



### **Paddy farmers advised to cut down on fertilizer**

Scores of farmers who cultivate paddy in an extent of four lakh acres in the district are taught to revert to conventional ways to save money.

The District Agriculture Technology & Transfer (DATT) centre is now popularising the cost reduction techniques to help the farmers save money.

The farmers in the district were producing paddy on a par with those who grew it under canals harvesting 28 quintals per acre. But, the increased cost of cultivation has made their lives miserable.

### **Increase in input costs**

According to DATT centre coordinator R. Uma Reddy, the cost of cultivating paddy per acre, which was Rs. 9,000, has increased to Rs. 20,000 per acre in the recent times. The increased cost of inputs – fertilizers, labour and seed were frustrating the farmers who did not see any profit at the end.

The farmers were urged to use less fertilizer, particularly phosphorous. "Due to excessive use of fertilizers, nearly 5,000 acres of land is being converted into saline rendering it useless for farming," Mr. Uma Reddy explains.

### **'Soil health affected'**

The soil health had been considerably deteriorating and the farmers who were using two bags of fertilizers were now using three bags thus reducing the soil efficiency further.

Similarly, the labour efficiency had come down drastically. The officers were now asking the farmers to give less dosage of fertilizers mixed with neem powder to save 50 per cent of cost of fertilizer.

The farmers were also being asked to maintain correct distance between saplings while planting so that they could run the drum seeder to clear the weeds. “For clearing weeds in the field, a farmer needs 12 persons per acre per day which is very costly in these times of increased labour cost,” Mr. Uma Reddy said.

The DATT centre conducted demonstration camps at 25 locations across the district to educate the farmers.

### **Farmers keep their fingers crossed over State relief**

*Except Thirumanur and T.Palur, Ariyalur district is completely rainfed*

The farmers of Ariyalur district are worried over the relief they are likely to get from State government as Chief Minister Jayalalithaa has announced a compensation of Rs.15, 000 per acre only for the delta districts.

Led by R.Ulaganathan, district secretary, Communist Party of India, K.Jayachandran, V.Nagarathinam and N.Sengamuthu, farmer leaders, pointed out that Ariyalur, one of the most backward districts in the State, has two blocks – Thirumanur and T.Palur – which are normally considered delta areas.

All other areas are totally rainfed. Crops in thousands of acres have withered and a substantial area has been left fallow . Hence they pleaded that all those who have raised paddy and

suffered losses should be given a compensation of Rs.25,000 per acre, those who have left their lands fallow should be given Rs.15,000 per acre and each family of the agricultural labourers should be given Rs.10,000 as relief . Besides, they want the government to write off all the crop loans obtained from cooperative banks.

Mr.Jayachandran pleaded that farmers who have raised crops such as cashew and chilli should also be compensated adequately for their loss. "Ariyalur has substantial area covered under cashew, " he said.

"We have been keeping a close watch on Governor's budget speech but were totally disappointed because there was hardly any mention of such crops," he added.

He also sought constitution of associations of farmers who are using common water sources (pasanadharar sangham).

Mr.Ulaganathan alleged that the cooperative department officials are indulging in recovery when the farmers are in deep distress. "This should be stopped immediately", he pleaded.

To the plea for setting up direct procurement centres, Collector P.Senthilkumar, who was in the chair, said they would be opened immediately.

Mr.Sengamuthu alleged that while the price of rice in the open market has shot up by 60 per cent, the price fixed by the government for procurement through the DPCs was too low. "Neither the producer nor the consumer is benefited but it is the middleman who takes away everything," he alleged. When some of the farmers voiced their concern regarding settlement of insurance claims by the Agricultural Insurance Company, Joint Director of Agriculture R.Gunasekaran said he would take up the issue with the insurance companies concerned. Most of the farmers have been insured under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme, he added.

One of the farmers alleged that some of the cement plants in the region are causing incalculable harm, especially to vegetable crops.

Another major complaint was that the crops raised in Aandimadam region including groundnut, paddy, sugarcane, gingili and black gram are eaten away by more than 200 cows and buffaloes that raid the farms both during the day and night.

“While we are facing serious crisis because of the climatic issues and rising prices, this is an additional headache and the district administration should attend to it immediately,” they pleaded.

Mr.Nagarathinam alleged that the PWD has failed to regulate whatever little water was left in the district and hence a large number of tracts have been left high and dry.

The Collector later handed over State-level awards to P.Ulaganathan and A.Palanivel for their achievement under the Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water Bodies Restoration Management Project. While Mr.Ulaganathan has achieved 10,650 kg of maize per hectare (first prize), Mr. alanivel has achieved 10,250 kg per hectare (third prize).

### **Training on making amla products**

A training programme on preparation of value-added products from amla will be held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on February 20 and 21.

According to a university release, processing of amla into various value-added products and packaging technologies will be covered in the training programme. It will include preparations like amla beverages, amla concentrates, dehydrated amla products, and details on FPO licence for establishing fruit processing industry and finance, will also be part of the training. Those

interested should pay a fee of Rs. 1,000 in the form of a Demand Draft drawn in favour of Dean, Agricultural Engineering, should be sent to the Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003, before February 20.

For details, contact 0422-6611340 / 6611268.

### **“Give jobs to farmers under government scheme”**

*Plea for check-dams and farm ponds to augment groundwater*



The district administration has been urged to implement Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for the benefit of farmers and farm labour to mitigate the impact of drought.

Addressing the monthly farmers' grievance redressal meeting here on Friday, the president of Madurai-Theni Districts Farmers' Association, M. Pandian, said that the government had given the go-ahead to take up agricultural activities such as land preparation under the rural job guarantee scheme.

Farmers and agricultural labourers could be employed to work on the lands of small and marginal farmers and of those ryots belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. “If

farmers are employed to work on farm land, they will show more interest and execute the work,” he said.

He said the depleting groundwater table was causing concern for farmers as 48,856 wells used for lift irrigation had been affected. The Department of Agricultural Engineering should be asked to create facilities such as check-dams and farm ponds to augment groundwater.

Efforts should be taken to tap run off water from National Highways, State Highways and rural roads. Water collected from these roads could be let into the defunct wells to improve the groundwater table, he suggested.

Officials should conduct a village-wise survey of the quality of groundwater so as to chart a plan to avert a possible drinking water crisis during the ensuing summer, Mr. Pandian said. Another farmer, Rajamanickam, wanted the Block Development Officers to make surprise checks to monitor implementation of the rural employment guarantee scheme.

Chellakannu of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam urged that compensation should not be confined to farmers of 21,519 acres who had cultivated crops. It should be extended to all farmers and farm hands to mitigate their plight. “Or else, they cannot survive. Even the survival of cattle has become a challenge,” he said.

Another farmer, K. Devarajan, wanted the administration to prepare a transparent action plan for cutting of cane for crushing to avoid irregularities. He alleged that a private sugar mill was allowed to draw water from the Vaigai dam even as the people were worried about their drinking water requirement. The drought period should be used to repair channels, and for desilting tanks, he said.

One of the farmers urged the government to supply fodder for cattle with 50 per cent subsidy to prevent distress sale of milch animals. The compensation announced by the government should not be restricted only to paddy, but also to other crops such as mango and coconut as they too were affected.

Responding to the farmers' suggestions, Collector Anshul Mishra asked the officials to send replies to all the queries raised by farmers before they were put up to him. He asked the Public Works Department officials to keep the farmers informed about the tanks taken up for desilting. "You inform them about the criteria of selection of the tanks," he said.

PWD Assistant Engineer C.P. Mohan Kumar said that the State government had allocated Rs. 2.25 crore under the Traditional Waterbody scheme for renovation of four tanks. Works on strengthening bunds, renovating sluices, repairing weirs and lining of field channels would be taken up in Sithalangudi, Vairavanatham, Melakkal and Kulamangalam tanks, he said.

### **Farmers seek transparency in allotment of farm ponds**

*"Panchayat presidents should not be vested with power to select beneficiaries"*

District Revenue Officer (DRO) S. Viswanathan has assured farmers of transparency in allotment of farm ponds as they opposed empowering the panchayat presidents in selecting the beneficiaries.

As farmers unanimously raised objection to the district administration vesting the village panchayat presidents with the powers to select the beneficiaries at the farmers' grievance day meeting here on Friday, the DRO and Joint Director of Agriculture Ka.Sakthimohan assured to protect the interests of the farmers. Mr. Sakthimohan said that the district administration proposed to dig 500 farm ponds by this fiscal and another 4,500 farm ponds in the next.

Interested farmers could submit their applications to the local agriculture department official, and a district-level committee would select the beneficiaries.

Alleging that the panchayat presidents were acting with vested interests, the farmers appealed to the district administration to directly monitor the process of selecting the beneficiaries. Mr. Sakthimohan suggested that the farmers got their applications registered in the first stage and assured that the district administration would work out a transparent method for selecting the beneficiaries when the scheme was implemented. The existing 1,500 farm ponds would also be desilted for a depth of five feet, he said.

The DRO, who chaired the meeting in the absence of Collector K. Nanthakumar, also assured that the beneficiaries would be selected without any bias.

The farm ponds would be provided to the farmers free of cost, with 50 per cent of the work done by the workers of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) Scheme and the rest by the farmers, through back-end subsidy method. Thanking the government for declaring all the districts, except Chennai, as drought hit, the farmers appealed to the government to waive farm loans, besides paying adequate compensation for crop loss and help the farmers to get full insured amount under crop insurance.

PA to Collector (Agriculture) G. Soundarajan announced that the district administration had set up 51 paddy procurement centres at eight blocks in the district.

### **Farmers demand disbursal of crop loans in cash**

The exclusive grievances redressal meeting organised by district administration for farmers here on Friday has provided a platform for agrarian community to raise their demands for disbursal of



crop loans entirely in cash and relief to offset losses suffered due to drought-like conditions, among others.

C. Manoharan, district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vyavasayigal Sangam, said the district administration should take necessary steps to ensure allocation of compensation to all farmers in the district without leaving anyone from the package since the district uniformly witnessed the worst 'drought-like conditions' in the last one decade.

"The relief should be given at the rate of Rs. 15,000 per acre in the case of losses caused to the standing crops and Rs. 10,000 to the farmers who could not even go for sowing because of the inadequate availability of water for irrigation.

"This year, the dry spell in the district has been much worse than what experienced in delta districts," he pointed out. On the requisition from small and marginal farmers for disbursal of crop loans issued by Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACCSs) fully in cash, the Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies S. Babu had clarified that the existing provisions did not allow such pay out of credit.

As per the norms, only 52 per cent of the total loan sought could be given in cash.

Of the remaining portion in the loan value sought by the farmers, as much as 22 percent of the amount would be utilized by PACCSs to procure and distribute fertilizers and 16 per cent for giving away pesticides and seeds to the borrowers (ie. farmers), Mr. Babu said.

Another major requisition from the farming sector was the need to carry out desiltation in reservoirs like Thirumoorthy Dam to augment the water holding capacity.

Need to replace the worn-out micro irrigation gadgets in the command areas of Upparu irrigation system was also raised by the farmers.

Collector G. Govindaraj, Joint Director of Agriculture M.K.Sherif and District Revenue Officer R. Gajalakshmi were present to answer the farmers' queries.

### **Veterinary varsity to start courses for farmers**

*Courses deal with veterinary sciences, dairy sciences, and fishery sciences*

University of Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences, Bidar, is introducing 11 certificate courses in the field of veterinary, dairy, and fishery sciences from the coming academic year. The certificate courses include five courses in veterinary sciences, two in dairy sciences and four in fishery sciences.

K.N. Prabhudev, Extension Director of the university told *The Hindu* during his recent visit here that the objective of the new courses was to popularise scientific methods in veterinary and fishery sciences among farmers.

"Many farmers are into dairy and fishery farming, but several of them are doing it without proper scientific methods owing to which, they do not get the desired profit. The certificate course will help them learn various new methods developed by scientists, helping them make higher profit," Dr. Prabhudev said.

### **Open for all**

He said that any person, irrespective of educational qualification, could undergo the training, which has a tenure ranging between one month and two months.

He said that the certificate courses would impart scientific training in fish farming in ponds, ornamental fish farming for aquariums, salt water fish farming. There would be a course in value addition of seafood.

On promoting fishery in North Karnataka region, Dr. Prabhudev said despite the potential, the farmers of north Karnataka region had failed to adopt fish farming as an alternative source of earning.

“The north Karnataka region has many farmers who have got large ponds built in their field for storing water. But most of them are not aware that these ponds could be best used for rearing fish,” he said.

**Farmers say they're ready to give land at Rs. 1 cr. per acre**



There is a proposal to acquire agricultural land to set up an industrial area at Jakkasandra in Kolar district.— FILE PHOTO: BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Farmers of Jakkasandra and surrounding villages in Malur taluk have said that they will part with their land to set up an industrial area there if only they were paid Rs. 1 crore per acre of land to be acquired for the purpose.

A meeting was convened on Thursday to discuss the issue and ascertain the opinion of the public in connection with the rate to be fixed for the land near Jakkasandra where it is proposed to set up the third phase of the industrial area.

The farmers argued that they would be losing fertile irrigated land and hence, they should be given more compensation. "We will not give land if the rate fixed is at even Rs. 80 lakh per acre," the farmers insisted.

Deputy Commissioner D.S. Vishwanath clarified that he had the authority to fix a maximum of Rs. 40 lakh per acre of acquired land. While Rs. 30 lakh was given for land at Vemgal, the amount could be raised to Rs. 40 lakh for land in Jakkasandra, he said.

"If the farmers insisted on more, that will be conveyed to the government," Mr. Vishwanath, who is also the chairman of the price fixation committee, said.

According to the sub-registrar the rate of irrigated land in the area was in the range of Rs. 10 lakh to 12 lakh per acre. However, since Rs. 30 lakh was given to Vemgal farmers, the committee could fix it at Rs. 40 lakh using its discretionary power, Mr. Vishwanath said.

The government will not force the farmers to give their land for the industrial area, he said. A former MLA A. Nagaraj and farmer leader A. Ashwath Reddy spoke.

Joint Director of the Department of Industries V. Venkatesh, Land Acquisition Officer Ambarish and Assistant Commissioner Ayesha Parveen were present.

## Endosulfan: relay hunger strike from Monday

### *Demand for implementation of relief package*

Accusing the government of “moving slow” on its promise to disburse the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)-assured compensation and of omitting a few identified endosulfan victims from the list of persons to be compensated, yet another indefinite relay hunger strike will begin here from February 18.

Social and cultural activists and the mothers of the victims will take part in the agitation, spearheaded by the Endosulfan Peedhitha Janakeeya Munnani in their bid to force the government to swiftly implement the NHRC-suggested rehabilitation package, Munnani convener Ambalathara Kunhikrishnan said.

The agitation comes after the temporary suspension of a 130-day relay hunger strike by the mothers of endosulfan victims following “fruitful” talks in August last in Thiruvananthapuram with Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. He had assured them that he would look into their major demands.

The NHRC had asked the State government to provide Rs.5 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and the totally bed-ridden victims and Rs.3 lakh each to the critically ill.

In a government order sent to the NHRC dated January 12, 2012, the authorities had furnished a list of 4,182 victims — 2,453 categorised as critically ill and 1,729 in the other group.

Despite holding “satisfactory” talks with the delegation of agitating mothers led by P. Karunakaran, MP, the government was not sincere in its efforts to mitigate the plight of hundreds of victims, who are reeling under a host of mysterious diseases, attributed to the

prolonged spraying of the endosulfan pesticide in the cashew estates of Plantation Corporation of Kerala (PCK) Ltd., Mr. Kunhikrishnan told *The Hindu* .

No special funds had been earmarked in the last Budget for the package, leading to undue delay in paying the amount.

The list of 4,182 victims had been made after examining around 26,000 patients by a team of medical experts during various medical camps and the fresh move to “truncate” the list was unwarranted and unacceptable, Mr. Kunhikrishnan said.

### **ICRISAT meet focuses on helping poor farmers**

Inclusive market-oriented development to improve the livelihoods of the small farmers was the focus of a four-day Global Planning Meeting (GPM) of the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), which concluded on Friday.

#### **Delegates**

The GPM was attended by about 160 senior scientists and managers from ICRISAT’s locations in India and Africa. “We should never forget to connect the improvement of our crops to improvement of poor people’s lives,” ICRISAT Director-General William Dar said in his address.

### **Agri exporters asked to ensure quality of products**



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is on his way to inaugurate second national seminar on 'Food Safety' at Hotel Mayfair convention hall in Bhubaneswar on Friday. —Photo: Ashoke Chakrabarty

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) here on Friday warned exporters of agricultural and processed food to ensure quality of products from its production to till its dispatch.

“European countries, United States of America and many Asian countries have set very high standard on food safety. At present, every exporting country has to give guarantee to importing countries that the food being shipped is safe,” Asit Tripathy, Chairman of APEDA, said while addressing National Seminar on Food Safety here.

Mr. Tripathy advised exporters to work with producers from the farm and monitor quality of product in every level it passes through.

“India has made a rapid stride in export of agricultural and processed food products. It has come from nowhere to become 10th largest exporters in the world. For export sector, quality remains the biggest challenge,” he maintained.

APEDA chairperson said by March 2012, the value of total food export from the country stood at Rs. 165000 crore. Stating that State has a big role in ensuring quality of products, Mr. Tripathy said, “we need to develop testing laboratories across the State. The laboratories, besides helping testing of food products for export purposes, would be very vital as every trading houses dealing with foods need to get their products tested as per Food Safety and Standards Rules 2011.”

Earlier Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the two-day-long seminar on food safety being organised by Institute of Quality and Environment Management Services and Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar Heritage here.

### **Need to teach agriculture in schools underscored**

*'It's part of the school curriculum in developed countries'*



G. Jaylal, Additional Director-General (Southern Region), AIR and Doordarshan, inaugurating a workshop on 'Holistic agriculture education' in Mysore on Friday.— PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

There is an urgent need to introduce agriculture as a subject in primary and secondary school curricula, said Y.J. Raveendra Prakash of Azim Premji Foundation, Dharwad, here on Friday.

He was delivering the keynote address at a workshop on 'Holistic agriculture education' organised by All India Radio, Mysore, at the Central Institute of Indian Languages. Stating that the importance of introducing agriculture as a subject was being increasingly felt by authorities, he said it was part of the school curriculum in many developed countries.

There were no written references on agriculture in the country, he said, and added that agricultural practices were passed on from generation to generation orally. The sector had, however, undergone great changes. Knowledge of technology had reduced the effects of the vagaries of nature. But the focus of formal education had completely neglected the agrarian



economy, and agriculture education became confined to higher levels of education, Mr. Prakash said.

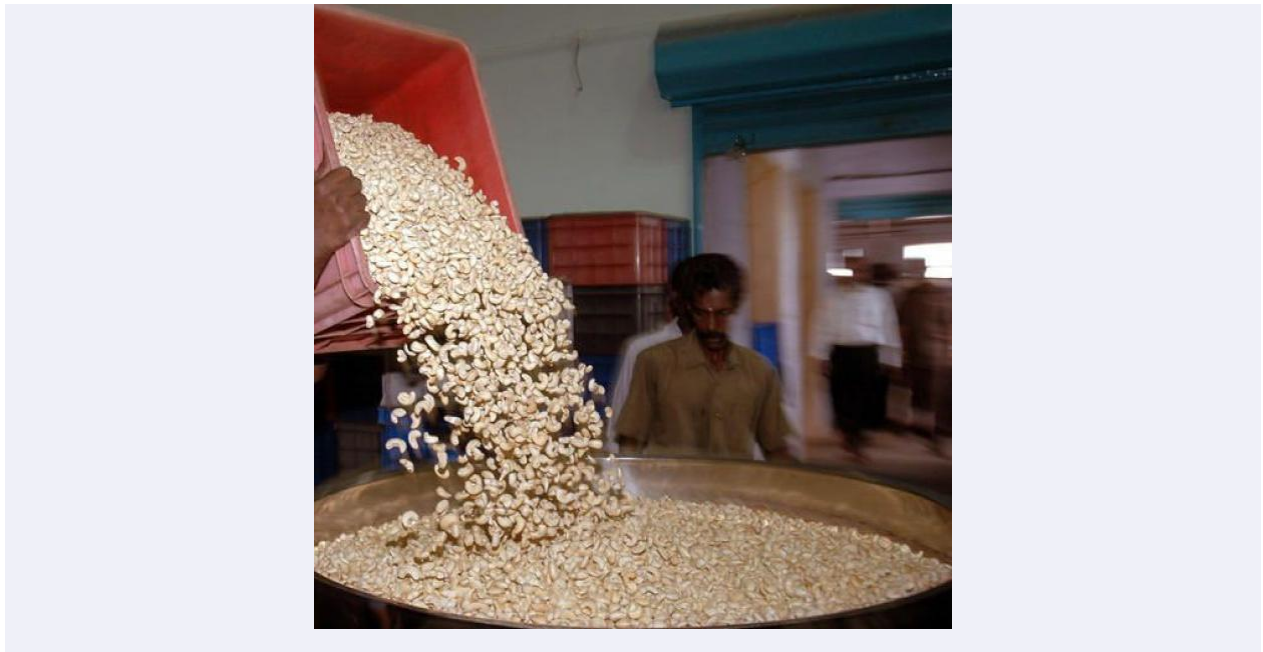
Mr. Prakash said that people ought to learn to live in harmony with nature, and agriculture was the right subject for that. Agriculture was based more on social values. The trend of utilising agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes should stop, he added.

G. Jaylal, Additional Director-General (Southern Region), AIR and Doordarshan, who inaugurated the workshop, noted the contribution of radio to the sector. He said that radio had been the mainstay in the past, catering for farmers' requirements when media activism had not begun.

Broadcasts on agriculture and education were extremely popular. Prasar Bharati had the mandate to educate, inform and entertain people in keeping with the traditions and culture of the country, and AIR had achieved a great deal in that regard, Mr. Jaylal said.

AIR was one of the oldest broadcasting stations in the world which was in its 86th year, providing uninterrupted broadcasting. However, he admitted that the advent of private radio stations had resulted in AIR losing its monopoly.

## Cashew declines on subdued demand



Cashew prices fell by Rs 10 a kg in the national capital today largely owing to subdued demand from retailers and stockists.

Sufficient stocks position following increased arrivals from producing belts also weighed on the cashew prices.

Cashew kernel (No 180, 210, 240 and 230) prices fell by Rs 10 each to settled at Rs 680-740, Rs 665-685, Rs 585-600 and Rs 500-550 a kg, respectively.

Marketmen said fall in demand from retailers and stockists amid adequate stocks, mainly led to the fall in cashew kernel prices on the wholesale dry fruit market here.

The following are today's quotations (per 40 kg): Almond (California) Rs 14,300 Almond (Gurbandi-new) Rs 7,100-7,600; Almond (Girdhi) Rs 3,100-3,400; Abjosh Afghani Rs 8,000-20,000.

Almond Kernel (California-new) Rs 485-525 a kg.

### **Icrisat meet focuses on inclusive growth in farm sector**

The Global Planning Meeting of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) has specially focussed on inclusive market-oriented growth to support poor farmers.

The five-day event held at the institute's headquarters near here sought to focus on extending the market opportunities for smallholder farmers and their families in the dryland tropics.

Tackling the complexity of challenges in the tropical drylands of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the meeting was attended by about 160 senior scientists and managers from the institute's locations in India, Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa.

"We should never forget to connect the improvement of our crops to the improvement of the poor peoples' lives," ICRISAT Director General William Dar said.

The emphasis of the event was on how to transition the institute's work most effectively into new programmes. The institute is leading the research on grain legumes, dryland cereals and neglected crops.

## **Farm research**

Icrisat conducts agricultural research for development in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa with a wide array of partners throughout the world.

“We must ensure that our agricultural research for development initiatives help the dryland poor move from poverty to prosperity by harnessing markets while managing risks — a strategy we call Inclusive Market Oriented Development (IMOD),” Dar said.

Spread over 6.5 million sq km in 55 countries, the semi-arid tropics have over two billion people, and 644 million of these are the poorest of the poor.

The institute through its partners helps empower these poor people to overcome a degraded environment through better agriculture. It has two regional hubs and five country offices in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Good demand lifts Kochi tea prices**

A good demand perked up the prices of almost all varieties at the Kochi tea auction. In Kochi Sale No.7 in the dust category, the quantity on offer in the CTC grades was 9,40,000 kg.

The market was fully firm to dearer by a rupee to Rs 2 and sometimes more following quality. However, bolder grades were irregular and sometimes lower, auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

The quantity on offer in the Orthodox grades was 12,000 kg and the market barely remained steady for primary and secondary grades. Bulk of the offerings was absorbed by exporters.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted the best prices of Rs 101/112, RD grades quoted Rs 106/140, SRD ruled at Rs 108/146 and SFD stood at Rs 108/143.

### **Leaf sale**

The leaf category also witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer in the Orthodox grades was 150,000 kg. Good liquoring Nilgiri Broken, whole leaf and Fannings were fully firm to dearer. Others were irregular and lower.

Medium bolder broken, tippy grades and whole leaf barely remained steady and tended to ease. Others were lower and witnessed some withdrawals.

Of the quantity of 55,500 kg on offer in the CTC grades, the market for good liquoring well-made varieties were dearer by Rs 1 to Rs 3 and sometimes more. Others were irregular and sometimes lower.

In the dust category, both Injipara (Prm) SRD and Jayshree Tea (Prm) SRD quoted the best prices of Rs 146 followed by Injipara (Prm) SFD at Rs 143. In the leaf grades, Chamraj OP fetched the best prices of Rs 401 followed by Chamraj FOP at Rs 361.