Too much emphasis on commercial crops endangers food security: Nammalwar**

Focussing too much on commercial (cash) crops will endanger food security, proponent of organic agriculture Nammalwar has said. In a statement, he said industrialised agriculture does not lead even to breakeven situation. That was why farmers switched over to commercial agriculture.

For example, Tamil Nadu has 38 sugar mills each one having a registered cane area of about 20,000 acres. In other fertile lands, cash crops such as banana, coconut, turmeric, cotton, flowers and tobacco are raised.

All the governmental assistance such as free electricity and fertilizer subsidy go only to commercial crops. Thus food production faces serious threat, he added.

Pointing out that 80 per cent of the farmers in the State own less than two acres each, he lamented that they are forced to rely on income from other sources for their livelihood. Their farming activities are totally dependent on rivers and rains. And the skirmishes between the States regarding water, drought due to climatic changes and floods, affect them directly.

“Industrialised agriculture contributes 35 per cent to global warming,” he observed.

He said that industrialised agriculture required items from industries and hence would require quite a lot of energy. Thus it becomes “high energy input agriculture.” But organic agriculture, which is given several names including ecological farming, bio-dynamic agriculture, and natural way of farming, is one with “low external input and sustainable agriculture (LEISA).” Farmers and non-governmental organisations which wanted a change found LEISA method to have a number of solutions to the complexities of agriculture.

That’s why organic farming is considered both producer-friendly and consumer-friendly, he added.

Mr.Nammalwar said as early as 2006 the National Commission for Agriculture pinpointed the problems faced by Indian agriculture. Even the commission’s chairman and the father of Green Revolution M.S.Swaminathan had said that if proper solutions were not found, agriculture would reach an irredeemable stage, he warned.

The organic scientist said farmers at present are meeting too many problems and are incurring huge expenses. A large number of them are committing suicide. Only 28 per cent of them are able to get loans from the nationalised banks while the rest are still at the mercy of private lenders.

While groundwater level is going down year after year, salinity in cultivable lands has increased. Nutritional deficiency is found in almost all the fields.

Farm produce do not fetch remunerative price. And there is no scope for improving the productivity of the lands that offered food grains for the public distribution system at the initial stages. And consumers become victims of diseases such as jaundice, diabetes, and cancer. Both pregnant and lactating women suffer nutritional deficiency. Even children are born with low weight and poor physical and mental growth. Crops with high nutrient content like cholam,

cumbu, ragi, varaghu, kudiraivali, samai, thinai and panivaraghu require less water. But the lands where these are raised have been rendered fallow and hence considered orphan crops.

Quoting Mr.Swaminathan, Mr.Nammalwar says “in late 1960s we were awaiting the arrival of ships for food. Now we don’t have even such an opportunity.”

As African countries are facing serious drought and suffering, the entire focus of the world has turned towards them.

The problems of Indian agriculture need a deep and long-term research and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has the facilities to do so and the NGOs can involve the public both in research and growth.

Hence, he is confident that if both these organisations were to act in unison it could bring about a sea change in agriculture in the State.

### **Sharp increase in procurement price of paddy**

Paddy, a crop cultivated in the district, has fetched higher procurement prices this season indicating an increase in the price of rice in coming months.

Procurement price of fine paddy variety has been hovering between Rs.1,100 and Rs.1,200 a bag (61 kg) due to a sharp dip in production in Theni and in other parts of the State. Some traders pay even more to farmers at Palanichettipatti, at the far end of the Cumbum Valley.

The procurement price last year hovered between Rs.550 to Rs.650.

Following crop failure in major production centres, particularly in delta areas and Madurai district, paddy availability is limited to Theni district.

Traders from Virudhunagar, Madurai, Thanjavur, Theni, Tiruchi and Tiruvarur and Thiruvannamalai camp at Cumbum, Uthamaplayam, Chinnamanur and Theni to procure the entire production. Traders from other areas are ready to pay cash to farmers, whereas local traders seek credit, says S. Palanivel, a local trader.

### **Farmers unhappy**

Despite an acceptable procurement price, farmers are not happy. The hike does not reflect our profit in view of the rise in overhead costs. It is not sufficient to settle accumulated debt, says P. Mani, a farmer of Uthamapalayam.

### Egg price goes up

*in rupees*

<b>Price rise of egg in 2013</b>	
<b>January 24</b>	<b>- 3.20</b>
<b>January 28</b>	<b>- 3.30</b>
<b>January 31</b>	<b>- 3.40</b>
<b>February 4</b>	<b>- 3.45</b>
<b>February 7</b>	<b>- 3.55</b>
<b>February 9</b>	<b>- 3.65</b>
<b>February 11</b>	<b>- 3.70</b>

The table price of egg scaled to a new high price of Rs. 3.70, its highest price in Namakkal Zone, on Monday. This is five paise more than the previous highest price of Rs. 3.65 in September 2012 and came down to Rs. 2.70 in about a month due to various reasons.

The wholesale price has now climbed by 50 paise in two weeks. On Saturday, the egg rate once again equalled its previous highest price when it climbed by 10 paise from Rs. 3.55 on Thursday. "The decision to increase the price to the highest price was taken by the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) on Monday", its Namakkal Zone Chairman Dr. P. Selvaraj told *The Hindu*.

Dr. Selvaraj said that the domestic consumption of eggs has also gone up in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. "This is because the price of chicken meat has gone up drastically, making egg affordable despite its price hike. Its (egg) price is also good in other zones and we expect the price to go up further in the days to come till the winter continues in the North", he added.

NECC sources and poultry farmers pointed out that another main reason for price of egg going up was the drop in production of egg.

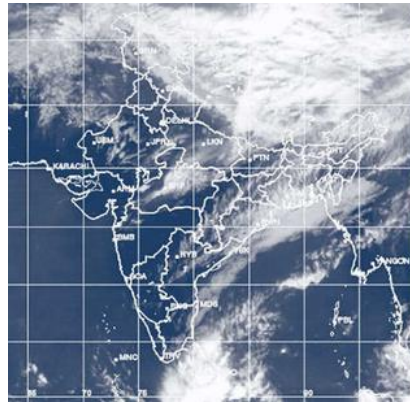
## Water level

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Tuesday stood at 45.70 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 143.09 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 80.67 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 9 cusecs and 30 cusecs of water is discharged.

## Nagercoil

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 4.10 feet, 31.68 feet in Perunchani, 4.98 feet in Chittar I, 5.08 feet in Chittar II and 7.50 feet in Poigai dam.

## Weather



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ANDHRA PRADESH				
Anantapur	33	19	0	tr
Arogyavaram	30	15	0	6
Bapatla	31	20	0	0
Calingapatnam	29	19	0	0
Gannavaram	31	22	0	0
Hanamkonda	34	19	0	0
Hyderabad AP	31	20	0	3
Kakinada	30	21	0	2

Kavali	31	22	0	0
Kurnool	34	21	0	0
Mahabubnagar	33	20	0	15
Machilipatnam	31	21	0	0
Nandyal	34	20	0	0
Narasapur	31	22	0	0
Nellore	33	23	0	0
Nizamabad	34	20	0	23
Ongole	32	23	0	0
Ramagundam	34	19	0	0
Tirupathi AP	32	21	0	0
Tuni	31	20	0	15
Vizag AP	33	20	0	8
Vizag	31	22	0	3
<b>KARNATAKA</b>				
Agumbe	33	14	0	0
Bangalore AP	29	17	0	1
Bangalore	29	18	0	1
Belgaum AP	32	18	0	0
Bellary	34	19	0	0
Bijapur	33	20	0	4
Chitradurga	31	19	0	0
Chickmagalur	29	17	0	15
Chintamani	29	14	0	0
Gadag	33	17	0	0
Gulbarga	34	20	0	33
Hassan	32	16	0	20

Honavar	36	23	0	0
Karwar	35	22	0	0
Madikeri	27	16	0	24
Mangalore AP	36	22	0	0
Mysore	31	18	0	0
Mandya	32	18	0	0
Panambur	37	23	0	0
Raichur	33	21	0	0
Shirali	35	23	0	0
<b>KERALA</b>				
Alappuzha	32	24	0	76
Kannur	36	25	0	0
Kochi AP	33	25	0	27
Kottayam	35	23	0	32
Kozhikode	34	25	0	0
Punalur	37	22	0	22
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	32	25	0	17
Thiruvanantha				
-puram City	34	25	0	22
Vellanikkara	35	23	0	0
<b>TAMIL NADU</b>				
Adiramapattinam	31	23	0	52
Coimbatore AP	32	21	0	1
Coonoor	31	12	1	11
Cuddalore	31	23	0	0
Chennai AP	31	23	0	tr

Chennai	30	23	0	0
Dharmapuri	31	18	0	0
Kanyakumari	33	23	0	9
Karaikal	30	23	0	10
Kodaikanal	19	9	2	45
Madurai AP	34	23	1	4
Nagapattinam	31	23	0	13
Palayamkottai	35	23	0	8
Pamban	30	24	22	83
Parangipettai	32	22	0	0
Puducherry	32	22	0	0
Salem	33	20	0	0
Thanjavur	31	25	0	5
Tiruchi AP	33	23	0	tr
Tirupattur	32	17	0	0
Tondi	31	24	1	31
Ooty	21	10	0	6
Valparai	29	13	0	7
Vedaranyam	32	23	0	199
Vellore	32	21	0	0
<b>LAKSHADWEEP</b>				
Amini Divi	34	26	0	tr
Minicoy	32	27	0	105
Kavarathi	—	—	—	—
<b>OTHER STATIONS</b>				
Kolkata (Alipore)	29	14	0	12



Mumbai	31	23	0	0
New Delhi	24	9	0	103

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

### **Dry weather over A.P.**

**CHENNAI:** Isolated rainfall occurred over Tamil Nadu. Dry weather prevailed over Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andhra Pradesh.

The minimum temperature rose at one or two places over Kerala and Tamil Nadu and fell at one or two places over rest Tamil Nadu and changed little elsewhere over the region. They were appreciably above normal at one or two places over Telangana, north interior and coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, above normal at one or two places over rest Telangana, rest coastal Karnataka, rest Tamil Nadu and coastal Andhra Pradesh, below normal at one or two places over rest coastal Andhra Pradesh and south interior Karnataka and were remained normal over the rest of the region.

**Forecast (valid till Thursday morning):** Isolated rain may occur over south coastal Tamil Nadu. Mainly dry weather will prevail over rest Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andhra Pradesh.

## weather

Chennai

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Feb 13

Max Min

30° | 25°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 74

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:32

Sunset: 06:14

Barometer: 1013

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Feb 14

Max Min

31° | 23°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Feb 15	Saturday Feb 16	Sunday Feb 17	Monday Feb 18	Tuesday Feb 19
30°   23° Partly Cloudy	31°   24° Overcast	31°   22° Overcast	33°   22° Overcast	31°   23° Overcast

#### Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:01

Sunset: 06:09

Barometer: 1017



### Farmers' Club educates on banking needs in Chhattisgarh

To educate farmers about their banking needs and help them use bank credit efficiently, farmers' clubs have been constituted in Chhattisgarh and eleven other states of the country by apex development bank NABARD and the Axis Bank.

Farmers' Club is a grass-root level informal association comprising 10-15 farmers of the same or nearby villages promoted by rural and semi-urban branches. As many as 106 such clubs through 16 Agri-Business Centres of Axis Bank are being promoted in 12 states.

Farmers' Club programme was introduced by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in order to bridge the gap between the rural customers and the banks. The basic objective of Farmers Clubs is development in rural areas through credit, technology transfer, awareness and capacity building.

# THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

13.02.2013 A.M

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12<sup>th</sup> jan 2013

## Sugar climbs further on talk of excise duty hike

Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale terminal extended gains by Rs 10-20 a quintal on Tuesday tracking a firm futures market and on talk of an increase in excise duty. Spot prices were up Rs 10-20 a quintal. *Naka* prices gained Rs 20-30 a quintal. Mill tender rates rose by Rs 15-20 a quintal on improved demand from stockists. Domestic futures prices extended gain for the third consecutive day. "The market sentiment remained positive as futures extended gain by Rs 20 a quintal till noon and crossed Rs 3,100. Prices at the producing level have dropped by more than Rs 150 to Rs 3,050-3,150 in the last one and a half month on selling by mills," said a wholesaler in Vashi.

He added that considering the higher production cost of about Rs 3,300-3,400, the current price level seems to be a bottom and demand from retailers as well as wholesalers may lift prices again. Though, as Vashi carries excess inventory and upcountry buying at the mill level is absent, prices may rise slowly.

In Vashi, 62-63 truckloads (each of 100 bags) arrived and 60-61 truckloads were despatched locally. On Monday, 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold 64,000-65,000 bags (each of a quintal) at Rs 3,060-3,100 (Rs 3,050-3,090) for S-grade and Rs 3,145-3,260 (Rs 3,140-3,240) for M-grade. On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, the March contract was up to Rs 3,104 (Rs 3,088), April to Rs 3,145 (Rs 3,125) and May to Rs 3,185 (Rs 3,168) till noon.

**Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates:** S-grade Rs 3,202-3,292 (Rs 3,192-3,272) and M-grade Rs 3,312-3,441 (Rs 3,302-3,431).

***Naka* delivery rates:** S-grade Rs 3,150-3,220 (Rs 3,140-3,180) and M-grade Rs 3,250-3,365 (Rs 3,220-3,350).

## Lack of N. India orders pulls down turmeric buying



Spot turmeric sale tumbled on Tuesday, as there was no demand from neighbouring States.

“For want of upcountry demand, traders and exporters just bought only 280 bags to meet local orders. Stockists bought about 900 bags. Orders from North India are expected to start pouring in from the first week of March,” said Erode Turmeric Merchants Association President R.K.V. Ravishankar.

Because of quality arrival, the hybrid variety increased by Rs 300 a quintal. The finger variety was up Rs 200 a quintal in the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society. Demand is up for the fine variety. A few bags of the Mysore and number 8 arrived for sale, but only few were sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,211-6,324 a quintal, the root variety at Rs 4,001-5,630.

**Salem hybrid crop:** The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,734-6,850, the root variety at Rs 5,365-5,819. Of the 497 bags that arrived, only 69 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,133-6,317, the root variety at Rs 4,874-5,917. Of the 482 bags that arrived, 360 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,829-6,189, the root variety at Rs 4,611-5,898. All the 627 bags kept for sale were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,169-6,499, the root variety at Rs 4,169-5,956. All the 161 bags kept for sale were sold.

## Low stocks, high offtake keep dara wheat firm



Low availability of stocks coupled with steady domestic demand kept Dara wheat and flour prices firm on Tuesday.

The Food Corporation of India hasn't allocated stocks under the open market sale scheme for February month yet, said trader Sewa Ram.

Flour millers are using their remaining stocks and depending on arrivals from Uttar Pradesh, but if the situation persists, prices may increase marginally, he added.

In the physical market, Dara wheat quoted at Rs 1,520-1,525 a quintal. Around 60 tonnes of the Dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,520, while delivery at the *chakki* was Rs 1,525.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, after witnessing a good rally earlier on Monday, February contracts remained supportive on buying interest on Tuesday. The contract improved further by Rs 5 and traded at Rs 1,585 a quintal. The March contract extended loss and decreased by Rs 4 to Rs 1,452. Spot prices on the exchange remained unchanged, after rising on Monday, at Rs 1,500 a quintal.

## Flour Prices

Steady domestic demand kept flour prices unaltered at Rs 1,750 a quintal. On the other hand, *Chokar* was marginally down Rs 10 at Rs 1,360-1400 a quintal.

According to the market sources, a Bangladeshi trading firm is buying 50,000 tonnes of wheat from India at \$330 a tonne, including the cost of delivery.

### **Stockists avoid new edible oils orders before Budget**



Edible oils remained calm on Tuesday, as stockists avoided fresh buying and concentrated on taking deliveries of old commitments. Talk of a higher import duty kept the market cautious.

Bursa Malaysia Derivatives was closed for holiday, while domestic soya oil futures improved slightly. Volume was thin and need based in the ready market. Groundnut oil rose here by Rs 5 for 10 kg. Palmolein ruled steady. Soyabean and cotton refined oil dropped by Rs 3 and Rs 2 for 10 kg. Sunflower and rapeseed refined oils decline by Rs 5 and Rs 10 for 10 kg.

There was no fresh bulk commitment from stockists, as they have covered enough for February. Fear of a hike in import duty in the Budget has led traders to concentrate on taking deliveries of advance commitment made in the past to avoid any tax burden or dispute. In the spot market, resellers traded about 150-200 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 503-504 (excluding Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust) and at Rs 508-509 (excluding Shapur). There was no direct trade with refiners, as their prices were higher than resellers.

New arrivals of rapeseed-mustard seeds in Rajasthan and Gujarat and positive outlook for rabi oilseeds crops are putting pressure on the market sentiment. Palm oil inventory and output data for January from the Malaysian Palm Oil Board on Wednesday will give more trading clues.

Towards the end of the day, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 511-513, super palmolein at Rs 560 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 800. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 510, soyabean refined oil at Rs 695 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 775. Allana offered palmolein at Rs 510 and

super palmolein at Rs 560. In Saurashtra and Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled unchanged at Rs 1,920 for a 15-kg *telia* tin and at Rs 1,240 for loose (10 kg).

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil's March contract was up at Rs 702.35 (Rs 694.35), April at Rs 691.80 (Rs 685.70) and May at Rs 690 (Rs 686.30). Last week, **Malaysia's crude palm oil's** March contracts settled at MYR2,534, April at MYR2,560 and May at MYR2579 a tonne.

**Mumbai nominal spot rates (Rs/10 kg):** groundnut oil 1,240 (1,235), soya refined oil 695(698), sunflower exp. ref. 710 (715), sunflower ref. 780 (785), rapeseed ref. oil 775 (785), rapeseed expeller ref. 745(755) cottonseed ref. oil 605 (607) and palmolein 507 (507).

**Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai** quoted Rs 568 for Malaysian super palmolein.

### **Pepper moves up on buying support**

The pepper market continued to head north on good buying interest amid limited supply on Tuesday. All the active contracts closed much above the previous day's closing.

Sellers were buying back their positions as spot is ruling above the futures. Some were buying back March, while investors were opting to buy April and May as the arrivals of fresh pepper were not picking up as anticipated. In fact, these factors aided the price rise on the futures market, market sources told *Business Line*.

They said market moved up despite concerted efforts by some of the operators to pull it down by spreading rumours that the arrival of the new crop would pick up in the coming days. Besides, Vietnamese new crop would also hit the market soon.

On the spot, only 17 tonnes of fresh pepper arrived and that were traded at Rs396 and Rs406 depending upon the quality such as bulk density, moisture content and area of production, they said.

Meanwhile, an estimated 25 tonnes of new pepper was reportedly traded afloat by buyers from here. Interstate dealers were said to be active in the primary markets covering directly from the growers, they pointed out.



February contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 740 a quintal to close at Rs 39,460 a quintal. March and April went up by Rs 295 and Rs 245 respectively a quintal to close at Rs 36,460 and Rs 35,130.

### **Turnover**

Total turnover decreased by 70 tonnes to 1,357 tonnes. Total open interest declined by 35 tonnes to 3,679 tonnes.

February open interest fell by 30 tonnes while that of March and April dropped by 35 tonnes and 9 tonnes respectively to close at 2,066 tonnes and 560 tonnes.

Spot prices intandem with the futures market and good domestic demand amid limited supply moved up by Rs 100 to close at Rs 39,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,100 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market has gone up further following rise in futures market prices and hence remained out priced in the world market.

### **Fertilisers to be sold in smaller packs**

Farmers will soon be able to buy non-urea and complex fertilisers such as di-ammonium phosphate and muriate of potash (MOP) in smaller packs of 5 and 10 kg. At present, the fertiliser complexes are sold in conventional bags of 50 kg each.

The Fertiliser Ministry has recently allowed the sale of non-urea fertilisers – DAP, MOP, complexes, fortified fertilisers and customised fertilisers in smaller packs of 5 kg, 10 kg, 25 kg and 40 kg besides the conventional bag size of 50 kg.

The latest move is in response to the demands from various quarters as a sharp rise in non-urea fertiliser prices had led to decline in sales and an imbalance in consumption. It is also expected to encourage the balanced fertiliser application and promote the fertiliser use in low consumption and in-accessible areas.

The prices of non-urea fertiliser have shot up by a third since Rabi 2011 tracking global prices and a weaker currency. The retail prices of DAP have increased by almost a third to Rs 24,000 a tonne from Rs 18,200 a tonne. The MOP prices have shot up to Rs 17,000 a tonne from Rs

12,000 a tonne. The farm gate prices of single super phosphate has also soared from Rs 4,800 to Rs 7,800 and that of 10:26:26, a popular complex fertiliser, from Rs 16,000 to Rs 22,000 a tonne.

### **Drought could be a drain on pepper, cardamom growers**



Drought conditions that are currently prevailing in Kerala have started affecting plantation crops such as mangosteen, cocoa, nutmeg, pepper and cardamom.

“If the dry spell continues for another three months i.e., till the onset of monsoon in the first week of June, that would affect mangosteen, nutmeg and cocoa crops badly”, Thomas P. Thomas, a Botanist and grower in Kozhencherry in Kerala’s Pathanamthitta district told *Business Line*.

He said mangosteen and nutmeg require soil moisture and that is disappearing from the soil because of the drought conditions prevailing and second, due to the drop in the ground water

table following the fall in the river bed consequent to sand mining and filling of paddy fields and wetlands around the area.

Nutmeg has surface roots and, hence, the dry spell would affect its trees fast.

Fruits, the trees are bearing, at present, will fall. Similar will be the situation with mangosteen, which is at the budding and flowering stage.

Cocoa also started flowering and in some areas bearing fruits. Many of these fruits and flowers won't be able to withstand the heat and, hence, will fall, he said. Consequently, production of all these crops in 2013 is likely to halve, growers said.

Even a couple of showers, would not help and instead it will aid the fall of fruits and flowers, he said.

According to Joshua Daniel, a grower cultivating pepper, cocoa and mangosteen, pepper vines have already started drying up while cocoa and mangosteen flowers will fall if the drought conditions persisted.

Cocoa, mangosteen, nutmeg etc. are grown on the banks of rivers Pampa, Manimala, Meenachil and Periyar in Kerala's southern districts because of the sandy soil that has good moisture content. Cardamom growers in Idukki and Wayanad are also a worried lot as for the last three months, they have not received any showers. Cardamom plants also require adequate soil moisture.

"We may be able to irrigate for another 15 days from the bore-wells.

The small check dams have almost gone dry.

A majority of the small and medium growers has no irrigation facility.

In fact, only 2 – 3 per cent of growers have big check dams.

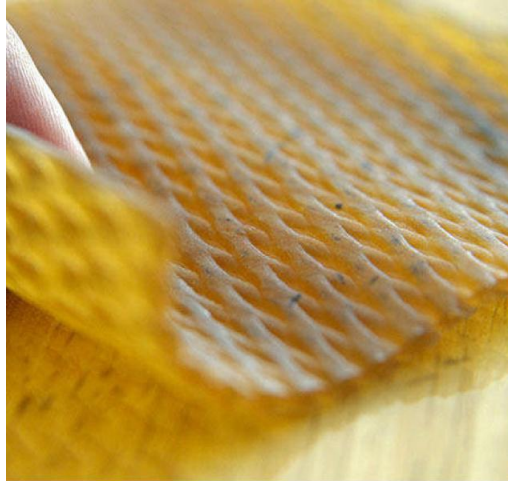
"The weather has been unfavourable for the cardamom plants during the current season.

Both the South-West and the North-East monsoon rains have been deficient last year and that is now followed by the protracted dry spell, cardamom growers said.

Consequently, the crop during the current season is less than 50 per cent of the previous season, growers said.

Yet, prices have not picked up and are vacillating between Rs 750 and 800 a kg, they said.

### Spot rubber rules steady



Spot rubber was quoted steady on Tuesday. The market opened weak, but regained the initial losses on late trading hours following a better closing on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

Meanwhile, the key TOCOM rubber futures edged higher led by a weak yen, but the gains were limited as traders remained cautious ahead of the Bank of Japan's policy meeting to be held later this week.

Sheet rubber closed unchanged at Rs 156 a kg, according to traders. The grade finished flat at Rs 156.50 a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

The February series improved to Rs 157.10 (155), March to Rs 159.30 (157.25), April to Rs 162.40 (160.21) and May to Rs 166 (163.72) a kg, while the June series weakened to Rs 167.99 (168.66) on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) increased to Rs 176.66 (175.47) a kg at Bangkok. The February futures for the grade firmed up to ¥310.01 (Rs 177.33) from ¥308 a kg during the day session and then to ¥313.5 (Rs 179.27) a kg in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

**Spot rates were (Rs/kg):** RSS-4: 156 (156); RSS-5: 152 (152); ungraded: 146 (146); ISNR 20: 152 (152) and latex 60 per cent: 101 (101).

### **Rapeseed output seen up 20% on higher yield**



Rapeseed-mustard crop output in the forthcoming rabi season is expected to go up by 20 per cent to 71 lakh tonnes against 59 lakh tonnes estimated in March last year on the back of better yield and favourable climatic conditions, according to the Solvent Extractors Association survey.

Area under rapeseed/mustard has dropped marginally to 64 lakh hectares against an earlier estimate of 66 lakh hectares.

The yield per hectare is expected to go up by 24 per cent to 1,103 kg a hectare against last estimate of 893 kg.

The SEA survey was conducted in major rapeseed-mustard growing regions in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

B.V. Mehta, Executive Director, SEA, said the crop may be delayed by 15-20 days due to late sowing and high temperature during the season beginning.

The good sub-soil moisture at the time of sowing and showers in January and February and favourable weather have helped farmers to better their yield, he said.

Besides, the estimates are based on current weather condition and expectation that the prevalent cold temperature will continue for two to three weeks, he added.

The yield and overall production may be impacted if the temperature rises in next few days.

While association has maintained Government record on area, it has made adjustment on yield to reflect the correct production of rapeseed/mustard, he said.

### **NEW VARIETY**

The association has been involved in various programmes to increase productivity of different oilseeds, including rapeseed/mustard. At the beginning of rabi season, the association procured seeds of high yielding Gujarat mustard-3 variety (GM-3). It was distributed to progressive farmers in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra for evaluation purpose.

A study has found that the GM-3 yield increased by 30-50 per cent in comparison with yield of conventional variety grown in the same farms.

If this variety is abundantly made available and propagated, it will not be difficult to achieve the target of 100 lakh tonnes of rapeseed mustard in the next three-five years, said Mehta.

# Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

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## Jeera falls 0.8% on profit-booking



Jeera futures for March fell by Rs 102.50, or 0.78%, to Rs 13,035 per quintal in 11,376 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the April lost Rs 87.50, or 0.66%, to Rs 13,130 per quintal in 7,221 lots.

Prices dipped as speculators booked profits at existing levels amid expectations of higher output and supplies from the new season crop.

## Pepper up 1.24% on thin supply



Pepper futures for February moved up by Rs 480, or 1.24%, to Rs 39,200 per quintal in 651 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the March traded higher by Rs 235, or 0.65%, to Rs 36,400 per quintal in 2,100 lots.

Prices rose as speculators created fresh positions, driven by a firm trend at spot market on pick-up in demand against thin supplies.

However, expectations of higher production this year and sluggish exports restricted the gains.

### **Sugar up 0.8% on pick-up in demand**



Sugar futures for March added Rs 25, or 0.81%, to Rs 3,113 per quintal in 25,210 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the February contract gained Rs 21, or 0.69%, to Rs 3,071 per quintal in 15,200 lots.

Prices strengthened as speculators enlarged positions, tracking a firm spot market trend.

However, higher supplies in the physical market from producing areas restricted the gains.

### **Wheat up 1% on likely dip in foodgrain production**





Wheat futures for February edged up by Rs 15, or 0.97%, to Rs 1,560 per quintal in 840 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the March contract gained Re 1, or 0.07%, to Rs 1,457 per quintal in 8,680 lots.

Participants creating speculative positions also supported the trade.

Reports saying country's foodgrain production is estimated to decline by 3.5% to 250.14 million tonnes in 2012-13 crop year as poor rains have hit rice and coarse cereal crops, influenced wheat futures trade.

### **Rapeseed/mustard seed output to rise despite lower acreage**



Despite a marginal decline in acreage, rapeseed / mustard seed output is likely to remain 20.95 per cent higher this season on favourable climatic conditions. Extended rainfall during the last monsoon season, coupled with chilling cold, helped sustain soil moisture, a key ingredient for better crop prospects, for long, resulting in an exponential growth in yield this year.

A survey conducted by the apex trade body, Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA), showed the rapeseed / mustard seed output to remain up at 7.11 million tonnes (mt) this year, compared with 5.88 mt in the previous year. Last year, however, SEA had forecast the season's output at 6.27 mt, which was later revised downwards to 5.88 mt when the actual output hit mandis.

This year, however, variable issues have already been factored in while assessing the rapeseed / mustard seed crop. Hence, the actual output is likely to remain at around the same level as estimated.

The survey, however, forecast the average yield at 1,103 kg/hectare (ha) for 2012-13, an increase of 23.52 per cent from the previous year's level at 893 kg/ha. Good subsoil moisture at the time of sowing, useful showers during January and February, severe cold and continuous favourable weather have helped increase the productivity, said the survey.

The Union ministry of agriculture has estimated the total area under rapeseed/mustard seed crop at 6.45 million ha for 2012-13, compared with 6.58 million ha in the previous year.

Rapeseed/mustard seed is a rabi crop sown largely in October with the beginning of a gradual decline in soil moisture in the field. Harvesting of this crop begins in the second fortnight of February and continues until April.

This year, however, due to late sowing and high temperature in the beginning of the season, the crop was delayed by 15-20 days. Also, the estimate is based on current weather conditions and expectations the cold temperature would sustain for the next two-three weeks. However, if temperature rises in the next few days, it may have some impact on yields and overall production.

Notably, SEA distributed the Gujarat Mustard-3 variety (GM-3) among farmers, which has shown very encouraging results.

<b>STRENGTHENING PRESENCE</b>			
	2011-12	2012-13	Change (%)
Area (mn ha)	6.58	6.49	-1.37
Yield (kg/ha)	893	1,103	23.52
Crop (mt)	5.88	7.11	20.95

Source : Solvent Extractors' Association

In the beginning of the rabi season, SEA had procured this mustard seed variety and distributed to the progressive farmers through the members –

solvent extraction plants--across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and also in Maharashtra. The GM-3 crop area has shown between 30 and 50 per cent increase in yield this year, compared with the conventional seeds used by farmers in the previous years.

If the seed of this variety is abundantly made available and propagated, it will not be difficult to achieve the target of 10 mt of rapeseed / mustard seed in the next three-to-five years, as happened in Bt cotton in last one decade.

### **Punjab Agricultural University college selected for Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme**

LUDHIANA: The [College of Agricultural Engineering](#) and Technology (COAE&T) of the [Punjab Agricultural University](#) (PAU) has been selected for participation in the Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP - Phase II) Project, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. University sources informed that the COAE&T will be granted about Rs 10 crore for this project. The TEQIP aims at transforming the technical education system in the country.

### **Unseasonal rains ruins crops in Nashik**

NASHIK: Lack of adequate rainfall for the last two years has brought on a severe drought in the state with farmers not being able to salvage their crops and even drinking water being available at a premium. Now however [unseasonal rains](#) are causing more havoc, farmers in [Nashik](#) who had been able to salvage their crops in spite of the drought saw their crops being ruined due to unseasonal rains on Monday when it rained in many parts of Nashik.

APMC officials in [Lasalgaon](#) Asia's largest onion market confirmed that it had rained in Nashik and said that onion crops were damaged but said that it was too early to reveal as to whether it would lead to a further increase in onion prices.

Large tracts of onion, grapes and mangoes have been ruined due to the unseasonal rain.

Rains also hit Jalgaon, Lonavala, Karjat, Shahapur, Sangamner, Akola, Rahta and Kopargaon.

### **Topography, finance stop farmers from going hi-tech**

RANCHI: Innovations in laboratories and research wings of [agriculture university](#) have started reaching state-based farmers through robust extension programmes taken up by the

government and university itself. However, poor farmers are unable to adopt modern techniques because of topographical and financial constraints.

Jatashankar Choudhary, director of state agriculture management and extension training institute, said he has observed a lot of change in the farmers' approach to adopting modern technology. "Adoption of [system of rice intensification](#) (SRI) and hybrid seeds by the farmers is one such example where a remarkable change has been seen in the farmers approach," he said, stressing that pilot projects organised to demonstrate the benefits have encouraged them to adopt it and set aside the traditional methods of farming.

Choudhary, however, said undulation of topography and lack of irrigation facilities is a major deterrent. "Even if farmers are ready to adopt new methods and use hybrid seeds for their crops, they have to go for effective water harvesting because, given the undulation in topography, that restricts irrigation facilities and concentration of 80% of rainfall in just four months of the season," he said.

Dr DK Rusia, head of the department of agriculture engineering at Birsa Agriculture University, said farmers have changed their approach in adopting farm mechanisation. "Since buying tractors and other mechanical tools is a costly affair, they are more eager to take up animal-driven and handheld tools developed at our university and central institute of agricultural engineering," he said.

Rusia, however, admitted that farmers demand subsidy because increasing input in agriculture in one particular year or season is unaffordable for most of them. "Ground nut diggers, potato diggers, weed removers and a new sickle are some of the engineering innovations readily taken up by the farmers across the state," he said.

Rusia said that topography plays spoilsport with use of tractors and small power tillers as the farmlands are in step form at many places. "Power tillers, which are cheaper and affordable,

cannot be taken atop the hilly terrain once the soil becomes muddy and the use of tractors damages the ridges. As a result, farmers prefer animals to plough their land," he said.

He added that unless deep ploughing is done every three to four years, the soil loses its water retaining capacity and fertility as well.

### **Drought tourism is in full swing**

MUMBAI: First it was NCP president and Union agriculture minister [Sharad Pawar](#) who went on a whistle-stop tour of drought-affected Marathwada. He was followed by chief minister Prithviraj Chavan, who is from the Congress. Now governor K Sankaranarayanan is also planning to interact with people in drought-hit parts of the state in the first week of March.

Amid all the coming and going, the question people are asking is whether these tours, particularly the ones undertaken by Pawar and Chavan, will help the state tackle the worst-ever drought in recent memory or will the visits turn out to be nothing more than a customary annual exercise undertaken because politicians must be seen taking stock of the situation.

Senior bureaucrats from Marathwada felt there was a lack of coordination at all levels and absence of seriousness about the situation among politicians, particularly from the ruling Congress-NCP.

A high-ranking bureaucrat strongly criticized Pawar's recent comment that the Centre was yet to receive a statement from the state government on the situation.

"We feel that as Pawar has been in state politics for over four decades, instead of making a statement critical of a government in which his own party is a constituent, he should have asked either Chavan or his own nephew Ajit Pawar, who was sitting next to him in many meetings, to submit a memorandum," a bureaucrat said.

A former chief secretary felt that there was too much of politics in the management of the drought. "Parts of Marathwada have seen severe droughts for the past several years, but it appears that no strong measures have been taken to tackle the situation," he said. "Both Pawar and chief minister Chavan must fix responsibility on their cabinet members as well as elected representatives."

Leader of opposition Eknath Khadse also came down heavily on Chavan and Pawar, saying that instead of undertaking tours of drought-affected areas, they must ensure that orders passed by the state government for tackling the situation must be implemented in letter and spirit. Khadse said so far the state had only stayed recovery of power bills and granted fee exemption to school students.

"The stay is on current bills, but the new policy is silent on outstanding bills," Khadse said. "If Chavan is at all serious, he must immediately grant a stay on recovery of all bills."

On the fee exemption, Khadse said the government had not done adequate homework before making the announcement.

"Under the Right to Education Act, school students have already been exempted from payment of fees," he said. "If some schools are charging fees, it's between Rs 25 and Rs 50. If at all they are keen on granting exemption, students of professional colleges, such as medical and engineering colleges, should be exempted."

He said it was "shocking" that while there was acute shortage of tankers, even workers under the employment guarantee scheme were not paid wages for periods ranging from seven days to a month. "All these issues have been specifically brought to the notice of the CM, but no corrective measures have been taken," Khadse said.

Marathwada-based activist S M Deshmukh said it's time for senior leaders like Pawar and Chavan to forthwith stop the annual event. In my opinion, it's all political. First Pawar toured the drought affected areas and now for obvious political reasons, Chavan is following him. People of Marathwada know that neither Pawar nor Chavan will be able to tackle the drought," Deshmukh said.

Deshmukh, a keen observer of drought situation in the Marathwada region for well over three decades, said it was unfortunate that after the on-set of monsoon, the government completely ignores the entire region. Since 1980, after S B Chavan was instrumental in constructing the Jaikwadi irrigation project, no new dam has been constructed in the entire Marathwada region, as a result, the region is reeling under worst ever drought. For last well over four decades, Marathwada has been receiving a steady rain fall, but no concrete measures were taken for water conservation. We have not taken measures for water conservation, on the other hand, we have constructed thousands of bore wells, as a result, the entire region has been witnessing a steady depletion in ground water level," he said.

Times View: Knee-jerk reaction won't help

Our leaders seem to wake up to the reality of drought every year between December and June and then forget the issue when the rains come. No amount of VIP tours of districts, which can also result in disruption of routine work, will help the state's drought-prone areas unless there is some serious planning on how to tackle the problem. Dams are nowadays more in the news for cost escalations and controversies. Politicians and bureaucrats need to look at long-term solutions instead of waking up only when the problem is there every year.

### **Another chilly, wet spell from February 15**

LUCKNOW: After recording an all time high rainfall in the month of February last week between February 4-6, the city would witness another wet spell in coming days from February 15 to 17. The weatherman has predicted light to moderate rainfall across the state including Lucknow. After the rainfall, minimum temperatures are expected to fall significantly leading to foggy and chilly weather conditions from February 18 onwards for the next 2-3 days.

The [Indian Meteorological Department](#) (IMD) on Tuesday issued a warning of widespread rainfall over UP from February 15-17. This spell will be more intense over eastern parts of the state, particularly, the Sangam area of Allahabad. Earlier, the rainy spell between February 4 and 6 saw more rain in the west and the central UP. According to the IMD, Allahabad, where Maha Kumbh is being held, is expected to receive a moderate rainfall from February 15 onwards with one or two heavy spells on February 16 and February 17.

State Met director JP Gupta said the rainfall would be due to the western disturbance (WD) likely to hit the northern region of the country on February 14. The WD will cause heavy snowfall and rain in the hills and moderate rainfall in the northern plains, including UP. He said that the rainfall activity will start from February 15 and intensify on February 16 and 17. The WD is expected to fizzle out by February 18, leading to revival of winds coming from the snow-clad regions. It would result in drop in the temperatures, he predicted.

On Tuesday, people in the city woke up to overcast sky and strong cold winds. However, the sky was clear by the afternoon. The maximum temperature was 24.7 degrees Celsius and minimum temperature 10.6 degrees Celsius. Similar weather conditions are expected to continue on Wednesday. The sky will remain cloudy and minimum temperature is expected to be around 10 degrees Celsius. The change in weather was due to moisture incursion after formation of a trough from northeast Arabian Sea to southwest Madhya Pradesh.

A trough is a line or a curve along in the [atmosphere](#) along which pressure is low. The [atmospheric pressure](#) is governed by temperature variation. The trough helps in moisture incursion leading to cloudy sky and can also cause rains. On the other hand, the WDs are cyclonic circulation formed over Mediterranean Sea, Caspian Sea and [Black sea](#) and travel to India after covering several countries including Iran and Pakistan. These WDs are responsible for snowfall and rainfall in hill region and thundershowers in plains during winter.



## Drought to trim India's sugar production below consumption



India's sugar production for the 2013/14 season is set to fall below consumption for the first time in four years as a water shortage trims acreage in three key states.

The drop could boost global sugar prices as the world's top sugar consumer imports raw sugar to maintain stocks and to take advantage of lower prices in Brazil.

"Farmers in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are switching to other crops. If we look at prices, cane is attractive, but water is not available," said a Mumbai-based official with a global trading firm, who declined to be named.

Figures from the Indian Sugar Mills Association show that the western state of Maharashtra and southern Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are likely to produce 12.2 million tonnes, or more than half of India's total production, in the 2012/13 season, which ends on Sept. 30.

India, the world's biggest sugar producer after Brazil, is likely to produce a total of 24.3 million tonnes of sugar in the current year, compared with demand of about 23 million tonnes.

It would then need imports over the following season to maintain opening stock levels for the year starting Oct. 1, 2014, dealers said.

Though the country is likely to start the year starting October 2013 with stocks of 7.5 million tonnes, it would want to maintain these levels going into the next year.

After the 2009 drought sugar production fell sharply, forcing India to make big purchases from overseas markets, which pushed the price of raw sugar futures to 30-year highs.

## FODDER SHORTAGE

"It is difficult to estimate sugar output for next year. It depends on the diversion of cane for fodder, monsoon rains and recovery rate," said the trading firm official, who declined to be named. "Right now, we can say around 20-21 million tonnes can be produced."

In 2012 state governments bought cane to offer cheaply or free as fodder when alternative supplies were short because of lack of rain. Cattle become the main source of income for farmers during drought years.

The fodder shortage is likely to rise between March and June this year, raising demand for mature cane as fodder.

"Total cane area in Maharashtra and Karnataka will be down 20 to 25 percent for next season," said Narendra Murkumbi, managing director of Shree Renuka Sugars, the country's biggest sugar refiner.

New plantation is down by nearly 50 percent in both states, Murkumbi said.

"Drought is affecting new plantation and it will even cut availability of the ratoon crop next season," D B Gavit, a director at the Maharashtra Sugar Commissioner's office, said.

The ratoon crop is the root stub of cane after the first harvest that remains in the ground for a second harvest. It usually accounts for more than a third of total cane production.

The water shortage in the central region of Maharashtra is so severe that people are struggling to secure drinking water, but the situation is better in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

"Uttar Pradesh will compensate for some of the production losses in Maharashtra and Karnataka. It is not facing a water shortage," said Kamal Jain, managing director of sugar brokerage Kamal Jain Trading Services.

Uttar Pradesh is expected to produce 8.1 million tonnes of sugar in 2012/13.

### Farm sector needs Govt's support to bring green revolution: Seed industry

**The Indian Seed Industry, fifth largest in the world, has urged the Government to facilitate an enabling environment including providing tax incentives and ensuring regulated operative mechanisms of rules so that all States follow uniform policies.**

On the inaugural day of the 4th Indian Seed Congress, industry leaders said much like the IT revolution, Indian agriculture too required robust support from the Government to bring evergreen revolution in the country. Inaugurating the ISC 2013, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on Friday said lack of coordination between the Public and Private Sectors is impeding the growth of Indian Agriculture Sector.

Pawar reiterated that the pending New Seeds Bill must be discussed and passed in the upcoming session of the Parliament to resolve these issues. Minister of State for Agriculture Tariq Anwar lauded the contribution of the seed industry, and said, Indian agriculture sector has benefited immensely from technology in seeds.

Dr KV Subba Rao, President, Chairman ISC-2013 said, uniform operating mechanism which will ensure uniformity of policy and rules across different states are the key to Indian agricultural sector growth.

The National Seeds Association of India (NSAI) Executive Director Raju Kapur reiterated the major industry challenges including policy framework, availability/ exchange of germplasm, non-uniform policy of hybrid registration in various states and limited financial benefits to seed industry.

NSAI represents 300 seed companies. Dr NK Dadlani, Director NSAI, said, the ISC 2013 focuses on the theme 'Seeds of Change - Ensuring the evergreen revolution.