



Rs. 18 crore-relief for Chidambaram Kattumannarkoil farmers

Of Rs. 15,000-relief package, Rs. 5,000 will be from State Disaster Relief Funds

The government has sanctioned Rs. 18.23 crore as relief to 7,615 farmers in 51 villages of Chidambaram and Kattumannarkoil blocks.

Based on the assessment made by officials of the Revenue and Agriculture Departments, a total of 12,152 acres in Chidambaram and Kattumannarkoil blocks were found to be affected.

As many as 7,615 farmers in 51 villages in both the blocks, including 7,284 in 31 villages in Chidambaram and 331 in 20 villages in Kattumannarkoil block, have been identified as beneficiaries for the special relief package, said M.C. Sampath, Environment Minister.

Based on this estimate, the government has sanctioned Rs. 18.23 crore to be given away as relief to the distressed farmers in these blocks, he added.

New relief formula

The State government has evolved a formula for disbursement of special relief package to delta farmers who have been badly affected this samba season due to poor monsoon and refusal of the Karnataka government to release Cauvery river water for irrigation.

The relief package of Rs. 15,000 an acre announced recently by Chief Minister Jayalalithaa would be partly met from the State Disaster Relief Fund and partly by companies that had provided insurance cover for the crops, the Minister said during his visit to Thirunaraiyur in Kattumannarkoil block on Monday to disburse the relief package to 226 farmers.

“Of the Rs. 15,000-relief package, a sum of Rs. 5,000 would come from the State Disaster Relief Funds and the remaining from crop insurance companies,” the Minister said.

‘Advance’

As it would take some time for the insurance companies to assess the extent of crop losses and decide on the quantum of relief on a proportional basis, the farmers would not be able to avail themselves of the benefit immediately.

To overcome such a time lag, the government has evolved a strategy under which it would assume the responsibility of disbursing the amount pertaining to the insurance component too as ‘advance’, and treat the differential amount (between the total package and the share of insurance companies) as the size of the real special package assistance.

Cuddalore Collector R. Kirloshkumar said the relief amount would be deposited in the personal accounts of farmers maintained in the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Banks.

The banks had been categorically told not to adjust the special package amount to the existing loans of farmers.

As deposits in banks

The disbursal procedure, in the form of depositing money in the respective bank accounts, had already begun in the district on February 23. So far a sum of Rs. 6.44 crore was deposited in the accounts of 2,924 farmers.

Arrangements would also be made for depositing the relief amount in the farmers' accounts kept in nationalised banks, the collector said.

MLAs Selvi Ramajayam and N. Murugumaran were present.

Scientific Workers' Conference at TNAU

The 79th Scientific Workers' Conference will be held at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here on March 1 and 2. Agriculture Minister S. Damodaran will inaugurate the conference in the presence of Sandeep Saxena, Agricultural Production Commissioner and Secretary to Government, Agriculture Department, Tamil Nadu. Vice-Chancellor of TNAU K. Ramasamy will deliver the keynote address.

Following the inauguration, action taken on the recommendations of the 78th Scientific Workers' Conference will be deliberated upon.

Plenary session

On March 2 there will be a plenary session chaired by Mr. Damodaran that will put forth new recommendations.

Thalavadi farmers reap profit in garlic cultivation



The cultivation of garlic has given a new lease of life for many farmers in Thalavadi block of Erode district.

The short-term, less-water intensive crop has been ensuring a handsome profit to the farming community in many remote villages in the block for the last few years.

“A kilogram of garlic is being sold for Rs. 60 in the wholesale market. We take home a profit of Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 1.5 lakh an acre,” D. Raja, a farmer in Thalavadi who cultivated the crop in two acres of land, said.

Garlic takes about 100 to 120 growing days from planting to maturity and it requires little attention.

The cultivation cost ranges from Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 80,000 depending on the soil type, irrigation methods and the seed variety. The average yield per acre is about 3.5 to 4 tonnes, farmers explain.

The climate in Thalavadi hills is conducive for garlic cultivation and a majority of the farmers have installed micro irrigation systems such as sprinkler and drip to water the crop.

The micro irrigation system ensures better water management and helps enhance the yield, farmers say.

The planting of the crop normally commences in the month of September and ends in November. The crop is harvested in February and March.

“The revenue from garlic cultivation this year is low when compared to the previous years because of the fall in the prices. Garlic prices, which stood around Rs. 120 a kg, have come down to Rs. 60 this year. Still it is profitable,” points out the president of a joint liability group for farmers in Thalavadi, S. Manickam.

About 300 acres in the block is being covered under garlic crop. “The crop does not attract wild animals and is a good choice for hilly regions like Thalavadi,” says Deputy Director of Horticulture Robert Vincent.

Committee demands import duty on red gram

: The joint action committee of farmers’ organisations and trade bodies have demanded that the Union government impose an import duty of at least 20 per cent on red gram imported from Myanmar, to protect the interests of indigenous growers.

Addressing a joint press conference here on Tuesday, leaders of the committee including president of the Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha Maruti Manpade,

president of the Hyderabad Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Umakant Nigudgi, its secretary Basavaraj Hadgil, president of the Karnataka Red Gram Growers Association Basavaraj Ingin, and secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha Moula Mulla said that according to information available with them the Union government had entered into an agreement to import more than 1.20 lakh tonnes of red gram from Myanmar at a cost of Rs. 4,180 per quintal, and “unless an import duty of 20 per cent is imposed the prices of red gram in the Indian market would collapse leading to distress to farmers.”

Mr. Manpade said that imposition of the import duty would help in stabilising red gram prices in local markets.

‘Restore incentive’

He said that the Union government should also restore the incentive of Rs. 500 per quintal over the Minimum Support Price of Rs. 3,850 fixed for red gram.

To a question, he said market intervention by the Red Gram Development Board on behalf of the State government to purchase red gram directly from farmers at an increased Minimum Support Price of Rs. 4,500, fixed by the State government, has helped in stabilising prices of the gram in the wholesale market. “A Rs. 500 incentive by the Union government would further increase the prices of red gram in the wholesale market and farmers would get remunerative prices,” he said.

Mr. Manpade said that after the intervention by the Red Gram Development Board, prices had gone up to Rs. 4,475 per quintal in the wholesale market and

the arrival and sale of red gram in the market yard of the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) had gone up. So far more than 3 lakh quintals of red gram had been sold in the market yard. On Monday alone more than 20,100 quintals of red gram was sold, he said. To a question, Mr. Manpade said the total procurement done in the procurement centres established by the Red Gram Development Board in all taluk headquarters in Gulbarga, Bidar and Yadgir districts was just 27,000 quintals so far. The leaders warned that they would have to revive the agitation against the Union government if it does not impose import duty on red gram imported from Myanmar and restore incentive on red gram to farmers above the MSP.

'Extend compensation to crops other than paddy'

The Agriculturists' Wing of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee has appealed to the State government to extend compensation to the crops other than paddy as they have also been hit hard by the drought.

In a memorandum to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, Puliur A. Nagarajan, State vice president of the unit, said while he was thankful to the State government for having started the disbursement of compensation to farmers, it had not covered all the affected farmers.

Hence, he pleaded that all those whose crops had been affected by the drought should be given some relief.

With specific reference to the 17-channel area, he submitted that annual crops like banana, sugarcane and betel vines that had been raised in thousands of acres were withering due to drought.

Their yield had also slumped.

Hence, he pleaded that a compensation of Rs.1 lakh an acre should be granted for banana and Rs.50,000 an acre for sugarcane and betel vines. "This is the condition obtaining even in the Chief Minister's constituency of Srirangam," he added.

He also requested the State government to release at least 3,000 cusecs of water to the 17 channels from Mettur dam and ensure drinking water both for the people and the cattle in the region.

In order to feed the cattle, he suggested that the farmers be given modern equipment for rent to collect straw after harvest of paddy.

In a communication to the Prime Minister, he pleaded for early constitution of Cauvery Management Board which alone would be able to effectively implement the Award of the Cauvery Waters Dispute Tribunal which had now been gazetted.

At present, he said that the Tamil Nadu government had given compensation only to 10 per cent of the farmers. Besides, he came to know that only 25 per cent of the total area would be given compensation.

“This is causing despair among the farmers. All the areas in the Cauvery delta and all the farmers should be given compensation from the Central government’s Disaster Relief Fund directly. Besides, all those farmers who had left their lands fallow and the agricultural labourers should be given Rs.2,000 per month up to January 2014.”

Flower show does ‘well’

Courtesy a 200-year-old well

Something, somewhere holds a surprise. For the office-bearers of the Kollam Agri Horticultural and Zoological Society, the organisers of the ongoing 10-day flower show at Asramam, it sprang from a colonial well.

The discarded well was spotted on the campus of the Government Guest House, the venue of the show, when water scarcity was posing a threat to the show.

When drinking water supply was becoming erratic, people would not have tolerated siphoning off water for the flower show which began on February 22, the organisers told *The Hindu*. Keeping the blossoms hydrated was no easy task, they said.

The well, over 200 years old, was never noticed in the past in spite of the show being held there many times. It was sunk by the British to water the Edward Rose garden and the lawns of guest house lawns, which was then the Residency. The building was where the British Resident stayed when in Kollam (then Quilon).

Reviving it was another problem as the structure, with 25 laterite rings in place, was filled to the brim with garbage and debris, they said.

Ghost tales propped up from nowhere and getting labour to clean the well became difficult, society treasurer M.A. Salam said.

Finally a team from Mangad agreed to clean the well, for which the society paid close to Rs.1 lakh.

A mini-lorry load of empty liquor bottles were removed. The water had to be pumped out till we hit clean white sand. The well is now a water spring, he said.

Flower show general convener V. Vishwanathan said the society intended to refurbish the well.

A wire mesh would be placed on top. The District Tourism Promotion Council would then be in charge, he said.

Farmers seek Tea Board office at Mananthavady

Tea growers of Wayanad have appealed to the Tea Board to open its office at Mananthavady so that they can make better use of the board's welfare schemes and technical support.

A group of tea growers submitted a joint memorandum to Ambalavanan, Executive Director of Tea Board (southern region), Kunoor, appealing to him to open an office at Mananthavady to bring the Board's farmer-friendly programmes closer to hundreds of tea farmers in north Wayanad. T. Shabir, a tea grower in Thalapuzha, and a spokesman for the tea farmers, told *The Hindu* on Tuesday

that since the largest concentration of small tea growers in Wayanad was in north Wayanad, Mananthavady would be an ideal location for a Tea Board office.

Tea growers in Mananthavady, Thalapuzha, Karimani, Perya, Valad, Puthiyidam, Venmani, Varayal, Vellamunda, Makiyad, Niravilpuzha Kunjom, Koorom, and Puthussery now had to travel a long distance to each the nearest Tea Board office. Farmers in south Wayanad do not face this problem as there was a Tea Board office in Guddalore.

[‘Focus on agriculture the China way’](#)

Thrust to agriculture sector

- **Impetus to agriculture sector with increased loans and technological assistance stressed**
- **Targeted total credit potential under the priority sector put at Rs. 1,09,025 crore**
- **Funds at a low cost of 7.25 per cent interest being made available for new programmes**
- **Credit estimates prepared by NABARD for A.P. were the highest in the country**



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Minnie Mathew

Chief Secretary Minnie Mathew on Tuesday said it was imperative for India to follow the China's example in giving the required impetus to the agriculture sector with increased loans and technological assistance - both pre and post harvest.

At a 'Consultative Credit Seminar for Growth' organised by the A.P. Regional Branch of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), she said given the pro-active nature of the State's machinery, the targeted total credit potential under the priority sector, at Rs. 1,09,025 crore could be achieved. This meant an increase of 27.89 per cent over the projections of Rs. 85,326 crore for the year 2012-13, she said.

Ms. Minnie Mathew said that against a projected Agricultural Credit Plan of Rs. 61,685 crore in the year 2011, they had achieved Rs. 72,000 crore.

She said it was important that farm output was increased as only agriculture would help reduce poverty, like it was proved in China. Lack of post-harvest infrastructure and an inefficient supply chain were challenges that needed to be surpassed, she said.

A.P.'s Secretary-Finance L. Premchandra Reddy made a presentation on the progress of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) that started in the year 1995-96. Funds at a low cost of 7.25 per cent interest were being made available for new programmes and to complete projects that were delayed.

In his presentation, Chief General Manager-NABARD, K.R. Nair said the credit estimates prepared by NABARD for A.P. were the highest in the country.

Credit potential

The total credit potential under the priority sector at Rs. 1,09,125 crore included crop loans to the tune of Rs. 59,818.95 crore (42.32 per cent growth over last year).

Ryots demand release of water to save crop



Farmers of Konjerla mandal staging a dharna in front of the Nagarujanasagar Canal office in Khammam on Tuesday demanding release of water. —PHOTO: G.N.RAO

Farmers owing allegiance to the Konijerla mandal unit of Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham staged a dharna in front of the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) Superintending Engineer's office here on Tuesday demanding release of water from the Palair reservoir to save their standing maize and chilli crops.

Ayacutdars under the second zone of the NSP left canal system gathered in front of the office and raised slogans seeking the intervention of the higher officials to safeguard their standing crops.

Addressing the dharna, the sangham leaders alleged that the ayacutdars under the NSP canals in Konijerla and its neighbouring mandals were facing the imminent threat of losing their standing crops due to non-release of water from the Palair reservoir. Stating that the elected representatives in the neighbouring Nalgonda district ensured water to the ayacutdars under the NSP first zone in their district, they alleged that the public representatives concerned in Khammam district remained silent over the plight of the NSP ayacutdars in Konijerla and several other mandals in the district. They demanded that the authorities should take initiative for release of water from the Palair reservoir at least for five days to the NSP ayacut areas in Konijerla, Enkur other mandals in the district.

They submitted a memorandum to this effect to the officials concerned.

[Scientists seek separate budget for agriculture](#)

Farm scientists and progressive farmers unequivocally demanded the presentation of a separate Central budget for agriculture, akin to the railways, to ensure nation's food security.

“Right to food for all can only be achieved when an exclusive and all-encompassing agricultural budget is presented in the Parliament,” opined K. Venkata Reddy, former Vice-Chancellor of Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapur.

He was speaking at the ‘National Science Day’ seminar on ‘Food Security’ organised jointly by Tirupati chapter of Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), Society for Hunger Elimination (SHE) and Sri Padmavathi Prarthana Mahila Mandali (SPPMM) here on Tuesday.

Prof. Reddy, an eminent economist, emphasised the need for farmers to go for organic farming and multiple crop system to make farming viable.

In his keynote address on ‘How secure is the food security?’, V. Rajagopal, SHE chairman and formerly Director of Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI- Kasargod), focused on steps to avoid food wastage and strengthen PDS.

Farmer suicides

The suicide by 2.70 lakh farmers in the last 17 years in India, besides being a personal tragedy to their families, also had a telling effect on the collective yield, at the rate of 2 tonnes of food produced by each of them, he explained.

Climate change

R. Ramamurthi, former Vice-Chancellor of Sri Venkateswara University and ISCA chairman, highlighted the impact of climate change on agricultural production and cautioned that food security could suffer a jolt unless an efficient mechanism to combat drought and floods was in place. SPPMM president R. Annapurna presided.

T. Giridhar Krishna, Associate Director of Research (RARS) spoke on “Farmers’ problems and solutions”, SPMVV professor T. Kalarani on ‘GM foods –current status’ and WORD secretary K. Gangadharam on ‘Role of natural farming’, among other topics.

First open Agricultural University to come up in Nagpur



A farmer works in a field close to a new development in Ahmedabad.photo:afp

Arvind Krushi Mukta Vidyapeeth, the first-ever open agricultural university, dedicated to practical education in the field of agriculture, will come up soon in Nagpur.

Farmer suicides, poor yields, low remunerations, crop damage due to untimely or inadequate rains, were some issues disturbing me for the last few years, said

former Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Ranjeet Deshmukh, who will be at the helm of this proposed varsity, named after his father.

“Together some experts in the field and we came up with this concept of an open agricultural university that would take the lead in educating and training farmers,” he said.

“We will start with study centres and training programmes first in Vidarbha and the state and gradually spread over to all over the country,” said Mukund Gaekwad, who has been appointed as the Chancellor of the new university. He is a visiting professor of agriculture in international universities and former head of horticulture department at Mahatma Phule Agriculture University, Rahuri.

Several experts like farm consultant and scientist Subhash Nalange, weather specialist B N Shinde, value addition expert Jyoti Surse, PDKV’s former Vice-Chancellor C D Mayee, Ramesh Fiske are in the managing committee of the university.

“We have applied for registration to the Distance education Society, New Delhi,” said Ashok Dhage, the new Vice-Chancellor.PTI

[Where farmers sell goats to protect trees](#)



sacrificeThe delta of Sunderbans is under threat of rising sea levels of some 3 mm per year.photo: AFP

Aware that the only weapon they have to fight climate change are mangrove swamps, villagers in Sundarbans are now gradually rediscovering their love for the trees with some even selling off cattle which damage the plantation.

“Our goats love the taste of mangrove leaves and so they damage the plants. We decided to sell them off as whenever we planted new saplings they used to eat it,” says 29-year-old housewife Sushmita Bera of a village in Gopalnagar.

“After the 2009 cyclonic storm Aila destroyed large parts of Sundarbans we have realised that only mangroves can act as sentinels along the coast to protect us from tidal surges,” she says.

The decision to sell goats was a hard one as they are an integral part of the whole farming system with multiple uses like meat, milk, manure and skin.

But the panchayat got into action to save trees and announced fines for owners of cattle found damaging any plant.

Mangroves protect coasts from erosion by stabilising the shorelines with their specialised root system which grow upwards of soil.PTI

To market, to market



FRESH PRODUCE From vegetables to plantain leaves, get them all PHOTOS:
APARNA KARTHIKEYAN





Amidst loud announcements at the railway station, passengers haggling with auto drivers, piping hot tea at stalls, crates of juicy red tomatoes and bundles of emerald green curry leaves, the Mambalam market street slowly wakes up.

APARNA KARTHIKEYAN records the sights and sounds

“Auto?” a driver hails a couple, outside Mambalam Railway Station. “T. Nagar bus stand; how much?” they ask. “Rs. 50,” the driver says firmly, and muttering “But it’s so close-by,” the couple walk away down the deserted Ranganathan Street. Passengers spill out of the station; some head to the tea stall next to the Vilayaatu Vinayagar temple; I follow others down the market road.

It's nearly 6 a.m., but many of the stalls are still shuttered. "Do you own this shop?" I ask Masthan, the neatly dressed young man, sitting outside a small shop. "No, no, I clean those toilets from 4 a.m. to 2 p.m.," he says, pointing across the road. "The bathrooms are clean," he assures me, walking over to collect money from a man who's just used them.

Tea, ready!

"Yove, paal pongudhu! (Hey, the milk is boiling!)," a shout goes up from the street, and tea master Subramanian's assistant hurries to the counter. "He's the chief master; his *barottas*, *veg kurma*, *idlis* and *dosas* are very good. But his *sambhar* is the best," a fish-cart puller tells me, as I try to draw Subramanian into a conversation. He smiles at the compliment, but is clearly a man of few words. Vairavan the plantain leaves seller next door is more forthcoming. Cutting the leaves to size and discarding torn portions, he tells me business has been dull. "I don't have general knowledge, but I think price hike is the reason," he says. The leaves come from all over Tamil Nadu and are bought by hoteliers; *nuni ilai* (a type of plantain leaf) is preferred, Vairavan tells me, and fetch Rs. 3 a piece.

Two stalls away, mini-lorry driver Muthuraman unloads dozens of crates of tomato, with little fuss. "Tomatoes come from Kolar, Karnataka. They reach Mambalam early morning by lorry, and are delivered near the police station. We pick it from there, and drop it off in the stalls," he says.

S. Muthukumar, the owner of the tomato shop arrives. Tuning the radio for devotional music, he deftly sorts the squishy tomatoes from the firm ones.

“Bangalore tomatoes now sell for Rs. 10a kilo and the country ones for Rs. 5. But that’s the morning price, by evening, to get rid of stocks, I sell them for nearly half that!’ he says, spreading a blue tarpaulin on a wooden table. Big and small tomatoes quickly colour it red, as they land with soft thumps when Muthukumar empties a crate over it. I’m enveloped, briefly, by the rich smell of ripe tomatoes.

Walking down the road, I spot a shop with the rolling shutter propped up by a low stool; inside, limbs swaddled in blankets suggests the premises doubles up as a residence. A man carrying an enormous bundle of curry leaves swiftly distracts me; I follow him to the alley where P.R. Meiyappan’s curry leaf business and teashop flourishes.

The entire right side of the alley is emerald, stacked with fat, fragrant bundles of curry leaves. Meiyappan cuts the jute ropes, and weighs heaps of leafy stems on a large weighing scale. “This comes from Salem, top quality,” he assures me knotting 20 kg into a whopping roll and hoisting it on a turbaned helper’s head. “Madras full-a *namba* supply (I supply across the city); the other day, a woman from Delhi bought a big lot; she wanted to powder it for reducing sugar,” he says. Does it help tackle diabetes, I ask. “I don’t know,” he laughs, and goes away to make tea / coffee for his customers.

A few shops down the road, nearly a tonne of pumpkins occupies every inch of a house converted into a shop. Smooth, greenish white pumpkins are piled high in the rooms and passages; the backyard is given over to dark green and orange *parangikkaais* (pumpkins); and they both keep for long, the salesman tells me, as long as they aren’t bruised.

“I only sell *naatu karigaai* (country vegetables), no English vegetables,” Devaraj tells me, sitting behind sacks of brinjal, snake gourd and bitter gourd. “This market has fresh produce, often straight from the fields. *Keerai* (greens) is plucked and bought here, at 2 p.m. every day. Office-goers who get off at Mambalam station buy from us; but our peak hours are noon to 3 p.m.; you won’t be able to walk here then!” Devraj’s only daughter is in Class XI. “She wants to be an engineer; let’s see what the Plus Two marks are like,” he says.

A female voice announces that Kanyakumari Express will shortly arrive on platform no. 5. The market gets busier; mini lorries and fish carts churn up dust; kittens nestle next to their mothers, in sackings meant for vegetables. Outside the station, a young girl hails an auto to take her to T. Nagar bus stand. “Rs. 40,” the driver tells her. “Thirty?” she asks hesitantly, but the driver turns his face.

A few shops down the road, nearly a tonne of pumpkins are piled high in the rooms and passages; the backyard is given over to dark green and orange parangikkaais(pumpkins); and they both keep for long, the salesman tells me, as long as they aren’t bruised

Food security

The articles “Deciding who gets to eat” (Feb. 26) by Brinda Karat and “From Bengal Famine to Right to Food” (Feb. 13) by M.S. Swaminathan argue that the diversion of farmlands for other purposes is one of the potential causes of food insecurity. A farmland owner cannot be faulted for aspiring for the maximum value from his land. He cannot engage in farming for environmental reasons or national issues. A farmer will keep his land agricultural as long as it is

economically viable for him. For that, the productivity per unit should increased manifold.

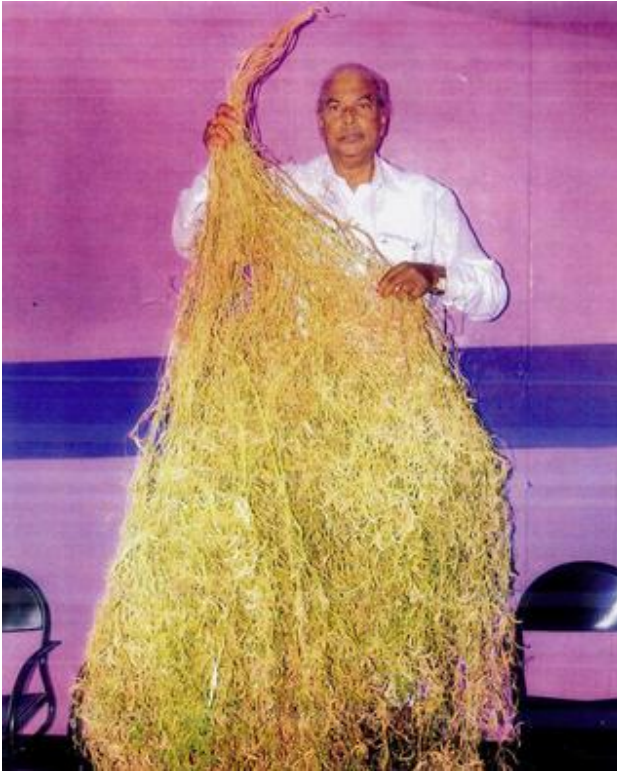
Lessons can be learnt from the green revolution of the 1970s. It came out of introducing naturally modified grains with high yield potential. Today's scientific stage allows leapfrogging nature's slow process of evolution and producing grains in the laboratory. Genetically modified food will let farmers keep their farmlands intact. Developed countries like the U.S. and China have embraced this technology.

V. Rajan,

Thiruvananthapuram

The UPA government alone is not responsible for price hikes. All politicians are equally to blame. Parliament sessions are hardly productive. Most of the bills are passed in a hurry. There is a long list of pending bills, including the Food Security Bill. It is the duty of our MPs to pass the important bills after debate and discussion without delay.

Mr. Greenfingers offers Rs.10 lakh as prize



Goriparthi Narasimha Raju Yadav with a horsegram creeper with more than 10,000 branches.– Photo: Special Arrangement

He is known to all as Mr. Greenfingers. Any crop or vegetable he cultivates grows in abundance.

A farmer by birth Goriparthi Narasimha Raju Yadav has been creating wonders in his native village of Guduru in Krishna district.

When he cultivates paddy he gets record yields. When he grows fruits or vegetables they grow to a massive size.

The Government of India has recognised his special skills and talents and conferred upon him the Padmasri Award. Other awards are dime a dozen for him.

The top half of his letter head is filled with some of the other awards given to him and also the number of important committees he was a member of. But Mr Yadav is in the news again for the record-breaking horsegram creeper with more than 10,000 branches.

To show the amazing size of the plant, Mr Yadav, who is himself a six-footer is seen holding it up in a picture taken as proof. He has offered a prize of Rs 10 lakh to anyone with such a horsegram plant. He claims that he did not grow the plant with fertiliser of any kind or spray it with pesticide.

The plant was not even watered since its germination, he asserted.

Government agencies set to reap bonanza from cotton purchases



Cotton in heaps at a ginning mill in Adilabad. —PHOTO: BY ARRANGEMENT

Even as cotton farmers are crying hoarse over losses suffered due to non-remunerative prices and damage to the crop because of untimely rains in the State, government agencies like the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED)

are all set to laugh their way to the banks, thanks to the current upward trend in cotton prices in the open market.

Prices

According to market observers in the district, the rate of a cotton bale candy has gone up by about Rs. 1,500 per unit during the last week and is expected to go up further. A candy is now priced at approximately Rs. 36,500 owing to the growing demand in spinning mills across the country.

The price of cotton has seen a jump of about Rs. 200 per quintal in the open market in Adilabad against the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs. 3,900 per quintal. Elsewhere, like in Maharashtra, the price is Rs. 4,300 per quintal owing to better quality of the produce that arrives in those markets.

Distress sale

While cotton farmers in Adilabad have resorted to distress sale of their produce, often below the MSP, leaving no stocks with them now, only the CCI and the NAFED have sufficient stocks when the demand for cotton bales has risen according to market observers.

The CCI has turned out to be the biggest purchaser of cotton in Adilabad and elsewhere in its MSP operations. Of the 56 lakh quintals that has been traded in the markets in this district, the CCI has purchased as much as 26 lakh quintals while the NAFED has bought about six lakh quintals.

The government agencies continue to purchase the produce though arrivals have almost dried up.

In the present scenario, the CCI will have a stock of over 5 lakh bales while the NAFED is good with over one lakh bales.

Aqua farmers' meet

An aqua farmers meet was held at the Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE) here on Tuesday. Over 60 aqua farmers from different parts of the region were turned up for the programme that was conducted in association with the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA). Officer in-charge of the CIFE S.S.H. Razvi and project director of the ATMA Sitarama Raju spoke.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Grain mountain grows despite push for exports



In March, farmers in India will begin to harvest the sixth consecutive wheat crop expected to exceed demand, and when threshing is over in June the government's combined wheat and rice stocks are set to hit 100 million tonnes.

SINGAPORE/NEW DELHI: India will be unable to consume or export enough wheat and rice to rein in a record stockpile after another bumper harvest, a failure that means crops risk rotting in fields instead of being sold on world markets to cash in on higher prices.

In March, farmers in India will begin to harvest the sixth consecutive wheat crop expected to exceed demand, and when threshing is over in June the government's combined wheat and rice stocks are set to hit 100 million tonnes. That is about a fifth higher than the volume in storage a year ago.

The grain mountain is worth about \$30 billion and the nation of 1.2 billion will soon have enough wheat piled up to feed its poor for a year. But in a stark example of country's corruption-plagued and inefficient food distribution and storage system, much will simply end up rotting in a country with 500 million poor, and despite a need for income from exports to reduce a record current account deficit.

The food ministry is pressing the government to increase exports, but country's creaking transport system means that a large portion of grains will simply not be able to get to ports even with global prices jumping a fifth last year.

The country's grain export facilities are working flat out, but the government will struggle to ship more than 6 million tonnes of wheat in 2013 from its stocks, while sales by private exporters will be capped at around 2 million tonnes.

If exports reach 8 million tonnes in 2013, it would make India one of the world's top 10 exporters. The volume would amount to about a quarter of the 30 million tonnes shipped by top exporter the United States.

Wheat also has to compete with booming rice exports for limited capacity on the railroads and in the ports. Like wheat, the rice crop has been abundant and the nation emerged as the world's biggest rice exporter in 2012.

"Despite our best efforts, we (India) cannot export to an extent where stocks come down to somewhat manageable levels," said Tejinder Narang, adviser at New Delhi-based trading company Emmsons International.

"The government will have to struggle with mammoth stocks. There's no way out."

That means India is unable to capitalise fully on the opportunity to export to international markets, where there is room for more Indian supply to compensate for poor harvests from major producers.

Benchmark Chicago wheat prices jumped 19.2 per cent last year as adverse weather conditions reduced harvests from Australia and Russia, the world's second and third largest exporters. Wheat was the best-performing commodity on the Thomson Reuters-Jefferies CRB index in 2012.

Storage space of 47 million tonnes can accommodate less than half of the

expected stockpiles, and [the rest](#) will sit under tarpaulins in the open.

Wheat consumption and exports from government warehouses will likely account for around 82 million tonnes of India's 92.3 million tonnes of output in 2013. Additional 2 million tonnes of exports by private traders will leave a surplus of around 8 million tonnes.

India produced a record 105.31 million tonnes of rice last year, while domestic consumption stood at around 90 million tonnes.

The government has so far given permission for 4.5 million tonnes of wheat exports from state storage in 2012/2013. It will likely raise that to 6 million tonnes but beyond that the permits may be no more than a paper solution as there is no real capacity to ship more out unless the bureaucrats push for wheat to have priority over rice exports.

A food ministry official, who declined to be identified, said his ministry was pressing the cabinet to allow India to export as much as possible while prices are firm.

Govt to promote organic farming in all dists

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh on Monday said organic farming has started showing results by improving productivity besides improving the quality of vegetables. The income of farmers engaged in organic farming has also increased substantially.

The state government has already decided to promote organic farming in at least one village in all the districts.

Replying to a question of Neeraj Kumar (JD-U), Singh said the farmers were getting 10-15% (per kg) more money by selling organic vegetables. Citing example, the minister said 2,500 hectares of land in 30 villages [spread](#) over eight blocks of Nalanda district are presently covered under organic farming of vegetables.

Nalanda district has already found a place on the global map through the global positioning system (GPS) for sowing potato over an area of 160 acres by using natural fertilizers only. Talking about Sohdi village in Nalanda, the minister said with the organic farming, a large number of birds and ducks are now common sight in this village. Earlier, the residents hardly found such birds near the village. A farmer from Sohdi has set a new world record in potato production through organic farming. The farmer, Rakesh Kumar, harvested 108.8 tonnes of potato per hectare and set a new world record in potato production, the minister said.

Last year, a farmer of Darveshpura village in Nalanda had set a world record in potato production through organic farming. Rakesh has created a new world record in potato production through organic farming.

The minister, while replying to another question, said the government has given up to 80% subsidy for purchasing mechanized agriculture equipment. The state

government provides huge subsidy to farmers to increase their productivity, the minister told Kumari Jyoti (Congress).

HindustanTimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Feb 27

Max Min

32° | 22°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 65

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:26

Sunset: 06:17

Barometer: 1015

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Feb 28

Max Min

32° | 19°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Mar 1	Saturday Mar 2	Sunday Mar 3	Monday Mar 4	Tuesday Mar 5
32° 20° Cloudy	32° 20° Sunny	32° 21° Partly Cloudy	31° 22° Overcast	32° 21° Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Humidity: 65

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:26

Sunset: 06:17

Barometer: 1015



THE HINDU Business Line

'Cases of irregularities in farm debt waiver being examined'

Amid CAG pointing to errors in implementation of the farm debt waiver scheme, the government today said RBI and NABARD are examining the case and action will be taken against banks found involved in irregularities and the ineligible beneficiaries.

Replying to supplementaries in Rajya Sabha, Finance Minister P Chidambaram said the CAG report on the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008, has been submitted and a day would be fixed for its tabling.

The government auditor in its report has pointed out errors of inclusion and errors of exclusion, he said.

It is “unfortunate” that some deserving farmers did not get the benefit of the scheme and some “ineligible farmers got benefit of loan waiver”, he said.

The government, Chidambaram said, is more concerned about inclusion of ineligible beneficiaries.

He said action will be taken against banks found involved in irregularities besides the ineligible recipients of the scheme after completion of the inquiries.

NABARD and RBI, in January, issued directions to lending institutions to examine cases of any irregularities and to take corrective steps including recovery of such amounts from ineligible beneficiaries.

Directions had also been issued for recovery of any excess payment and fixing responsibility of the bank staff in appropriate cases.

The Minister said he was also open to suggestion of a separate probe if the ongoing ones do not yield desired results.

He said the debt waiver was to the tune of about Rs 55,000 crore.

The Minister said the amount of money given to ineligible beneficiaries would be known after completion of the inquiries.

The guidelines issued by the government for the scheme, included procedures for preparation of beneficiaries lists; setting up of grievance redressal mechanism; and statutory, concurrent or special audit of the claims as may be prescribed by RBI and NABARD.

Spot rubber skids on weak global cues

Physical rubber prices declined on Tuesday. The market opened weak but regained the initial losses partially in tune with the late gains on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

Sheet rubber dropped to Rs 156.50 (157) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to traders and the Rubber board. The trend was mixed.

In futures, the March series improved marginally to Rs 157.89 (157.10), April to Rs 162.45 (161.28) May to Rs 166 (164.52) and June to Rs 168.80 (167.29) a kg on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) surrendered to Rs 162.94 (166.77) a kg at Bangkok. The March futures declined to ₹272.5 (Rs 160.44) from ₹281.3 a kg during the day session and then to ₹271.8 (Rs 160.02) a kg in the night session on Tokyo Commodity Exchange (Tocom).

Spot rubber rates (Rs/kg) were: RSS-4: 156.50 (157); RSS-5: 151.50 (152); Ungraded: 146.50 (147); ISNR 20: 152 (152) and Latex 60 per cent: 99 (99).

Mills' body wants Cotton Corp to fix price for MCU-5

The Southern India Mills Association (SIMA) has urged the Textiles Ministry to ask the Cotton Corporation of India to announce a selling price for the cotton the latter procured from Andhra Pradesh.

The association, the apex body for spinning mills in the country, said that the corporation should in particular announce the price for the long staple variety MCU-5 to help the spinners.

The Cotton Corporation has procured over 20 lakh bales of the natural fibre, including MCU-5, as part of the Government's market intervention operations.

Only a limited quantity of long staple cotton is available in the country and the Government should ensure that such varieties are available for domestic mills.

The availability will help the woven garment and made-up sectors to meet their export commitments. Expressing concern over the surge in prices, the association sought the intervention of the Government to arrest the price hike. Association Chairman S. Dinakaran said that domestic prices were rising at a time when global prices ruled stable.

Referring to the Cotlook A Index price behaviour, he said that the price per pound has been varying between 85 and 89 cents during the last one month whereas Sankar-6 cotton price which ruled around Rs 34,000 a candy (of 356 kg) in the beginning of the month is now ruling at Rs 36,500.

HOARDING

Alleging traders of hoarding cotton, Dinakaran said: “The Cotton Corporation has been delaying the announcement of the prices for varieties, such as MCU-5 and holding back its trade in the domestic market. The spiralling raw material cost has already made some textile mills look at imports. This will affect the farmer.

Further, the abrupt increase in cotton prices has sent wrong signals in the international market and the pace of demand for Indian cotton yarn and fabrics have started to slow of late.”

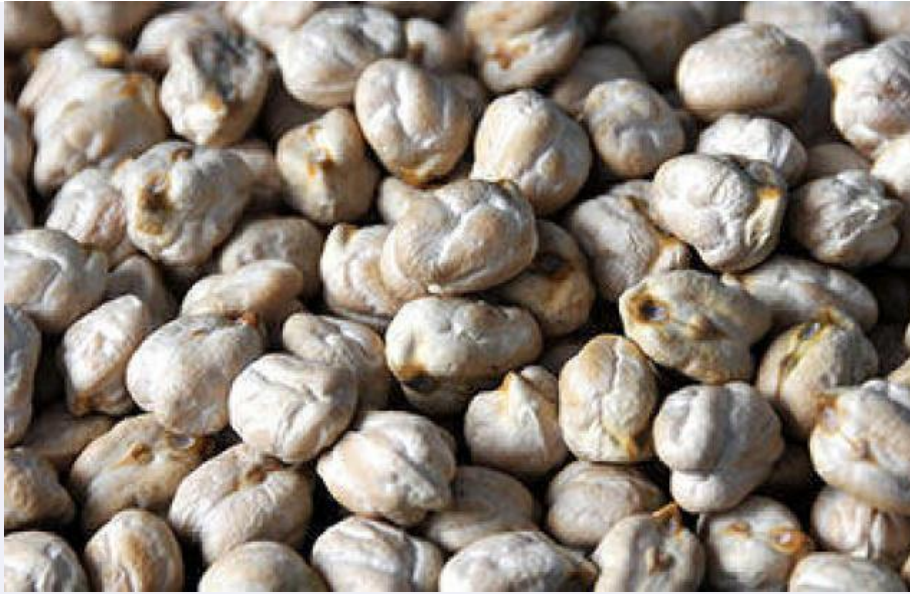
Industry sources charged that hoarding of cotton by some traders has led to the present situation.

Spinning mills in Tamil Nadu are already suffering due to acute power shortage.

Though there was some improvement in performance in the recent months due to stability in cotton price, there could be a reversal in the trend after around 55 lakhs bales of cotton have already been registered for exports.

Of this, 33 lakh bales have already been shipped out.

[Chana seen bearish on rising arrivals](#)



Slack demand and weak futures pulled down chana prices in local mandis by Rs 100 to Rs 3,300-3,350 a quintal, while new chana with high moisture content was quoted at Rs 3,100-3,200.

Similarly chana (desi) ruled at Rs 3,150, chana (mausmi) at Rs 3,500-4,000, chana (Vishal) at Rs 3,100-3,200, chana (Russian) Rs 3,500, while Kabuli Bitki ruled at Rs 3,200-3,300.

Besides weak futures and slack demand, rise in arrival of new chana on account of improvement in weather condition, also pounded its prices. Bearish sentiment in chana will likely to continue in near future as arrival expected to rise further in the coming days. Besides bumper yield this year, arrival of imported chana from Australia and Tanzania and large carry-over stocks will also add to the bearish sentiment.

Chana output in Madhya Pradesh this year is expected to be around 16 lakh tonnes against 82-83 lakh tonnes. Arrival of chana in local mandis on Tuesday was reported to be around 3,000-3,500 bags.

Decline in spot prices dragged its dal by Rs 25 with chana dal (average) declined to Rs 4,075-4,100 (Rs 4,100-4,125), chana dal (medium) to Rs 4,175-4,200, while chana dal (bold) fell to Rs 4,300- 4,325 (Rs 4,325-50).

Dollar chana also ruled steady at Rs 4,000-4,500 amid subdued demand. In container also, dollar chana declined by Rs 300 in the past one week on slack export demand with dollar chana (42/44 count) quoted at Rs 5,450-75; 44/46 count at Rs 5,325-50, while 58/60 count ruled at Rs 3,950.

Drought drains Maharashtra's seed industry

The severe drought in Jalna district of central Maharashtra has impacted operations of the local seed industry, one of the largest in the country, besides affecting farming.

AVAILABILITY HIT

Satyanarayan Rathi, President of Maha Seedsmen Association, told *Business Line* that the process of seed multiplication by farmers, who produce these seeds for certain seed companies, has dropped by about 50 per cent due to shortage of water.

Such a disruption in the production cycle will impact seed availability in the short term, he said.

The Association has more than 330 seed companies as members.

Rathi said that in and around Jalna city, usually there are about 12,000 seed producing farms, typically of 10 *gunthas* (quarter of an acre).

These are used by farmers for seed production, which are then sent to the companies for further sales and distribution.

This year, due to the water crisis, only 6,000 such small farms have been able to function. The rest (50 per cent) have shut down due to lack of water.

FARMERS' INCOME

Every year, farmers are paid about Rs 100 crore by seed companies for their produce, but this year, Rathi says farmers will only make about Rs 50 crore. In the short term, seed availability, especially that of vegetable crops in Maharashtra, are bound to get affected. Rathi said that most of these companies would have to source their seeds from other States such as, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Usha Barwale Zehr, Chief Technology Officer, Mahyco, confirmed that the day-to-day operations of the company had been impacted by the drought. "This is an unusual year and the company had to purchase water since November 2012 to run its research and development facility," she said, replying to queries.

She pointed out that though seed availability would definitely be affected in the local area, the impact would not be very significant, since seed production takes place all over the country.

Coonoor tea turnover hits year-low

The turnover at the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association this week has been the lowest so far this year, reveals an analysis of the market reports.

This has happened because of lower sale volume and reduced price realisation.

The volume of 12.51 lakh kg offered itself was the lowest so far this calendar of which, 10.84 lakh kg were sold against 11.74 lakh kg in the previous week. This was the lowest volume sold so far this calendar.

The price averaged Rs 97.90 a kg against Rs 98.39 in the previous week. This was the lowest price average fetched so far this calendar except for Rs 97.53 recorded on January 18.

Consequently, the turnover dropped to Rs 10.61 crore from Rs 11.55 crore. This fall of Rs 94 lakh marked a decline of 8.14 per cent in just one week.

This was the lowest weekly turnover earned so far this calendar.

Reduced demand contained the price-rise despite a low volume on offer.

Following prolonged snowfall freezing waterways and obstructing tea movement in Europe and the US, export demand was confined to plainer grades. Pakistan refrained from buying for the second consecutive week due to border tension. In the absence of competition from exporters, internal buyers were less active.

The major support to the market came from upcountry buyers who preferred brighter liquoring teas. They could buy CTC teas at an average price of Rs 98 a kg here against Rs 136 in Kolkata and orthodox teas at Rs 100 against Rs 151 there. Besides, the volume is inadequate in North India with some auctions at Kolkata listed for cancellation in March.

Sugar mills owe Rs 9,340 cr to farmers

Sugar mills owed Rs 9,340 crore to sugarcane farmers till January 15 for the current marketing year that started in October, Parliament was informed today.

That apart, Rs 488.88 crore were outstanding to farmers pertaining to previous years.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, the Food Minister K V Thomas said that arrears for the current marketing year relate to the supply of sugarcane.

“The reason for cane price dues of the previous years includes matters being sub-judice before the courts, mills taken under Securitisation Act by lender Banks, etc,” he said.

According to the data for 2012-13 (October-September), Uttar Pradesh millers owe maximum to farmers at Rs 5,456.35 crore, followed by Karnataka (Rs 1,655 crore), Andhra Pradesh (Rs 426 crore), Tamil Nadu (Rs 390 crore), Gujarat (Rs 362 crore), Maharashtra (Rs 308 crore), Bihar (Rs 275 crore) and Uttaranchal (Rs 271 crore).

Payments worth Rs 199.23 crore were still pending for the 2011-12 marketing year and Rs 289.65 crore for 2010-11 and earlier, taking the total cane price arrears to Rs 9,828 crore.

[Higher output mashes potato prices in Bengal](#)



Higher production has brought down potato prices in West Bengal by nearly Rs 100 a quintal over the last one month.

Wholesale price of the tuber (Pokhraj variety) is ruling around Rs 430-460 a quintal this week, down from Rs 500-550 in January-end.

According to Patit Paban De, member, West Bengal Cold Storage Association, loading of potatoes into cold storages will begin in early March and this is likely to keep prices steady around current levels.

The State is likely to produce 12 per cent higher crop at 95 lakh tonnes (lt) this year against 85 lt last year.

“The production is at a par with our expectations. Going by the current trend, we expect the production to be close to 95 lakh tonnes this year,” De told *Business Line*.

The most common Jyoti variety is yet to make its appearance in the market.

The price of the tuber, however, is lower compared with Rs 600-650 a quintal recorded in February-end and early March last year. Prices were higher primarily on the back of lower production last year, he said.

LATE BLIGHT DISEASE

The State, which recorded 4-5 per cent higher sowing this year, had expected to produce about one crore tonnes of potatoes. However, the production could be lower as some areas have been affected by late blight disease.

“The late blight disease can bring down potato production by about 4-5 per cent to 95 lt. However, it is still higher than last year,” he said.

DELAYED LOADING

Loading of potatoes in cold storages, which usually begins by February 20, has been delayed this year as most storage units have been demanding for an increase in rentals.

This apart, the crop has also been slightly delayed on account of delayed rainfall.

The Cold Storage Association has called for a State-level general meeting on February 28 to discuss the rental issue and decide on a future course of action, he said.

Cold storages in the State have been complaining about the lack of hike in rentals over the past two years. This is even while operational costs for storage units have gone up by 40-50 per cent.

Business Standard
When you're sure

Castor oil exports may dip 6% on low China demand

India's castor oil exports are expected to fall six per cent due to reduced demand from Chinese sebacic acid manufacturers

India's castor oil exports are expected to fall six per cent due to reduced demand from Chinese sebacic acid manufacturers.

As against total castor oil export of 424,000 tonnes in 2012, industry insiders expect India's castor oil exports to be 400,000 tonnes this year. Of the total castor oil exports in 2012, 180,000 tonnes or 45 per cent was exported to China alone. China, the biggest consumer for India's castor oil, uses most of the oil for manufacturing of sebacic acid, a castor oil derivative and exports most of the production to Europe and the US.

"The economic situation in Europe and US has weakened and there are grim prospects of an increase in consumption of sebacic acid. If demand remains subdued in these nations, castor oil export to China will be less," said Shwetal Vakil, chairman, SEA Castor Seed and Castor oil committee.

Sebacic acid is mainly used in the production of nylon, plastics additives, adhesives or resins and candles. According to industry sources, Chinese sebacic acid producers have incurred huge losses due to sustained fall in sebacic acid export price from \$5,200 a tonne in May 2011 to \$3,800 a tonne in November 2012.

The fall in prices is due to a sharp decline in demand for sebacic acid from the US and European countries. Also, China's castor oil consumption has been on a decline since 2010, from 219,000 tonnes to 210,000 tonnes in 2012. While

sebacic acid exports from China have fallen from 47,317 tonnes in 2010 to 39,689 tonnes in 2012.

"It is believed that India's castor oil export to China may fall 5-10 per cent to 160,000-165,000 tonnes this year," said F R Khodaiji, director, Pratima Exports Pvt Ltd. International castor oil prices are likely to remain weak due to sluggish demand scenario.

According to traders, international castor oil prices have fallen from \$2,800 a tonne last year to around \$1,350-1,400 a tonne recently.

"While castor crop is likely to shrink this year, we do not see much impact on castor oil prices as the international demand is likely to remain weak," added Vakil.

Meanwhile, analysts are still hopeful about castor oil exports from India to match last year's levels. "China's castor oil demand is still not clear. But looking at the previous trend, we are hopeful that in February-June period Chinese imports will rise, while from October onwards they may start falling," said Prerna Sharma, research analyst, Emkay Comtrade Ltd.

According to the market sources, in 2012 China's sebacic acid production and sales both took a beating, while in the first half of 2013 same trend is expected to continue.

Cotton prices jump 7% in Feb, as buyers eye price rise

Cotton prices have witnessed a rise of around seven per cent so far this month, thanks to increased stockpiling by foreign traders in anticipation of better price

expectations. This has also triggered demand from domestic millers, who are expecting healthy yarn exports this year.

According to market sources, with arrivals starting to decline, prices are likely to firm up to Rs 38,000 a candy (356 kg). Prices are up from Rs 34,000-34,100 a candy on February 1 to Rs 36,500-36,800. Daily arrivals have fallen from 55,000 bales (170 kg) to 40,000-42,000 bales in Gujarat markets. Nationally, the arrivals have fallen from 215,000 bales to 175,000 bales a day.

"Cotton prices have firmed up over two-three weeks as foreign traders have increased their buying from here. Moreover, decline in arrivals and increased demand from millers are supporting the price rise," said Arvind Patel, director of Jaydeep Cotton Fibres.

Multinational trading companies active in India are said to be buying cotton in order to export it. Switzerland-based Glencore Grains, Netherland's Louis Dreyfus Commodities and Singapore-based Olam International are active in exporting cotton from India, as prices in the international markets have started improving. Sources say global companies have so far purchased about a million bales from India.

Since production is estimated to fall this year due to the weak monsoon, a supply shortage is feared at the end of the season. As a result, demand from international and domestic traders has been on the rise. The Cotton Advisory Board estimates 33 million bales of crop in 2012-13 compared to 35.5 million bales the previous year.