

How Ethiopians are being pushed off their land

“It is not a land-grab, it is a life-grab. It is daylight robbery. But if we protest, if we speak the truth, we could end up in jail or worse.” Obang Metho was referring to the leasing of land to foreign companies in Ethiopia, spreading over nearly four million hectares. Nyikaw Ochalla joined in: “This is happening in the lands I grew up in, and it is my relatives and childhood friends who are being jailed, beaten up, and driven out; my childhood memories are being violated.”

Metho of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, and Ochalla of the Anuak Survival Organisation were speaking at the “Indian-Ethiopian Seminar on Land Investments” organised on February 5-6, 2013 in New Delhi. The seminar was put together by Indian civil society groups Indian Social Action Forum (Insaf), Popular Education and Action Centre (Peace), and Kalpavriksh, the research institution Council for Social Development, and the U.S.-based research group Oakland Institute.

Indian stakes

The stories narrated by Obang and Ochalla were harrowing. The lands being leased by the Ethiopian government to companies from India, China, Malaysia, and other countries, were claimed by it to be “empty.” In actual fact these are areas occupied or used by pastoral and small farming communities, as also grasslands and forests with significant wildlife. Decisions are being taken in the country’s capital to give up these lands ostensibly to help the country produce food and generate revenues; the underlying message is that either there is no one there to do the job, or that local communities are simply not up to the mark.

Indian companies are among the biggest players in the land deals, with investments of over \$5 billion, and leases over 6,00,000 hectares. Karuturi Global, a Bangalore-based agroproduce company has alone received 3,00,000 hectares. Claims by these companies and by the

Ethiopian government that the deals are legal and entail no human rights violations, have been shown as false in a series of on-ground investigations. The Oakland Institute has meticulously documented the nexus of corporations, politicians, investors, and officials that has made the land-grab possible. It notes that there is no public consultation with local communities (much less their consent), many of whom find out that their pastures or fields have been sold off only when bulldozers arrive. Any form of resistance or even questioning is met with imprisonment, beating up, and even killing. Both private security companies and the Ethiopian government's own forces are used to protect the investors. And there is a total lack of environmental and social impact assessments in these deals.

It is also stated sometimes that what Indian companies are doing abroad, is not the responsibility of the government. But this ignores the various ways in which the Indian government facilitates and supports such deals, not only through diplomatic channels but also financially (even if indirectly). For instance the Indian Export-Import Bank has pledged \$640 million of credit over five years for Ethiopia's sugar industry, and the fact that Indian companies are getting the biggest deals for sugarcane plantations cannot be unconnected.

Mass displacement

Obang and Ochalla were careful to clarify that they were not against India's people, who they realised could not be supporting such land-grab; however, for the affected communities, "it is Indians who are doing this to us." It is therefore important for groups here to question the intentions and actions of Indian companies and the Indian government agencies supporting them. Does their behaviour in Ethiopia meet the laws or guidelines under which Indian companies act within their own country? Does it meet international standards of human rights and environmental sustainability that India is a signatory to?

Over the next couple of years, the Ethiopian government plans to forcibly move 1.5 million people off their homelands and concentrate them into a few settlements in a process called "villagisation." It claims that this will enable it to provide efficient and good quality services like drinking water, sanitation, schools, and clinics, which is not possible in the case of today's scattered, small settlements. But Obang and Ochalla point out that all the relocation is taking place from lands targeted by investor companies, and that even where communities are saying

they would much rather stay where they are with whatever amenities they have, they are being forcibly moved out.

The claim that such investments are a “win-win” deal for the Ethiopian people and Indian companies is also questionable. Much of the production (sugarcane, cotton, jatropha, etc) is meant for export, and local foodgrains which are the staple diet are not being grown. Very little local employment is created; there is no requirement by the Ethiopian government that companies have to hire locally. Nor is there any contractual clause by which the money generated is to remain within the Ethiopian economy. A handful of businessmen and politicians are the prime beneficiaries.

Obang and Ochalla were at pains to state that part of the blame for this sell-out is located within the country’s own history, in which sometimes adverse relations between different tribes have become entrenched in the political system. The country’s ruling elite are from a tiny minority belonging to one ethnic group, who can ignore the sufferings of other groups affected by land-grab. In this sense, it is the Ethiopian people themselves who have to resolve the problem. But there is also an important role for India’s people, especially in highlighting the role of their own companies and government, and facilitating greater awareness of what is taking place in the name of Ethiopia’s development.

Odisha parallel

What is happening in Ethiopia (and other African countries) is an outcome of India’s own aggressive push towards globalised economic growth. The growth fetish has led to situations of both internal and external colonisation, in which farms, waterbodies, forests, grasslands and other natural resources are all up for grabs.

It was an ironical coincidence that on the very days the consultations on Indian land-grab in Ethiopia were taking place in New Delhi, police action was under way to forcibly evict villagers in Odisha to make way for the Korean multinational Posco. Representatives of movements from Jharkhand, Karnataka and elsewhere told Obang and Ochalla that they were facing similar repression while resisting forcible takeover by the government or by corporations. The currently dominant model of “development” is pushing such violence across the globe, wherever dominant nation-states and giant corporations are eyeing land and resources.

In such a situation, people in India who care for human rights, ecological sustainability, and basic justice, have to raise fundamental critiques of “development” and centralised governance, and work towards radical alternatives that secure the rights of all people to food, water, shelter, energy, learning, health and livelihoods. Such alternatives are already demonstrated to be feasible at thousands of sites across the world, but it requires a mindset change for both the Ethiopian and Indian governments to facilitate the empowerment of local communities to adopt them, rather than paving the way for corporate takeover. Neither the founders of India nor of Ethiopia would have dreamt of a future in which development takes place at gunpoint.

(Ashish Kothari is with Kalpavriksh, Pune.)

Indian companies are among the biggest land holders in the African country through deals concluded in dubious circumstances

Farmers, parties join hands to protest against GAIL's gas pipeline project

Lay the pipeline without affecting the farmlands, protesters say



PMK president G.K. Mani speaking at a farmers' conference organised in Erode on Sunday to protest against the GAIL's gas pipeline project. -PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

Members of various farmers' associations and political parties have joined hands to protest against the Gas Authority of India Limited's gas pipeline project. Participating at a meeting held here on Sunday, they urged the State government to stop the laying of pipeline immediately and convene a tripartite meeting to discuss the issue.

A majority of the participants stated that they were not against the laying of gas pipeline. “We are only opposing the move to lay the pipeline through farmlands”, they said.

“The GAIL authorities have laid the pipeline for about 30 kilometres along the National Highways in Kerala following opposition from the farmers. Similarly, the company laid the pipeline along the National Highways in Karnataka. Then why it is keen on laying the pipes through farmlands in Tamil Nadu?” asked Pattali Makkal Katchi President G. K. Mani during his speech.

CPI National Secretary D. Raja said that the pipeline should be laid without affecting the farmlands.

The country was facing a serious threat to food security as the farmlands were fast becoming commercial properties. The government should take steps to protect the agricultural fields and an alternate route should be used for laying the pipeline, he stressed. Mr. Raja also appealed to the government to organise a meeting to discuss the issue in detail with farmers and authorities from the public sector major.

DMK leader S. Muthusamy criticised the State Government for not supporting the farmers in this issue and its failure to stop the GAIL from laying the pipeline. All the speakers in the meeting suggested that the pipeline should be laid along the National Highways.

“We are going to conduct a series of agitations and meet the chief secretary to explain our concerns. We will also meet the Chief Minister in this regard,” G.K. Nagaraj, coordinator of Farmers’ Livelihood Protection Movement, said. Erode MP A. Ganeshamurthi also spoke.

A large number of farmers attended the meeting.

Rs.18.39 crore relief for farmers with more than 50 % crop loss

Relief to the tune of Rs.18.39 crore will be given to farmers who suffered more than 50 per cent crop loss in this samba season in Thanjavur district, said K.Baskaran, District Collector, here on Monday.

He discussed preparations for disbursing the relief to farmers . A sum of Rs.15,000 per acre is to be paid to farmers who suffered more than 50 per cent crop loss in the district. The Collector said that crops on 12,249 acres have suffered more than 50 per cent damage .

Relief will be paid through Thanjavur and Kumbakonam central co-operative banks and nationalised and commercial banks. Amount will be deposited in the account of farmers.

The Collector asked tahsildhars to prepare the list of farmers identified to get the benefit with their names, address, bank account number, and 'chita adangal.'

He also said that the government had ordered to provide 150 days of work under Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee scheme (MGNREGS). Thirty thousand people who have been provided 132 days of work should be provided additional days of work by the Block Development Officers. Government has ordered to dig 786 farm ponds in the district under MGNREGS.

S.Suresh Kumar, District Revenue officer, K.Varadarajan, Project Officer, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Mohammed Yahiya, Joint Director of Agriculture, participated.

'Thirty thousand people who have been provided 132 days of work should be provided additional days of work by BDOs'

Forest officials harassing us, say Kittur farmers

Officials claim their farmland is forest land



Farmers from Kittur taluk staging a protest in Belgaum on Monday.— Photo: D.B. Patil

Farmers from the new Kittur taluk assembled at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Belgaum on Monday and staged a protest against the Forest Department personnel allegedly for destroying farmland.

Farmers and their family members staged a dharna in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office under the leadership of senior leader V.P. Kulkarni and the former Union Minister Babagouda Patil. The protesters alleged that Forest Department officials were harassing them by claiming ownership of land which they (farmers) had been cultivating for over five decades.

Mr. Kulkarni said nearly 600 farmers' families in villages of Kulvalli, Ningapur, Katridaddi, Galginmath, Dindalkoppa, Gangyanatti and Machi of Kittur taluk had been cultivating land that the Forest Department was now claiming that it is forest land.

He said that the land in the question (along with the land elsewhere in the State) was transferred to the Forest Department by the Karnataka State government in 1955. Later, a Division Bench of the Karnataka High Court cancelled the government's order and there was no stay against its order anywhere in the country. But the forest officials were harassing farmers and destroying standing crops.

Farmers submitted a memorandum demanding action against forest officials responsible for destroying crops and farmland.

With Menmma brand, farmers' club embarks on a dairy venture

Ghee, curd, buttermilk, and sip-up to be marketed under the brand



Mark of purity: A member of the Mannarmala Farmers Club bottling milk for distribution at Perinthalmanna and neighbouring areas.

The Mannarmala Farmers Club in Vettathur panchayat, near Perinthalmanna, has embarked on a bold venture after scripting a success story in dairy farming.

From Tuesday, the club will start making various milk products. It will be a maiden venture in advanced dairy farming by any self-help group in the district, sources said.

Aided by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Haritha self-help group of the club had been supplying farm-fresh milk to people in and around Perinthalmanna for about five years.

The fresh milk collected from houses is distributed in 600-ml bottles sealed with unique identification codes.

Emboldened by the success of the farm-fresh milk supply, the club created a new brand called Menmma, an acronym for Mannarmala Eco-friendly Nature-fresh Milk Marketing Agency.

Beginning Tuesday, Menmma brand products such as ghee, curd, buttermilk, and sip-up will be in the local market.

We are launching this initiative with such products as ghee, curd, buttermilk, and sip-up. More products will be introduced soon, K. Jaffer, president, Vidyaposhini Library; and K.T. Mustafa, president Mannarmala Farmers Club; said.

NABARD had provided a grant of Rs.4 lakh under its Farmers Technology Transfer Fund (FTTF) programme for Menmma milk products.

Apart from ensuring employment to a dozen-odd youngsters and a steady demand for the milk produced by the three-dozen dairy farmers in Vettathur, the farmers' club was expected to generate more employment in future.

We had been promoting such self-help and joint-liability groups as part of our social development objective, said K.P. Padmakumar, NABARD's District Development Manager.

Award

As many as 170 farmers' clubs were functioning across the district. But only a few had been making a mark in social empowerment in rural areas. The Mannarmala club, which had won the National Youth Award in 2007, was adjudged the second best club in the State two years ago. The club members decided to launch Menmma products after utilising the 'field exposure' offered by NABARD at several places, including Anand in Gujarat.

We had secured equipment such as cream separator, milk analyser, packing machine, and cooler, K.T. Yousuf, secretary, Vidyaposhini Library; and K. Hamza, secretary of the club; said.

The club offered training in various activities, including bag-making and vegetable farming. It launched its annual coaching for SSLC students on Monday evening. South Malabar Gramin Bank Chairman K.V. Shaji will inaugurate the launch of Menmma products on Tuesday.

Vettathur grama panchayat president M. Hamzakutty will preside over the function.

Perinthalmanna Block panchayat president Aboobacker Haji will be the chief guest.

Club office-bearers said they had plans to set up a village knowledge centre soon. We had been thinking of introducing distribution of farm-fresh vegetables along with the distribution of the milk, Mr. Padmakumar said.

Rain-hit farmers begin efforts to minimise loss

With rain abating on Monday, farmers made all-out efforts to minimise the loss caused by unseasonal rain in the district on Saturday.

Farmers in Karamchedu, N.G. Padu, Addanki, Mundlamuru, Korispadu Chinnaganjam, Yerragondapalem, Maddipadu, and Kothapatnam among other mandals were fully engaged in draining the excess water from their fields and drying the harvested chillies and other crops.

Chairing a review meeting with officials, Primary Education Minister S. Sailajanth urged the officials concerned to speed up enumeration of crop loss due to the ill-timed rain.

"The enumeration should be done in a transparent and fool-proof manner," said Dr. Sailajanath, Minister in-charge of Prakasam district.

Bihar farmer's spud crop is new world record



Bihar's farmers have done state proud. A farmer from Sohdi village of Nalanda district has set a new world record in potato production through organic farming this year.

The potato farmer, Rakesh Kumar, has harvested 108.8 tonnes of potato per hectare and set a new world record in potato production, Nalanda district magistrate Sanjay Kumar Agrawal said on Monday. Last year, a farmer of Darveshpura village in Nalanda had set a world record in potato production through organic farming.

"Rakesh Kumar has created a new world record in potato production through organic farming. It was verified by experts, scientists and officials," Agrawal told IANS over telephone.

He said several officials and agricultural experts were present in the field at harvest time to verify the claim and record it. IANS

Crop loss: TRS plea to State

The TRS has asked the State government to return all the investment made by farmers who lost their crops due to recent rain. It also sought a compensation of Rs. 5 lakh to the kin of farmers who committed suicide in distress. TRS MLA K. T. Rama Rao on Monday visited Vangapahad

village in Hasanparthy mandal and called on the family of Raju, a farmer who committed suicide on Sunday. The party gave Rs. 50,000 to the bereaved family members. – Special Correspondent

Meet for agriculturists

Agriculturists' grievances day meeting will be held at the collectorate at 3.30 p.m. on February 22. Collector K. S. Palanisamy will preside over.

Farmers in the district may take part and redress their grievances during the meeting, according to a press release from the district administration here on Monday.

Dindigul

Agriculturists' grievances day meeting will also be held at the collectorate at 10.30 a.m. on February 22. Collector N. Venkatachalam will preside and review petitions given by farmers on January 18. He also advised farmers to submit two copies of their petitions for quick disbursal. Action taken on the petitions will be displayed in the meeting hall, said the Collector.

National meet of agricultural scientists

About 250 agricultural scientists from different parts of the country, who work in the field of climate change, will come to Bangalore in the next few days for a three-day national workshop to develop a protocol for research to meet the challenges of climate change on agriculture.

The workshop titled, 'Crop improvement and adaptive strategies to meet challenges of climate change' is being organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore from February 22 to 24.

Announcing this at a press conference in Bangalore, UAS-B Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda said such a protocol was necessary as climate change had become a big challenge in ensuring the country's food security.

He said Karnataka suffered from climate change in the form of drought or untimely rain. The annual losses in agriculture due to climate change in Karnataka ran to hundreds of crores.

Climate change would impact rainfall and reduction in soil nutrients. As this was expected to become rampant in future, there was a need for the sector to evolve a mechanism to meet the challenges, he said.

He stressed the need for choosing crops suitable for a particular area depending on the availability of water. The UAS-B had advised farmers in upland and midland zones of the Cauvery basin to switch over to crops requiring less water instead of sugarcane and paddy crops.

Rain cools Kozhikode, may affect paddy



Freshly Washed: Morning showers drench Kozhikode on Sunday.

For the past three days, the district has been waking up to the welcome patter of rainfall accompanied by the occasional claps of thunder. The morning showers, termed by meteorological officials a 'local phenomenon,' have provided some respite to the city from the sweltering heat.

However, the District Agricultural Office is worried that continued showers may affect paddy. "The rain may prove good for long-term crops such as coconut, but for paddy, which is ready to be reaped, it may spell disaster. The year before last we had similar rain, which ended up destroying paddy," Mohammed P.K., Deputy Director of Agriculture, said on Sunday.

Though the atmosphere remained fresh early in the day after the showers, the sky cleared up to a pristine blue as humidity settled in by mid-morning.

The district meteorological data shows that the showers have lasted three hours, from 5.30 a.m. to 8.30 a.m., starting on February 15.

“The rainfall can be classified as thunderstorm. It is a local phenomenon caused by the sudden increase in temperature. Even the spread of rainfall has not been uniform across the district. Only certain areas along or having proximity to the coastal line have experienced rainfall,” A.N. Krishna Kumar, Scientific Assistant with the meteorological office here said.

Coconut tree

Sajeena alias Sajimol (34), of Kannadi was killed when a coconut tree got uprooted and fell onto her in Aryad grama panchayat in the district on Monday. She was washing clothes in the backyard of her house at around 11 a.m. when the coconut tree in her neighbour’s house fell onto her. Though she was rushed to the hospital, she could not be saved. Local residents alleged that the panchayat failed to act even after petitions had been submitted to it to cut the precariously poised coconut tree.

Business booms for the carnation

Floriculturists in Kodaikanal reap bumper harvest and high profit



in full colour Carnations in full bloom in Kodaikanal. File Photo: G. Karthikeyan

This Valentine’s Day has been exceptionally memorable for floriculturists, mostly cut-flower growers, particularly at Gundupatti and nearby villages as they have reaped huge profit.

Because of a bumper harvest and sharp increase in demand for cut flowers within the country and abroad, carnations from Kodaikanal, seen to be on par with the Colombian ones in terms of quality, size, shape and colour, are being sold at a premium price of Rs.180 to Rs. 200 a bunch (a bunch has 20 flowers) this season. "It even touched Rs.250 a few days before the Valentine's Day," said S. Lakshmanan a floriculturist at Gundupatti.

Carnations are cultivated in Gundupatti, Mannavanur, Kavunji, Periyur, Shenbaramkulam and Thandikudi in Kodaikanal hills.

"Carnations can be harvested in five months of planting," says P. Manoharan of Thandikudi, who has raised carnations on 20,000 square metres of land inside a poly green house.

"The yield is high under protective atmosphere — in poly green house — when compared to open field cultivation.

The protective atmosphere also scales down pest attack and eliminates factors that inhibit growth and flowering," points out T. S. Selvaragavan, another carnation grower.

With steady growth in demand and attractive price for cut flowers in the Bangalore and New Delhi markets, many farmers have shifted to cut-flower cultivation, says floriculturist L. Latha at Gundupatti.

Cultivated area

The total area under cultivation has been expanding steadily in the past decade. It was 10,000 square metres in 2005-06, 50,000 square metres in 2006- 07 and 1 lakh square metres in 2010-11, says Deputy Director of Horticulture S. Raja Mohammad.

"Now, the total area under carnations this year is 1.50 lakh square metres."

Moreover, many farmers in Kodaikanal taluk prefer cultivation of carnations flowers under poly green houses so as to enjoy the liberal subsidy under the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), he adds.

Farmers get a subsidy of Rs. 467.50 per square metre and the NHM has allotted Rs.70.12 lakh for cultivation of cut flowers under poly green houses for this financial year.

The Horticulture Department has brought 11,400 square metres under poly green house scheme.

The conducive climate — 13 to 18 degrees Celsius — has increased the quality and shelf-life of cut flowers, adds Mr. Mohamed.

[Click for farm fresh veggies](#)



Rahul Reddy and K. Sampath (right), who recently launched farm2mom.com, at the SmashUp organised by TiE and Microsoft.- PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

Now you can order fresh vegetables directly from the farmer, sitting at home. Once the order is placed, the farmer will then pluck his produce, pack it and transport the vegetables to your doorstep. With no agents, the vegetables come relatively cheap, fresh and the farmer too gets a better deal.

This novel concept was launched just three months ago here through 'www.farm2mom.com' by two US-returned techies Sampath Kondam and Rahul Reddy. Started on a very limited scale, the entrepreneurs are hoping that the concept will strike a chord with the citizens.

The duo presented their concept at an event for startups called 'SmashUP' organised by The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) on Sunday. "While purchasing vegetables from Rythu Bazaar, we are not sure about their freshness, quality and how they are produced. We are trying to ensure that the customers get fresh vegetables directly from farmers," says K. Sampath, who himself was a farm owner in US, before his shift.

The entrepreneurs are trying to scale up the services, which at present is limited to five areas. “We are trying to reach out to IT firms and apartment clusters so that we can transport vegetables in bulk. We are covering Hi-tech City, Tolichowki, Gachibowli and Mehdiapatnam,” Mr. Rahul said. In the coming months, customers will also have access to individual profiles of farmers. “Information like how the farmer is producing the vegetable, what kind of pesticides and water he is using will be available. This will ensure that the customer makes an informed choice,” they said.

Experience of farming in the US has helped, said Mr. Sampath.

Dramatic improvement in groundwater levels



FIELD VISIT: District Collector Dinakar Babu, Commissioner R. Sridevi and Dr. Wani visit ICRISAT’s project site in Fasalwadi mandal in Sangareddy.- PHOTO: MOHD ARIF

G. Sattaiah is an elderly farmer of this village. Since the past two years he has been witnessing a visible change in the village.

The groundwater levels have increased, milk yield by the cattle has improved and some farmers have been able to go in for a third crop.

“I have 4.5 acres of land and cultivate sugarcane and paddy. Since the last two years, the yield in bores has increased thereby allowing us to provide water for the crops. Not only I, but many of the villagers benefited as besides the quality of the milk, the quantity has also increased,” Mr. Sattaiah told *The Hindu* .

This change was made possible with the initiative: Integrated Genetic and Natural Resources Management (IGNRM) - by SAB Miller India in association with International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid-Tropic (ICRISAT) to improve the conditions, in particular, for the farming community. Both the organisations arranged a field visit to the village. Dr. Suhas P. Wani,

Assistant Research Project Director, ICRISAT, says that the project was implemented at Fasalvadi, Shivampet, Venkatakishtapur and Chakriyal villages in the last four years, which has resulted in various benefits. These include additional water storage capacity of more than 30,000 cubic metres leading to groundwater recharge of 75,000 cubic metres, increase of moisture content between 5 to 10 per cent, increased crop yield and increased income sources in addition to additional business of Rs.1.2 lakh by Self-Help Groups.

“Water has been becoming scarce, leading to wars. Water availability has decreased in the last five decades across the nation despite having sufficient rainfall of 955 mm average. We are using only 40 to 45 per cent of water properly. By putting in place some measures like this, we can manage to use more water efficiently,” said Dr. Wani, adding that in sugarcane the income had increased by Rs. 18,000 per hectare, while it increased by Rs. 5,000 per hectare in paddy.

The project has been implemented in the private and public partnership mode, he said and the results have been satisfying. The spent malt programme being run in the village has resulted in increase of milk yield, he added.

Collector A. Dinakar Babu, who also participated in the programme at the village, said that this project can be replicated in other areas as well.

People feel the heat as food prices are on the boil

Changing prices are stretching family budgets



Even the most blasé citizen has had to sit up and take notice of the price graph. From cereals and pulses to fruits and milk, chicken and meat, and processed foods, everything has become

dearer. Needless to say, monthly budgets are strained as families grapple to stretch the budget without cutting down on the essentials.

People are putting in place coping mechanisms that range from change in consumption pattern to consciously cutting down protein-rich foods. The constant revision of prices is being attributed to a variety of factors along the production chain, including rising input costs for farmers, poor rainfall, lack of timely government intervention and hoarding.

Since February 2011, the price of milk — an important source of nutrition — has increased by no less than 42 per cent. Sugar is up by 13 per cent and wheat by 18. Eggs, which low-income families will tell you have become a luxury, have seen a 36 per cent price increase.

Pulses, which saw a huge price spike that later stabilised, recorded no less than a 60 per cent increase. However, the steepest rise has been in the price of two crucial staples, rice and ragi: a staggering 78 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. Among other protein sources, mutton, fish and chicken went up by roughly 77 per cent, 100 per cent and 23 per cent.

Even fruits have become somewhat of a luxury. The prices of the popular yelakki banana and even the papaya shot up by 30 per cent during the period. The cheapest grape variety is up by 34 per cent and twice that much for the high-end variety. As for apples, they don't tempt as much as they did with their three-figure tag.

Even consumers with expensive tastes — particularly those who buy organic — have had to swallow hard and fork out premium rates. Yes, everybody is feeling the pinch.

“You name the product, its price rise has been steep. Rent, LPG cylinder and petrol too have gone up,” said Kiran S., a mid-level executive in a private bank. “However, our salaries have not seen the kind of rise needed to meet these expenses,” he said. In the last two years, the budget of his family, consisting of his five year-old daughter and wife, has gone up by almost Rs. 3,000 a month.

So how is he coping? “We have cut back on eating out and weekend travel,” he said. So much so the family is now toying with the idea of ironing its own clothes. “We were paying Rs. 3 a garment: it is now Rs. 4,” he added.

Blaming government policy for this steep rise, Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president of Bangalore Wholesale Grain Merchants Association, said: “We have no control over climatic conditions. But proper government intervention can help. Even when agriculture input declines, foodgrains continue to be exported, [pushing up] prices in domestic market due to scarcity.”

He attributed the high pulse prices to dependence on imports.

The steep increase in chicken price is being attributed to a sharp upward price movement of soya and maize. “The cost of soya went up by about 70 per cent and maize 50 per cent. However, despite the rising chicken prices, demand has not come down,” said K. Giridhar, business manager, National Egg Coordination Committee.

The worst hit are the low income families. For, unlike in the past, when they could substitute rice with other millets such as ragi, this time around this option too is a bit of a stretch: a kg of the humble ragi is now Rs. 40, compared to Rs. 20 in the past.

Cattle feed row: action sought against KMF officials

The district unit of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) and Hasiru Sene has urged the State government for legal action against the top officials of the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) for their alleged involvement in supplying poor quality cattle feed to dairy farmers in the State.

The farmers, led by KRRS and Hasiru Sene took out a protest rally in the city on Monday. They alleged that the Cotton Seed De-Oiled Cake (CSDOC) supplied by the KMF to the farmers was of poor quality. Later, they held a demonstration in front of the Deputy Commissioner’s office here.

In a memorandum addressed to Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, the KRRS district women’s wing president Shobha Chalavadi said the KMF officials have stored large quantity of poor quality CSDOC at their godowns in Rajanakunte, Gubbi, Hassan and Dharwad. The same cattle feed has been supplied to farmers. It was another case of large-scale irregularity and need to be thoroughly investigated.

The KRRS members collected the samples and got it tested at the laboratory. Reports show that the nutrition contents like crude protein, crude fibre, neutral detergent fibre and acid detergent fibre was not as per the prescribed level. This cattle feed would have adverse impact on the health of cattle and impact milk production, the memorandum said.

Members of the KRRS and Hasiru Sene have urged Mr. Shettar to visit the godown and check for himself the ground reality. They have also urged him to book cases against the KMF officials involved in these irregularities under the Karnataka Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules.

Heavy downpour results in crop loss

The sudden heavy down pour on Saturday and in the early hours of Sunday has resulted in substantial crop loss in the district. The vegetables, mango, chilli, turmeric and pulses are some of the crops that have suffered.

Agriculture Department officials said that the farmers cultivated pulses in 27,365 hectare in the district. Of this, 25,500 hectare is black gram. The farmers cultivated maize in 300 hectare, green gram cultivated in 1,000 hectare and Bengal gram in 180 hectare. The actual loss is yet to be ascertained.

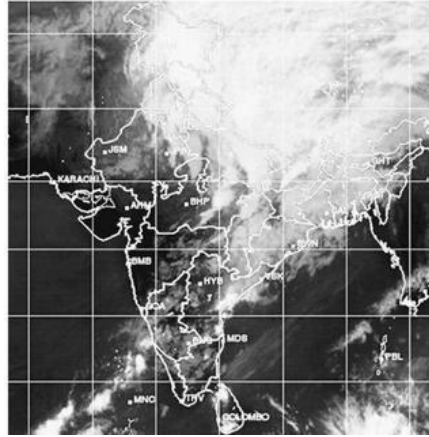
The horticulture crops like cauliflower, cabbage also suffered damages. Many farmers have already harvested the crop, the standing crops however were inundated. These vegetables are cultivated in about 20 hectare.

The chilli farmers, who cultivated in 9,725 hectare, are likely to incur quality loss due to inundation of the harvested crop.

The chilli marooned in flood waters will lose its quality. Likewise, the turmeric is cultivated in 2035 hectare in the district. The turmeric farmers are also likely to incur losses due to deterioration in the quality.

Horticulture Joint Director Subhani said that the mango orchards spread over 76,115 hectare in the district also might have suffered losses. The dropping of flower and fruit take place when there are heavy winds and gales. The farmers growing mango will have to face fungal problems in their orchards.

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	19	10	tr	98
New Delhi (Sfd)	19	9	2	127
Chandigarh	20	9	tr	108
Hissar	19	9	0	53
Bhuntar	15	5	tr	248
Shimla	7	2	0	263
Jammu	18	9	0	96
Srinagar	14	2	0	89
Amritsar	19	6	0	64
Patiala	17	10	tr	85
Jaipur	20	9	0	24
Udaipur	23	9	0	4
Allahabad	22	11	0	58
Lucknow	22	9	0	141
Varanasi	22	11	0	85
Dehradun	18	7	0	288
Agartala	25	16	9	9
Ahmedabad	27	13	0	tr

Bangalore	31	21	0	3
Bhubaneshwar	28	19	1	3
Bhopal	22	10	0	21
Chennai	31	25	1	20
Guwahati	20	13	11	11
Hyderabad	30	14	0	17
Kolkata	21	17	10	22
Mumbai	29	19	0	0
Nagpur	29	11	0	13
Patna	23	15	0	49
Pune	29	9	0	0
Thiruvananthapuram	34	25	0	31
Imphal	28	12	1	1
Shillong	13	6	17	26

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

Rainfall

RAINFALL: Rain/snow has occurred at a few places over Himachal Pradesh and at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand. Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over Haryana, Punjab and east Uttar Pradesh. Weather was mainly dry over the rest of the region. The chief amounts of precipitations in cm. are: HIMACHAL PRADESH: Sundernagar and Mandi 1 each and JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Katra 2.

MINIIMUM TEMPERATURES : The minimum temperatures fell appreciably in Haryana and Punjab, fell in Jammu and Kashmir and east Uttar Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were normal over the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 06.0°C recorded at Narnaul (Haryana).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 20th FEBRUARY 2013: Rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir on 19th and 20th and over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on 19th. Rain/thundershowers could occur at one or two places over Punjab and north Rajasthan on 19th. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 20th FEBRUARY 2013: Mainly clear sky likely to become partly cloudy sky. Mist/shallow fog in the morning.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Feb 19

Max Min

31° | 25°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:30

Sunset: 06:15

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Feb 20

Max Min

31° | 22°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Feb 21	Friday Feb 22	Saturday Feb 23	Sunday Feb 24	Monday Feb 25
31° 21° Partly Cloudy	29° 20° Overcast	30° 20° Overcast	32° 20° Sunny	32° 20° Sunny

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:56

Sunset: 06:14

Barometer: 1016



18th jan 2013

Agri credit camp at Kalladka in Dakshina Kannada district

Mangalore regional office of [Vijaya Bank](#) conducted an agriculture credit camp at Kalladka in Dakshina Kannada district recently.

A press release said here that more than 250 beneficiaries from Bantwal, Sullia and Puttur taluks in the district attended the camp.

The bank disbursed a sum of Rs 5.20 crore to them at the camp.

The Chairman and Managing Director of the bank, H.S. Upendra Kamath, handed over sanction letters to the beneficiaries on the occasion, it added.

Crops on 2.5 lakh hectares damaged in AP rains; 18 killed

Untimely rains and hailstorm in Andhra Pradesh have killed 18 persons and damaged agricultural and horticultural crops in 2.50 lakh hectares in the last two days. Paddy, maize, bengalgram and chillies suffered the maximum damage as rains lashed the coastal districts of Krishna, Guntur, Nellore, Prakasam and West Godavari districts.

Several other districts too registered heavy rainfall, with the State averaged 22 mm rainfall in a span of two days. Prakasam district suffered most where agricultural crops in 50,000 hectares were damaged, followed by Guntur with 27,000 ha and 23,000 ha.

Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the kin of the dead and called for enumeration of the losses. He asked officials of the Revenue, Agriculture and Horticulture Departments to submit a detailed report in a week.

He held a review meeting on Monday to take stock of the situation and discuss relief measures with the district collectors through video conference. A senior Government official said that the Chief Minister would visit the flood-affected areas in Adilabad and Karimnagar districts on Tuesday.

“The Chief Minister asked the Indian Meteorology Department officials to evolve a proper and better mechanism to alert the Government machinery and people on such calamities,” he said.

Aromatic rice drops as stockists book profits



After hitting a peak for this season last week, rice prices decreased with aromatic and Sharbati rice down Rs 50-300 a quintal on Monday.

Amit Chandna, Proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, said that prices fell as stockists booked profits after the recent rally.

Traders expect that aromatic and sharbati varieties to regain their previous levels in a few days and see the price fall as temporary, said Chandna. Prices of PR and broken varieties are unlikely to change a lot, he added.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) eased by Rs 300 at Rs 7,300 a quintal, while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 6,500, Rs 100 down.

Pure basmati (raw) dropped by Rs 50 at Rs 8,500. Duplicate basmati (steam) traded Rs 200 down at Rs 6,300.

Sharbati (steam) was down Rs 200 at Rs 4,800, while Sharbati (sela) was at Rs 4,500, Rs 150 down.

PR varieties managed to maintain their previous levels on moderate buying.

PR-11 (sela) was at Rs 3,100, while PR-11 (raw) quoted at Rs 2,800-2,900. Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,350, while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,300.

Dubar quoted at Rs 3,200, Tibar sold at Rs 4,300, while Mongra was at Rs 2,500.

Paddy Arrivals

About 1,500 thousand bags of PR variety arrived and sold at Rs 1,320 a quintal. Around 2,000 bags of Sharbati arrived and quoted at Rs 2,250. About 2,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and quoted at Rs 3,750.

Imported palmolein rises on Malaysian cues



Imported palmolein rose by Rs 5 for 10 kg tracking firm Malaysian palm oil futures on Monday. Soyabean refined oil dropped by Re 1 for 10 kg on slack demand. Volume was thin as stockists kept away from fresh bulk buying. They covered enough last week for March, while for February they chose to fulfil old commitments by taking deliveries.

Malaysian palm oil futures gained on Monday, snapping three straight sessions of losses as investors expected stronger export demand seen in the first half of the month to bring stocks down further.

An analyst said, "Malaysia's palm oil exports were quite strong for the first 15 days and production may come down again, so the market is supported because of that. Exports of crude palm oil may also rise for this month before the 4.5 per cent tax in March. Malaysia has set its crude palm oil export tax for March at 4.5 per cent, while there was no tax in February."

A Mumbai-based broker said, "In local market, a weak rupee against the dollar has lifted import cost, forcing local refiners to raise prices by Rs 5 for 10 kg. Needy stockists have bought merely 200-250 tonnes of palmolein from resellers at lower rates. Last week, traders bought about 2,000 tonnes of palmolein for March and kept away from fresh commitment for the current month."

Towards the end of the day, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 518-522, super palmolein at Rs 560 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 800. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 520 for March 1-15 and at Rs 523 for March 16-31, soyabean refined oil at Rs 695 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 775. Allana offered palmolein at Rs 511 and super palmolein at Rs 560. In Saurashtra and Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled at Rs 1,915 (Rs 1,915) for a 15-kg *telia* tin and at Rs 1,250 (Rs 1,250) for loose (10 kg).

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil's March contract firmed up to Rs 708.80 (Rs 706.80), April to Rs 697 (Rs 695.35) and May to Rs 694.90 (Rs 693.60).

Malaysia's crude palm oil's March contract settled at MYR2,474 (MYR2,452), April at MYR2,511 (MYR2,483) and May at MYR2,536 (MYR 2,506) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,235 (1,235), soya refined oil 694(695), sunflower exp. ref. 710 (710), sunflower ref. 780 (780), rapeseed ref. oil 780 (780), rapeseed expeller ref. 750 (750) cottonseed ref. oil 615 (615) and palmolein 511 (506).

Poor arrival perks up cotton



Cotton increased by Rs 300 a candy of 356 kg, as arrival declined across the country. Moreover, exporters and mills are buying on expectation of yarn export.

According to a Rajkot-based cotton broker, the fibre crop is up since last couple of days mainly because of slower arrivals and high demand. Prices may increase further, he added.

The Sankar-6 variety traded higher by Rs 200-300 at Rs 35,200-35,500 a candy. The V-797 A grade variety was offered at Rs 27,800-28,000 a candy. While 45,000 bales of 170 kg each arrived in Gujarat, 1.45 lakh bales arrived in the rest of the country.

Traders say that prices may rise to Rs 38,000 a candy on expectation of lower output, strong yarn exports and improvement in overseas sales of lint.

Kapas or raw cotton rose by Rs 20-25 to Rs 880-885 for a *maund* of 20 kg in Gujarat and was at Rs 900-915 for delivery at Kadi. Surendranagar Kalyan *kapas* contract gained Rs 10 at Rs 914.75 a *maund*.

Demand from spinners and exporters was high, while ginners bought less because of higher *kapas* prices.

Lack of upcountry orders keeps turmeric flat



Despite poor arrival, spot turmeric remained flat on Monday, as there were no orders from other States. Cheaper crop from Nizamabad and Assam also arrived here.

“Prices did not improve due to want of upcountry demand. Farmers too did not bring a lot of bags for sale. Many stockists placed orders and a few bulk buyers bought hybrid and quality turmeric by quoting slightly increased price,” said Erode Turmeric Merchants Association President R.K.V. Ravishankar.

Prices in Nizamabad and Assam are even lower and some traders purchased a little unpolished turmeric

from there and brought the stock to Erode after drying and polishing. Fresh orders may begin by the end of this month. Farmers said they did not want to sell at the present price, so they are bringing limited stock. They hope prices would increase in two to three months.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety (new crop) was sold at Rs 4,232-6,399 a quintal, the root variety at Rs 3,896-5,869. The old crop finger variety was sold at Rs 4,611-6,665, the root variety at Rs 4,269-5,899.

Salem hybrid crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,869-6,786, the root variety at Rs 5,389-6,029. Of the 663 bags that arrived, only 128 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety (new crop) was sold at Rs 5,352-5,631, the root variety at Rs 5,196-5,719. The old crop finger variety was sold at Rs 5,464-6,479, the root variety at Rs 5,193-5,960. Of the 398 bags that arrived, 295 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,209-6,484, the root variety at Rs 4,059-5,860. All the 221 bags kept for sale were sold.

At the Gobochettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,166-6,368, the root variety at Rs 5,066-5,987. All the 122 bags kept for sale were sold.

Buying ahead of holiday lifts sugar



Sugar improved on the Vashi wholesale terminal by Rs 5-7 a quintal on Monday on higher local demand ahead of a holiday on Tuesday for Shivaji Jayanti. Futures extended gains by Rs 20 a quintal, rising totally by more than Rs 50 in the last two days. Arrivals and despatches were higher.

Firm futures lifted the sentiment in the physical market. Some producers quoted higher prices on expectation of higher demand as temperatures rise. *Naka* and mill tender rates increased by Rs 10-15 a quintal. Spot prices rose by only Rs 5-7 a quintal due to ample supplies. A Vashi-based wholesaler said, "The Centre is likely to take a decision on giving freedom to the industry to sell sugar in the open market in the next 15 days. This has lifted market sentiment at the upper level." In October, an expert panel headed by Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Chairman C. Rangarajan had recommended immediate removal of the regulated release mechanism and the levy sugar obligation, two major controls. A trader said, "Retail demand is currently low and is not expected to improve till month-end. Producers continue to sell in local markets, keeping supplies high. Vashi currently carries more than 120 truckloads of inventory.

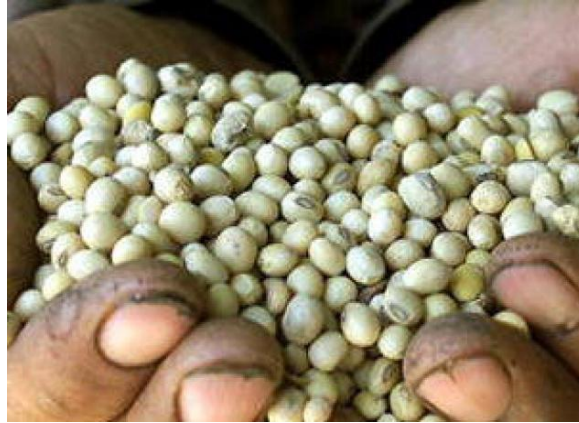
In Vashi, 65-66 truckloads (each of 100 bags) arrived and 63-64 truckloads were despatched locally. On Saturday evening, 10-12 mills offered tenders and sold 35,000-38,000 bags (each of a quintal) at Rs 3,070-3,100 (Rs 3,060-3,090) for S-grade and Rs 3,150-3,270 (Rs 3,145-3,260) for M-grade.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, March contract was at Rs 3,151 (Rs 3,131), April at Rs 3,199 (Rs 3,178) and May at Rs 3,240 (Rs 3,222) till noon.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,196-3,272 (Rs 3,192-3,272) and M-grade Rs 3,262-3,431 (Rs 3,262-3,431).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,170-3,200 (Rs 3,150-3,190) and M-grade Rs 3,240-3,360 (Rs 3,250-3,350).

Soya oil flat on slack spot offtake



Despite strong global cues, soya oil ruled flat on slack demand in the physical market on Monday. Soya refined ruled at Rs 695-700 for 10 kg, while soya solvent ruled at Rs 660-665 for 10 kg. Compared with last week, soya oil is ruling Rs 5 higher. Soya oil's February and March contracts closed at Rs 735.90 (up 5 paise) and at Rs 708.50 for 10 kg (up Rs 1.70). Soya oil is likely to remain sluggish till it's on a par with palm and cotton oil.

Soya seeds were up a little on weak arrival and improved demand for soya de-oiled cake or soyameal. On Monday, soyabean in Madhya Pradesh *mandis* ruled at Rs 3,180-3,260 a quintal amid arrival of 75,000 bags. There was no arrival at Indore due to an ongoing labourers' strike, while in Ujjain 3,500 bags and in Dewas 3,000 bags arrived.

Plant deliveries of soyabean also gained Rs 20-25 at Rs 3,320-3,370 a quintal on improved buying. Soyabean's February and March contracts were up on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange on buying and strong foreign cues at Rs 3,365 a quintal (up Rs 28) and at Rs 3,259 (up Rs 37.50). Soyameal gained on improved demand. In the domestic market, soyameal on Monday ruled at Rs 27,800-28,200 a quintal, while in the port, it was quoted at Rs 28,500-29,000.

Sugar decontrol: Rs 150/quintal additional excise duty likely



The Government may impose an additional excise duty of Rs 150 a quintal on sugar as part of the measures to decontrol the sector over the next few days. The current excise duty on sugar, including the sugar development fund and education cess, stands at 98 paise a kg.

The Government expects the proposed hike in excise duty to reduce its financial burden on levy sugar sales.

The Food Ministry has moved a Cabinet note on decontrolling the highly regulated sugar sector. Sources said the Government favours scrapping the release-order mechanism and doing away with the levy obligation immediately, broadly in line with the Rangarajan Committee recommendations.

PRICE HIKE Unlikely

Such a move would help millers better manage their inventories and cash flows, besides saving them the levy burden of around Rs 3,000 crore annually. As a result, the proposed hike in the excise is unlikely to result in sugar becoming costlier, millers said.

Of the 24 million tonnes (mt) of sugar produced in the country, levy sales account for around 2.7 mt and open market sales, around 20 mt.

At present, the Centre sets the quota that millers can sell in the open market under the regulated-release mechanism. Sugar factories, under the levy system, are obliged to sell 10 per cent of their output at a lower price of Rs 19.04 a kg to the Government for sale through the public distribution system (PDS).

The Government sells the levy sugar at Rs 13.50 a kg to poor families under the PDS, incurring a subsidy burden of around Rs 2,500 crore annually.

According to sources, the Government hoped to regulate the exports and imports of the sweetener through a tariff mechanism. An inter-ministerial group may take a call on the tariff structure, based on the prevailing prices — both local and global.

Last week, Food Minister K. V. Thomas had hinted that decontrol could be part of the Budget announcement. The Food Ministry expects more consultations with the States on issues relating to rationalisation of cane pricing, abolition of cane area regulation, and scrapping the minimum distance criteria for setting up mills.

Pakistan cuts buying tea from Coonoor

There was a mentionable drop in the purchases for Pakistan at Sale No: 7 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) auctions.

Most major exporters remained silent and some who bought sporadic volume said that they picked up the teas because the prices were in the low-bracket as demanded by their buyers.

“Normalcy is yet to return at the Indo-Pak border where traces of tension cast shadow on trade including tea shipments”, an auctioneer told *Business Line*.

“Tea is not being transported easily through Wagah border. Till now, conflict-charged statements are being aired by the political and military heads of both the countries. So, we prefer to ‘wait-and-watch’ before investing huge sums on tea now”, an exporter said.

Information has come that Pakistan has stepped up its purchases at Mombasa auction for Kenya and Malawi tea and Colombo auctions for Sri Lankan teas.

“This is to cover short-supplies from India”, the exporter reasoned.

Some producers, however, contended that they were not keen to sell to Pakistan because the asking price was low.

“Some exporters want tea for Pakistan at a landed price equivalent to Rs 92 a kg which means, we have to sell at Rs 80 a kg. The ruling average is Rs 98 here”, a producer said.

The CIS bought for Rs 90-109.

There was some purchase for European ports at Rs 89-95.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 85-89 for plain leaf grades and Rs 110-150 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 85-89 for plain dusts and Rs 110-150 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Allow scientists to hold field trials of GM crops, says Pawar



Making a case for genetically-modified (GM) technology to boost farm output, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said scientists should not be denied the right to conduct field trials of such crops.

“We cannot afford to curtail the vigour of our scientific community and deny them the right to conduct trials, as has been done for some GM crops, despite being subjected to strictest controls of bio-safety,” Pawar told the 84th annual general meeting of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR).

Constrained by depleting natural resources, including arable land, Pawar said “We do not have any option but to try and achieve a major breakthrough in productivity to ensure food security of 1.2 billion plus population of our country”.

“The process of research should not be stopped as it would demoralise the scientific community,” he added.

Three years ago, the Government had put moratorium on the commercial release of Bt brinjal on safety concerns.

In August last year, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture had recommended that all field trials in GM crops should be discontinued forthwith.

The Agriculture Minister said ICAR must prioritise technologies towards the resource of poor farmers and enable them to take advantage of new technologies. "Equipping the farmer to tackle the climate change and erratic monsoon should be an important agendum" Pawar said. On the impact of recent rains on rabi crop, the Minister said "By and large, our report on wheat crop is quite good.

There is sudden change in weather, but we have not reached a situation to say there's any damage to the crop".

This year, the Government is expecting a wheat crop of 92.3 million tonnes against last year's 94.88 mt.

Cardamom drops on reports of imports from Guatemala



The cardamom market lost flavour last week on weak demand following reports of imports in large quantity of the commodity from Guatemala at low prices.

However, good export buying has arrested a sharp fall in prices of cardamom.

Exporters estimated to have bought 80-100 tonnes of good colour above 7 mm capsules at Rs 850-870 a kg, sources told *Business Line*.

The market, in fact, crashed on Saturday with the average price dropping to Rs 640 following reports of imports, trade sources said.

The individual auction average thus fell to below Rs 700 after some time, they said.

Inferior grade cardamom, or rejection variety as it is called in trade parlance, is said to have been imported even though such material is available indigenously at Rs 500. Ever since the ban on 'Pan masala', there has been no demand for such material, they said.

Some in the masala industry might have probably imported some quantity of rejection material and that is appeared to have been inflated by vested interests in the market, the trade alleged.

Added to this, a heavy downpour on Sunday in the major cardamom growing belts in Idukki district aided the creation of a bearish sentiment in the market.

However, the output this season is much less and, hence, the buyers might wait for some time to assess the volume of cardamom imported into the country, they said.

According to P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, Kumily, "there is good demand for good quality capsules having good colour and bold above 7 mm and prices of this variety has been steady to firm."

At the Sunday auction conducted by the KCPMC, total arrivals stood at 72 tonnes as against 59 in the previous Sunday and of this, five tonnes were withdrawn.

The maximum price was at Rs 1,068 a kg and minimum was at Rs 498. Auction average price dropped to Rs 700.14 (Rs 764.22) Punnoose told *Business Line*. Total arrivals and sales during the current season from Aug 1, 2012 to Feb 17, 2013 were at 8,400 tonnes and 7,969 tonnes respectively. Total arrivals and sales during the corresponding period last year were about 12,793 tonnes and about 12,457 tonnes respectively. The weighted average price as on Feb 17, 2013 stood at Rs 770.08 a kg (Rs 562.44).

Prices of graded varieties remained steady at previous levels in Rs/kg: AGEB 900-1,000; AGB 780-790; AGS 745-755; and AGS -1: 720-730.

Mixed trend in spot rubber

There were no fresh enquires from major consuming industries to trigger a bullish trend in the market but selected counters recovered partially on covering purchases at lower levels.

The transactions continued to be dull.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 157.00 (156.50) a kg, according to traders.

The grade closed unchanged at Rs 157. both at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

In the futures market, March contracts inched up to Rs 158.35 (158.20); April Rs 162.00 (161.86) and May Rs 166.21 (164.96) while June and July contracts remained inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) closed marginally higher at Rs 176.71 (176.59) a kg at Bangkok. February futures increased to ₹309.30 (Rs 178.65) from ₹ 306.00 a kg during the day session but then fell back to ₹ 306.00 (Rs 176.80) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates Rs/kg: RSS-4: 157 (156.50); RSS-5: 152 (152); Un

Agri Ministry favours hike in excise duty on sugar



The Agriculture Ministry is in favour of increasing the excise duty on sugar by Rs 1.50 per kg, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said on Monday.

The current excise duty on sugar stands at Rs 98 per quintal.

“We support the Food Ministry’s proposal in this regard,” Pawar told reporters on the sidelines the annual general meeting of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Levy burden

The Food Ministry is in favour of increasing the excise duty on sugar to offset the levy burden even as the Government gears up to remove the controls on sugar sector, including doing away with the levy obligation.

Such a move is expected to help the Government reduce its financial burden on selling the sweetener to poor families at subsidised rate under the public distribution system.

Levy system

Under the levy system, the sugar factories currently have to sell 10 per cent of their total produce to the Government at Rs 19.04 a kg against the ex-factory price of around Rs 31 per kg.

This levy sugar is sold by the Government at Rs 13.50 per kg to the poor families under PDS, incurring a subsidy burden of around Rs 2,500 crore a year.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

19.02.2013 A.M

Farmers upset with govt compensation

DINDIGUL: Farmers in Sithaiyankotti, which is known as the 'rice bowl' of Dindigul are lamenting that the government compensation of Rs 15,000 per acre for loss of paddy crop is inadequate, as they are facing the worst crisis in recent years.

Though Dindigul is a drought-prone area, farmers in [Sithaiyankottai in Athoor](#) union have been cultivating a single crop for nearly a century using water from the local tanks, Kudaganaru river and the Athoor Kamaraj dam, if the dam surpluses.

Thangaraja, a farmer said that the paddy cultivated in this region had a special taste, because the water was mainly sourced from harvested rain water in tanks or river water. "I think this is the first time in about two generations that we are going to purchase our annual rice from outside and not from our own land," he said.

Udhuman Ali, another farmer said that they were used to cultivating the robust paddy varieties like IR 20 and IR 50 for many generations. This paddy was able to withstand some amount of drought because it was a native of this region. But then, the farmers found it difficult to access the grains of this variety for sowing and replaced it with seeds of Ko 43, Ko 45 and deluxe [ponni](#).

"Usually, the sowing is done in the month of October and it is ready for harvesting by the end of January or February, but this year, the only thing we have been witnessing with despair is the drying up of the crops and the cracking of the ground because of the lack of water. It is something beyond our ability to save our crops," he said.

According to the farmers of this region they have been cultivating a single crop of paddy in 500 acres in Sithaiyankottai alone and after the harvest, the till and pulses were cultivated. They had been reaping a good harvest every year with each acre fetching 35 to 40 bags of paddy weighing 75 kg each per acre. But, now the entire crop has failed them.

Akbar Ali says that they incur an expenditure of Rs 25,000 per acre from sowing to harvesting as labour has also gone up. The government's compensation of Rs 15,000 will result in a shortfall and a loss of Rs 10,000 per acre. The farmers say the government should come forward to give them Rs 30,000 per acre to keep their morale up atleast till the next sowing season.

State demands funds for rabi farmers' payout

PUNE: The [state government](#) has sent a proposal demanding financial assistance from the union government for paying compensation to farmers who have lost their rabi crops.

A senior revenue officer from the state government said the government has surveyed 3,905 villages in the state. Most of the crops in these areas will be lost because of water scarcity, lack of moisture in the soil and non availability of other irrigation sources, said the officer.

The state government has admitted that although the average area under rabi crop is 45 lakh hectares, sowing is reported in only 78% of the area. The government has already initiated the process of loss assessment.

The state government has so far received Rs 778 crore from the union government, which was utilized for providing financial assistance to farmers who had lost kharif crops in 2012 and for fodder camps. The new proposal for financial assistance is for the loss of rabi crops, because the state did not receive adequate rainfall, resulting in low moisture in the soil and less

availability of water in wells, lakes and dams, said an agriculture officer.

The state, in its report, has mentioned that close to 16 districts in the state are facing water scarcity due to insufficient rainfall. The state had received less rainfall in 2011, putting pressure on water bodies, and the insufficient rainfall in 2012 did not recharge the water bodies. Most of these districts fall in the rain-shadow area, which receives less rainfall compared to other parts of the state. The worst hit area in the state is Marathwada, where 798 tankers are supplying drinking water to 584 villages and 211 hamlets in the region. The situation has turned worse - until last week, 706 tankers were supplying drinking water in [Marathwada](#) region, and from this Sunday, 798 tankers have been deployed for supplying drinking water, said the revenue officer.

In Pune division, eastern parts of Pune and Satara districts have received inadequate rainfall and are facing severe water scarcity. Ahmednagar, Solapur and Sangli districts are completely hit by water scarcity, low rainfall and shortage of fodder. The state government has opened some fodder camps, but they are not sufficient, said a senior official.

Mango crop at mercy of weather gods

SURAT: Farmers in the [mango](#) bowl of south Gujarat are keeping their fingers crossed following the sudden change in weather conditions that might lead to large-scale damage to the ongoing flowering and to baby mangoes on the trees.

The farmers in Valsad and Navsari districts, which are famous for their Alphonso and Kesar mangoes, are reeling under deep worry. Valsad farmers fear that the prevalent weather conditions - which could last for another three to four days - could damage fruits. The farmers also face the threat of trees being infested with insects like Hoppers and Flower Webbers.

Horticulture experts at the [Navsari Agriculture University](#) (NAU) said that the continuation of cloudy conditions and drizzling in the region could indeed lead to heavy infestation of the mango trees by these insects. The [spread](#) of the insects could cause withering and shedding of flower

buds and flowers, triggering heavy loss from 25-60 per cent due to poor fruit setting.

"The weather was suitable a few days ago, but suddenly conditions have changed. The cloudy [atmosphere](#) in the region is a bad sign," a mango farmer in Umbergaon Pravin Chhajer said.

"This will have a negative effect on the flowering, resulting in decreased output."

Gujarat produces an average of 7 lakh tonnes of mangoes every season, out of which around 60 per cent is produced in south Gujarat region, mainly in Navsari and Valsad districts.

Dean, faculty of horticulture and [forestry](#), NAU, Dr N L Patel told TOI, "It is that time of the season when mangoes need sufficient amount of heat. The current weather conditions are not at all suitable for the health of mango trees in south Gujarat."

Patel added, "Farmers need to be extra cautious in taking very good care of the trees. If they spray insecticides haphazardly then there are chances of pollen being destroyed."

Re 1 per kg rice scheme to cost govt Rs 1126 cr a year

BHUBANESWAR: The state government will have to bear subsidy to the tune of Rs 1,128 crore per annum for supply of rice at Re-1-a-kg to [BPL](#) families, said food supplies and consumer welfare minister [P K Deb](#).

The minister replying to a question in the assembly said the Centre had provided Rs 2,144 crore subsidy to the Odisha government in 2012-13 on supply of rice to BPL families and beneficiaries of Antyodaya [Anna Yojana](#). The state government during this fiscal made financial provision to allow Rs 1,140 crore subsidy to the targeted beneficiaries on those rice supply schemes, he said.

The minister said the Centre in 2011-12 gave subsidy to the tune of Rs 2,568 crore to the

Odisha government on supply of rice against Rs 971 crore subsidy allowed by the state government for this purpose during this fiscal. Besides, Deb said the Centre shouldered total subsidy on supply of rice under Annapurna Yojana with a financial provision for Rs 520 lakh in 2012-13.

Following bumper crop, the government was taking step to procure more paddy from farmers against current year procurement target of 35 lakh MT of rice, he said, adding that 31 lakh MT of paddy was procured by February 10 this year against rice equivalent paddy procurement target of 43 lakh MT.