

A portal in which the A to Z of farming is just a click away



Breaking the communication barrier and knowledge gap is a must today

The science of communication is getting more advanced everyday.

From desktop computers/laptops and ipads to smartphones, information is just a click away.

“What our farmers need today for successful farming is the right information that can be made available to them easily. Breaking the communication barrier and knowledge gap that exists today becomes imperative.

Three centres

“From our side we have initiated the e-Extension Centre putting to optimum use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and created a website called Agritech portal”

(www.agritech.tnau.ac.in) which gives an exhaustive A-Z list of of agriculture,” says Dr. S. Haripriya, Assistant Professor (Horticulture), TNAU, Vridachalam.

“Our Vriddhachalam Kendra has devised a three-day training programme to farmers of Cuddalore district with minimum educational qualification of 10th standard to make them aware about how to use a computer and browse the Internet for gathering information related to their fields,” she says.

Interested farmers in the region are asked to pre-register for this training at this Kendra. Based on the responses from them we plan to select about 10 farmers per batch usually on first-come-first-served basis.

Five desktop computers with internet connection are being used to impart the training.

During the training, basic theoretical information and hands-on training regarding what is a computer, how to operate it, browsing the Internet to get agriculture related information etc are scheduled to be imparted.

In the last two years about 200 farmers have been trained in similar programmes.

Statistics

“We kept a record on the farmers who underwent the training and were able to find that an average of five farmers accessed agricultural information using the net in a week using the computer hub in this Kendra. Around one percent of them started using computers in their households,” she says.

Recently, the farmers started gathering new information from the portal approached the specialist of this Kendra for further action oriented queries. On knowing about the prevailing weather conditions in the State from the weather network page they started to pre-plan the cultural operations, harvesting and drying of the harvested produce. Some proactive farmers have also used the portal to choose major markets in South based on the produce price data available on the dynamic market information page.

When the State is facing a power crisis for nearly 10 to 12 hours daily how can farmers be expected to use computers?

No excuse

“Presently the power cut is for 12 hours in all districts. But there is some supply for the remaining hours. And many farmers use the supply time to charge their mobiles. Wi-fi and data card for net browsing are becoming a common facility on mobiles these days. If one person in the family (college going student) has a good handset then the farmer can easily get information from it.

“Take the case of Kissan mobile services. Several farmers use the facility as and when required. And today almost all high school students have laptops provided by the government. Such computers have battery back up for nearly 4-5 hours so this is not really a problem for interested farmers. All one needs is the attitude,” she says categorically.

Both English and Tamil

The web portal has both Tamil and English versions, the regional version prepared by specialists from this Kendra. Both the manuals are designed in an illustrative format to facilitate quick and easy viewing.

More emphasis has been given on teaching methodology, particularly communicating the contents in a simple and understandable way to the farmers.

In this emerging era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), there is a necessity to bridge the digital divide currently prevailing among the farmers, according to her.

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‘Pesticide use in Indian agriculture is less than world average’

“India’s use of pesticides is 76 per cent as against the world average of 44 per cent. However, the use in agriculture is less than 350 gm a hectare as against the world average of 500 gm a hectare,” P. Subbian, Registrar, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said here on Monday.

Speaking at the inauguration of a five-day international workshop on “Production of Bio-control Agents (Trichoderma and Pseudomonas)”, he said that 51 per cent of India’s food commodities were contaminated with pesticide residues, out of which 20 per cent has pesticide residues above the permissible level. Scientists and researchers involved in the Integrated Pest

Management Collaborative Research Support Programme from various countries participated in the workshop.

“To ensure food security without affecting the environment and avoiding human health problems, it is important to develop alternative methods of pest management, which include the use of bio-pesticides. Bio-pesticides accounted for only 0.2 per cent in the total pesticide market during 2000, but in 2005 it accounted for 2.5 per cent and the share is expected to be 5 per cent in 2013 with a market value of about one billion U.S. dollars,” he said.

The overall estimated growth rate of bio-pesticides would be 10 per cent per annum in the next five years. In addition, area under organic crops was growing, with an increase in awareness about organic food.

Highlighting the activities of TNAU in bio-control research, which was initiated in 1977, he said a bio-control unit was established in 1989. Several research projects on identifying bio-control agents were under progress.

E.I. Jonathan, Director, CPPS, explained the scope of bio-pesticides in managing crop diseases, especially in vegetable crops.

World Bank team reviews NAIP project on flowers

A team from the XII Implementation Support Mission of the World Bank visited Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) to review the project “Value Chain on Flowers for Domestic and Export Markets” going on at the university.

The project, funded by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research – National Agricultural Innovative Project, was implemented in 2008 in the public-private partnership mode involving key private partners in the State. The crops in focus were jasmine, marigold and carnation, which occupy a major area in Tamil Nadu and dry flower products, which are a major component of India’s floricultural exports.

The major objective of the project is to develop precision production, post-harvest and value-addition technologies for the focus crops, imparting training to growers, entrepreneurs, self help

groups and unemployed youth, and creation of floriculture database and market linkage with growers and exporters.

The team members interacted with beneficiaries of the project in Sathyamangalam, Udhamandalam, Tiruchi, etc., to ascertain the benefits.

They also visited Vanguard Exports, Coimbatore, the consortium partner, which exports loose flowers and also valued-added products by adopting the packaging technology developed by the Department of Floriculture and Landscaping of TNAU.

Tribal people reap profits from organic coffee



Coffee was introduced to the Paderu Agency area some five decades ago. However, it has become a sustainable economic activity only since a few years after the tribal farmers have taken up organic cultivation of coffee.

Earlier, the ignorant tribals would collect coffee berries and sell them to traders who in turn would sell it for handsome profits. Later, the government turned its focus on the crop and took the initiative to encourage tribals to turn coffee cultivators. The government provided poor tribal farmers with one acre size holdings of semi-waste land that was converted to cultivate coffee.

Even in this situation, the tribals did not gain much. They were led into a debt trap by the traders who would advance amounts to the tribal farmers before the crop season started with the understanding that the crop would be sold to them. Not only would the traders decide on the price of the crop but also pay at their convenience.

The situation changed only after the tribal farmers formed the Small and Marginal Tribal Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative Society (SAMTFMACS) with the active support of Naandi Foundation and AASSAV a voluntary organisation set up and run by tribals, Chief Sustainability Officer of Naandi Foundation David Hogg recalled. The tribal collective decided to launch organic coffee cultivation.

Today, the situation is totally different, the entire system is well organised with members of the community controlling the entire process. The tribal collective runs a nursery which provides the coffee seedlings to farmers, it helps in cultivation with timely advice, supplies neem cake and other organic fertilisers. Employees of the collective weigh and collect the berries from the doorstep of the tribal farmer. This is then sent to its own coffee pulper for processing, SAMTFMACS president Garam Kumbo said. Today the packed coffee powder is sold in big cities and abroad. It is available in Paris too, Mr Hogg said.

Agro-forestry

The collective has also taken up agro-forestry in the degraded lands. This not helps green the hills but also in carbon sequestration and as a result earn carbon credits, he added. This has ensured that the tribal farmer today earns on an average Rs 6,250 per acre.

The collective is making efforts to improve the productivity and take the average income per acre to Rs 31,250, the president of the tribal collective said. The economic stability has changed the socio-economic position of the tribal farmer in the Agency area, Mr Hogg explained.

Harvest festival at Vallicaud



The Mundakan paddy harvest season began on Tuesday at the Vettakulam paddy fields in Vallicaud panchayat in the district.

Grama panchayat president G. Maya inaugurated the harvest festival at a function at the paddy field.

Paddy on nearly 250 acres is ready for harvest at the Vettakulam Mundakan fields, the largest paddy field in the panchayat.

Mechanised harvesting

Pointing out the shortage of farm workers during paddy harvest, farmers said they had opted for mechanised harvesting this time.

They said Agriculture Department officials attached to the Krishi Bhavan at Vallicaud panchayat had taken the initiative to address the problem by hiring a Japanese combined harvester belonging to the Kollam district panchayat.

The machine, which was brought from Kollam recently, would take a month to complete the harvest in 600 acres of paddy fields spread across the panchayat, said A.J. Sunil, Agriculture Officer. Elizabeth Philipose, Assistant Director of Agriculture; Vimal, local body member, and Jayakumar, Padashekhara Samiti leader, were present.

Corruption, landlessness drive farmers out of Latehar

MGNREGA records manipulated; workers' wages siphoned off from accounts



Eighty-year-old Anarwa Kunwar is shown to have worked 66 days as per MGNREGA records. She says she never worked under the scheme.— Photo: Special Arrangement

At noon on Tuesday last, a dozen men gathered on the banks of the Auranga near Rankikalan village in Latehar district. As they performed the *dashmi* rites, the wailing from the huts in the village continued. Bhuiatoli village had lost 23 men, women and children when the truck in which they were returning to the village after working on landlords' farms in Bihar overturned and crushed them under the grain sacks they had earned after working for three months.

In 2001, Latehar was carved out of Palamu district, identified as one of India's poorest 100 districts in 1997 by the government. For years, landlessness and graft in public schemes forced the villagers to migrate for a few months to work on landowners' farms in Bihar in exchange for grains. Gains from funds allotted to the district under special schemes for the Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas seem to have also passed these families by.

Accident survivors say that like every year they left their village in November for landlords' farms in Bihar's Bhabhua district. For every 12 heaps of paddy each family harvested, they got to keep one. No one got any wages.

"My wife Bimli, my daughter, my son and his wife and I earned 16 *bori* [sacks] of paddy after working three months. The rate has remained the same since eight years. Before we left, the landowner deducted 80 kg from this as the share we ate while working on his farm," says Awdesh Bhuia, mukhiya of Bhuiatoli, a hamlet of Dalit households built at some distance from the upper-caste houses in the village.

On January 8, the families pooled in Rs. 350 each and hired a truck to carry the grains they had earned back to their village. At 1 a.m., sitting on top of the sacks as they tried to protect themselves and their children from the bitter chill of the night, they heard a loud sound before the truck swerved and overturned on NH 139 in Aurangabad. Of the 40 workers in the truck, 25 died, including 10 children. "We could not move, the children suffocated under the sacks. The police and some villagers took us to a hospital two hours later. My father's spine was injured," says Phool Kumari.

Over the 150 Dalit families in Bhuiatoli, only a third have ration cards. Those with Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards, entitled to 35 kg of subsidised grains every month say they get 29-30 kg once in two months.

District officials say 10 ponds were sanctioned as public works for the panchayat under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. A few of the families say they have MGNREGA cards, but do not have the job-cards with them. Among those who do, there are no entries in the job-cards.

Anarwa Kunwar, 80, lost 11 of her family members in the accident, including her two daughters and eight grandchildren. She is so frail she needs assistance with household chores, but MGNREGA records show she worked 66 days digging a pond last year. Budhan Bhuia, who died in the accident, is also shown to have worked 66 days in the same scheme, though his family denies this.

Collusion

“In 2011 too, wages were siphoned off from 23 workers’ accounts in this panchayat. We found that the former Block Development Officer, the Panchayat Sewak and the postmaster siphoned off wages in collusion with the contractors,” recounts James Herenj, who works at the MGNREGA Sahayata Kendra at Manika in association with economists Jean Dreze and Reetika Khera.

In 2011, activists at the kendra exposed a Rs. 2.5 lakh-scam in MGNREGA in Rankikalan. After an enquiry, an FIR was lodged against the BDO and Panchayat Sewak on March 1, 2011. A day later, Mr. Herenj’s colleague and MGNREGA activist Niyamat Ansari was murdered. South Latehar sub-zonal committee of the CPI (Maoist) claimed responsibility for the murder, saying he was a police informer. Social activists had then accused the area’s Maoists to be in collusion with the local contractor Shankar Dubey whose son was an accused in the MGNREGA scam.

“We ensure that the families’ compensation is paid through bank accounts since the postoffice seems complicit in the corruption here. We plan to include these families in the Public Distribution System as ‘additional BPL’ families,” said District Collector Arudhana Patnaik.

Agro-conference teeming with vested interests, coalition tells Centre

The Union Ministry of Agriculture has no intention of keeping off a conference it has supported despite the Coalition for GM-free India having taken umbrage at the Government associating

with an event organised by the agro-chemical industry to be addressed by speakers known for being promoters of genetically modified (GM) crops as an answer to food security.

In a letter written to Union Agriculture & Food Processing Minister Sharad Pawar, the group urged the Government not to go ahead with the conference slated for next week, saying it would provide a platform to hazardous industries and waste precious public funds in support of their cause.

Quoting from the Parliamentary Standing Committee recommendations on Agriculture, the group said the panel had clearly warned the Government against the “facilitative benevolence” of opening the agriculture sector up to private prospectors as done in communications, pharma, mineral wealth and other sectors...

“If the shortcomings in the food sector are addressed, there would not be any compelling need for adopting technologies which are yet to be proven totally safe for biodiversity, environment, human and livestock health and which will encourage monoculture — an option best avoided,” the panel had observed.

The coalition said the conference had “a predominance of vested interests behind it promoting the conference with full-page advertisements in newspapers such as the Pesticide Manufacturers and Formulators Association of India, the biotech-lobby group [Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises] and the National Seed Association of India. It has included controversial speakers who are known for their support to GM crops without supporting scientific facts or evidence”.

“It is unethical for the Ministry to blatantly promote technologies such as genetically modified crops, when India is trying to come out of the pesticide treadmill and make its production, farming and farmers’ livelihood sustainable, safe and remunerative,” it added.

Coalition

The coalition has objected to the Ministry, which is “answerable to the larger public, acting at the behest of these industries who stand to profit from these unneeded and hazardous technologies”.

The conference, 'Doubling Food Production in Five Years', is slated to be inaugurated by President Pranab Mukherjee with Mr. Pawar as a key speaker. Among other invitees are Chief Ministers of Gujarat, Bihar and Mizoram and known supporters of farm reforms and GM technology, including Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Y.K. Alagh, Ashok Gulati, Raju Barwale, Suresh Prabhu, Swapna Datta, R.B. Singh and Rajju Shroff.

Other invitees include agricultural analyst Dennis Avery, environmental activists Mark Lynas, Patrick Moore and Peter Raven, some of whom, according to the coalition, are associated with large agro-business corporations. Official sources told *The Hindu* that this was not the first time that the Ministry was supporting such an event.

The Ministry supported any conference related to agriculture, and GM crops was but one component, they said.

Some control measures for managing eriophyd mite

Eriophyd mite affecting coconut trees is a major problem in coconut regions of India. Green coloured nuts are more prone to this infestation than yellow coloured ones.

The mites spread through wind and their multiplication rate is high. Usually trees of 15- 25 years of age have been prone to damage by this pest.

Earliest symptoms of infestations are noticed on the buttons. A triangular yellow coloured patch and a gummy substance oozing from the small nuts, brown discolouration in the husks, frequent nut falling from the trees are all indications of the pest attack.

Though till now the infestation has not been fully prevented, it will be helpful for the coconut farmers to take necessary control methods as and when necessary.

Management

- Collect and destroy the fallen nuts.

Grow intercrops in between and casuarina on all the four sides to prevent further entry.

- Apply 1.3 kg of urea, 2 kg of super phosphate and 3.5 kg of muriate of potash at 3 kg per tree every year.

- In case soil is deficient in micro nutrients, apply 50 gms of borax, 1 kg of gypsum and 0.5 kg of manganese sulphate per tree a year. If possible farmers can also apply the 200 ml coconut micronutrient solution available at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. The micronutrient solution is available in sachets and should be tied to the tree root.

Bio input method

Farmers can also make their own organic bio inputs for controlling this pest. For this they need to grind 200 gms of garlic and mix it in water and filter it to make a extract of 300ml. An ordinary bar soap is to be dissolved in 500 ml water.

This soap solution is to be mixed in 200 ml of neem oil and stirred slowly to get a good emulsion. Mix the garlic extract into this. You will get approximately one litre of solution.

Dilute this entire solution in nine litres of water and the bio input is ready for use.

This bio formulation can be sprayed on the tree crown once every 45 days during non rainy season. It is advisable not to spray during heavy winds to prevent contamination spread.

(Utpal Dey, Scholar, & D.N. Dhutraj, Prof and Head, Dept of plant pathology, Marathwada Agricultural University, Parbhani, Maharashtra, email: utpaldey86@gmail.com, Mobile :8275824103.)

States pitch for free movement of farm produce

A high power committee of marketing Ministers of nine States has recommended that the Central Government take steps to implement uniform procedures in the agriculture market committees in different States.

In this direction, the committee wanted the Centre to make necessary amendments to the existing laws to facilitate single regulation across the country.

The Centre should create a barrier free environment for the movement of commodities between different States so that farmers secure remunerative prices for their produce.

The committee comprising Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Assam and Maharashtra has been constituted by the Centre to study the modalities for enacting a model Act governing the agricultural marketing activities. The panel is chaired by Maharashtra Marketing Minister.

Development plan to benefit 1.3 crore farmers

Aimed at benefiting over 1.3 crore agriculturists, land development activities for farming will be taken up shortly on lands belonging to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes besides small and marginal farmers.

As a prelude to this step, gram sabhas in 12,524 village panchayats met on Republic Day and approved the lists of the farmers identified by Rural Development and Agriculture Departments of the State governments. Assessment of requirements of the farmers is under way. Once this exercise is completed, activities such as land levelling and soil conservation will be taken up, according to officials.

This initiative of the government, when implemented across the State, will cover 1.34 crore persons, of whom marginal farmers [owning up to 2.5 acres of dry land or 1.25 acres of wet land] account for 1.18 crore; small farmers [five acres of dry land or 2.5 acres of wet land] – 12.33 lakh; SCs – 9.1 lakh and STs – 62,114.

The move will seek to address effectively the issue of labour shortage being experienced by small and marginal farmers or SC/ST farmers. One oft-repeated criticism is that it is because of the MGNREGS the farm sector is experiencing labour shortage. By permitting the MGNREGS works on lands of SC/STs and small and marginal farmers, a solution is sought to be found.

According to a State Government order, works on the lands of SC/STs will be taken up on a priority. Once they are saturated in a village panchayat, works on lands of small and marginal farmers may be considered. The government has also made it clear that only 100 per cent labour-oriented works will be taken up. As for the material component – [for instance, provision

of inputs in the form of seeds and manure], it will be dovetailed with other schemes of the Agriculture and other departments.

The National Food Security Mission – Rice and Pulses, National Agricultural Development Programme, Integrated Wasteland Development Programme, Integrated Forest Protection, National Horticulture Mission and State Fodder Development Scheme are among the programmes identified for dovetailing with the MGNREGS.

MDMK stages agitation

Volunteers of the MDMK staged a demonstration here on Wednesday, demanding compensation for the families of farmers who committed suicide after failure of crops due to drought.

As part of the state-wide stir, District Secretary M. Jayaraman led the protest in front of the Old bus stand here in the presence of 'Karate' M. Palanichamy, Party's state youth wing deputy secretary.

More than 250 protestors demanded that the government declare the entire State as drought-hit and provide a compensation of Rs. 25,000 per acre to the affected farmers.

Alleging that 19 farmers, hailing from different parts of the State had committed suicide after failure of crops in drought, they urged the government to provide a compensation of Rs. 10 lakh each to the families.

MDMK cadre stage protest

Cadre of Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) staged a demonstration near railway station here on Wednesday urging the State government to pay relief of Rs.25,000 per acre for farmers who have lost the samba crop this year.

Compensation

A compensation of Rs.15,000 per acre should be paid to those who have not raised the crop for want of water and left the field fallow.

All co-operative loans taken by farmers should be waived. Nationalised banks also should waive the loans given by them to farmers, the cadres said.

Durai Balakrishnan, deputy general secretary of the party, G. Udhayakumar, district secretary, S.K.Ravichandran, town secretary, participated in the agitation.

MDMK seeks waiver of outstanding crop loans in Tirupur district

Extending support to the aggrieved farmers in the district who are encountering drought-like conditions, the members of Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) staged a demonstration here on Wednesday seeking waiver of outstanding crop loans and relief to compensate loss of income.

R.T. Mariappan, district secretary of MDMK, said the government should declare the district 'drought-hit' considering that rainfall in 2012 was lowest in the recent times and the area under agriculture crops had significantly come down in the district as a consequence of the dry spells.

The MDMK members called upon the Union and State governments to take steps to waive all outstanding crop loans of the farmers, both in the case of scheduled banks and primary agriculture cooperative credit societies, since the farmers were not in a position to repay it.

Mr. Mariappan said the state government should disburse compensation to farmers at the rate of Rs. 25,000 per acre to offset the loss caused to standing crops due to the prevailing drought-like conditions. "The farmers who did not sow seeds owing to non-availability of adequate water for irrigation should be compensated at the rate of Rs 15,000 per acre.

Bioparks for paddy in Kuttanad

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has said the State government will be associating closely with the NABARD in implementing rural infrastructure projects.

Releasing the State Credit Plan for XXI Plan of NABARD here on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said the State government was very keen to work out a strategy for implementing the Plan and focus paper prepared by NABARD.

Finance Minister K.M. Mani, who delivered the key note address at the function, said mega bioparks would be set up in the State shortly for promoting value addition. Bioparks for paddy would come up in Kuttanad and Palakkad. Location of coconut bioparks in three regions of the State would be announced later.

The Finance Minister requested banks and NABARD to support the government's effort to develop entrepreneurship in the State under the Kerala State Entrepreneurship Development Mission. He highlighted the need for coordinated efforts by the banks and the government for smooth implementation of direct benefit transfer scheme.

He advised the banks to see financial inclusion as a business opportunity rather than a social obligation. Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan emphasised the State government's commitment to farmers' welfare and promotion of sustainable agricultural practices by efficient and optimum utilisation of natural resources.

The strategy of the government was to transform the weakness of small land holdings into strength by aggressively promoting hi-tech agriculture. That would improve production, and increase income levels of the farmers. He called upon the bankers and other stake holders to support the farmers in setting up of poly houses and to practice precision farming techniques. He advised the banks to ensure timely credit to all the farmers and to utilise the data base of farmers, being created by the government, and requested the banks to support the farmers undertaking farming in lease lands.

R. Amalorpavanathan, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Kerala, in his presidential address, urged the bankers and government officials to expedite electronic benefit transfer. He also requested the government to initiate steps to increase production and productivity, promote value addition at the farm level.

The 'State Credit Plan' for 2013-14 envisages credit projection of Rs.83,472 crore for the priority sector, which is 22 per cent higher than the credit potential estimated at Rs.68,434 crore for 2012-13. Out of the total projection, Rs.35,826 crore is earmarked for primary sector, which includes agriculture and allied activities. Credit of Rs.8,870 crore is projected for secondary sector, including small and medium enterprises, and Rs.38,775 crore for tertiary sector.

EU, India kick off 6 million Euro 'Water 4 crops'

The project is aimed at recycling and reuse of treated waste water from industries and households



Dr. Antonio Lopez, Head of Unit, National Research Council Water Research Institute, Italy, Dr William D Dar, Director General, ICRISAT addressing the media at ICRISAT in Patancheru of Medak district on Tuesday.-PHOTO: MOHD ARIF

India and European Union have jointly launched an innovative project here on Tuesday that could transform into a good green business in the near future.

The project, named as 'Water 4 Crops – India' was formally launched here at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). The project is aimed at recycling and reuse of waste water that would be collected from industries and households.

Under the project, the ICRISAT, along with its consortium partners - 22 partners from EU, 12 partners from India and two investment partners - will be embarking upon recycling treated waste water (grey water), stretching to a period of four years, including two years of experimentation and validation.

ICRISAT has been leading the consortium of national partners in India. The initiative was a mirror of EU's Water4Crops project composed of 21 consortium partners led by the Istituto di Ricerca Sulle Acque – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (IRSA-CNR), department of Bari, Italy.

Disclosing these details at a press conference here, ICRISAT Director-General William Dar, project head in India Dr. Suhas P. Wani and European Union project head Dr. Antonio Lopez

said that the project would address problems of reusing waste water, supplying of irrigation at dryland areas and meeting the requirements of farmers.

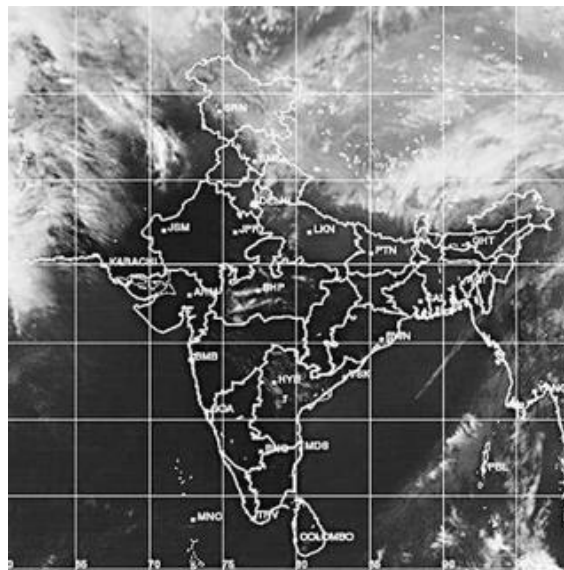
Dr. Lopez said that the usage of word 'waste water' was wrong and it should be called as 'used water' as the terminology itself would create some psychological resistance. Stating that this was a multi-discipline project, he said efforts would be put in place to address issues like how to utilise used water. He informed that focus would be on realistic application of upgraded technology at field level.

Dr. Suhas Wani said that this would become a good environmental business as it would address the problems of waste water, lack of irrigation at dryland areas and providing an opportunity for farmers for cultivation despite irrigation water supply problem.

Dr. William Dar said that water reuse was of critical importance to the semi-arid regions of the world. "We will now lead the Indian consortium in venturing into recycling industrial and domestic waste water for agricultural use to improve the livelihoods," he said.

Dr. Shilja Vaidya Gupta, Director, International Cooperation, DBT, and Meenakshi Sharma, Vice-President, SABMiller, India, were also present.

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	23	7	0	30
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New Delhi (Sfd)	23	6	0	33
Chandigarh	21	7	0	49
Hissar	25	4	0	33
Bhuntar	20	1	0	97
Shimla	14	5	0	119
Jammu	21	9	0	45
Srinagar	12	-2	0	59
Amritsar	22	5	0	15
Patiala	22	6	0	25
Jaipur	27	10	0	1
Udaipur	26	8	0	0
Allahabad	26	7	0	0
Lucknow	23	6	0	5
Varanasi	23	7	0	16
Dehradun	21	8	0	119
Agartala	27	10	0	0
Ahmedabad	29	16	0	0
Bangalore	30	18	0	0
Bhubaneshwar	29	14	0	1
Bhopal	25	8	0	0
Chennai	31	21	0	tr
Guwahati	28	10	0	0
Hyderabad	31	20	Tr.	Tr.
Kolkata	26	12	0	12
Mumbai	29	18	0	0
Nagpur	30	8	0	10
Patna	22	7	0	12

Pune	31	11	0	0
Thiruvananthapuram	33	22	0	4
Imphal	27	6	0	0
Shillong	18	6	0	0

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

Cold wave conditions are prevailing in some parts of Uttar Pradesh.

RAINFALL: Weather was dry over the region.

MINIIMUM TEMPERATURES : The minimum temperatures rose in west Rajasthan and changed little elsewhere.

They were appreciably below normal in east Uttar Pradesh, below normal in west Uttar Pradesh, appreciably above normal in west Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 02.8°C recorded at Adampur (Punjab).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 01st FEBRUARY 2013: Rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir. Rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on 31st January. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region. Fog/Dense Fog would occur over some parts of north Uttar Pradesh and in isolated pockets of Punjab and Haryana.

WARNING: Cold wave conditions would continue in some parts of Uttar Pradesh during the next 48 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 1st FEBRUARY 2013: Mainly clear sky becoming partly cloudy sky. Mist/Shallow fog in the morning.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Anantapur	34	18	0	0
Arogyavaram	31	17	0	0
Bapatla	30	20	0	0
Calingapatnam	28	20	0	0
Gannavaram	31	20	0	0
Hanamkonda	31	18	0	0
Hyderabad AP	31	20	tr	tr
Kakinada	30	21	0	2
Khammam	33	17	0	0
Kavali	31	21	0	0
Kurnool	32	20	0	0
Mahabubnagar	32	20	0	0
Machilipatnam	31	21	0	0
Nandyal	33	19	0	0
Narasapur	31	22	0	0
Nellore	31	22	0	0
Nizamabad	31	19	0	18
Ongole	31	22	0	0
Ramagundam	30	16	0	0
Tirupathi AP	32	21	0	0
Tuni	30	21	0	15
Vizag AP	29	20	0	8
Vizag	28	21	0	3
KARNATAKA				
Bangalore AP	30	16	0	0
Bangalore	30	18	0	0

Belgaum AP	31	12	0	0
Bellary	33	18	0	0
Bijapur	33	13	0	4
Chitradurga	32	16	0	0
Chickmagalur	30	15	0	0
Gadag	32	14	0	0
Gulbarga	33	20	0	0
Hassan	30	14	0	0
Honavar	32	19	0	0
Karwar	34	18	0	0
Madikeri	27	11	0	0
Mangalore AP	33	21	0	0
Mysore	31	15	0	0
Mandya	31	17	0	0
Panambur	33	21	0	0
Raichur	33	19	0	0
Shirali	32	20	0	0
KERALA				
Alappuzha	32	23	0	8
Kannur	33	23	0	0
Kochi AP	31	23	0	25
Kottayam	34	22	0	21
Kozhikode	34	24	0	0
Punalur	37	22	0	0
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	31	22	0	10
Thiruvanantha				

-puram City	33	22	0	4
Vellanikkara	35	21	0	0
TAMIL NADU				
Adiramapattinam	31	20	0	52
Coimbatore AP	32	21	0	0
Coonoor	20	10	0	6
Cuddalore	31	21	0	0
Chennai AP	31	21	0	tr
Chennai	30	22	0	0
Dharmapuri	32	17	0	0
Kanyakumari	33	24	0	9
Karaikal	30	22	0	10
Kodaikanal	18	8	0	1
Madurai AP	34	20	0	4
Nagapattinam	30	22	0	13
Palayamkottai	34	21	0	7
Pamban	31	24	0	56
Parangipettai	31	21	0	0
Puducherry	30	21	0	0
Salem	33	20	0	0
Thanjavur	31	24	0	5
Tiruchi AP	32	20	0	tr
Tirupattur	33	16	0	0
Tondi	30	22	0	30
Tuticorin	31	22	0	24
Ooty	19	6	0	0

Valparai	29	9	0	0
Vedaranyam	31	23	0	199
Vellore	31	21	0	0
LAKSHADWEEP				
Amini Divi	33	25	0	tr
Minicoy	32	24	0	105
Kavarathi	29	27	0	tr
OTHER STATIONS				
Kolkata (Alipore)	26	12	0	12
Mumbai	29	18	0	0
New Delhi	23	6	0	33

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

Isolated rain in Telangana

CHENNAI: Isolated light rain occurred over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Dry weather prevailed over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Rayalaseema and Karnataka.

The minimum temperature rose at one or two places over north interior Tamil Nadu, Telangana, fell at one or two places over north interior Karnataka and changed a little elsewhere over the region.

They were markedly above at one or two places over Telangana, appreciably above normal at one or two places over rest Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, interior Tamil Nadu, interior Karnataka, above normal at a few places over rest coastal Andhra Pradesh, at one or two places over Kerala, Rayalaseema, appreciably below normal at one or two places over north interior Karnataka, below normal at one or two places over rest interior Karnataka and were generally normal over the rest of the region.

Forecast (valid till Friday morning): Isolated rain may occur over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Mainly dry weather would prevail over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Karnataka and Rayalaseema.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jan 31

Max Min

29° | 22°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 83

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:35

Sunset: 06:09

Barometer: 1016

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Feb 1

Max Min

31° | 21°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Feb 2	Sunday Feb 3	Monday Feb 4	Tuesday Feb 5	Wednesday Feb 6
30° 21° Partly Cloudy	25° 23° Overcast	25° 22° Cloudy	25° 22° Cloudy	26° 23° Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:10

Sunset: 05:59

Barometer: 1019



30th jan 2013

Castorseed futures gain as speculators turn bullish

Castor prices moved up today as speculators enlarged their positions in line with firm physical and overseas markets sentiments.

However, new arrivals have started and may restrict the prices to go up.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), castor February contract increased Rs 33 to Rs 3,512 a quintal with an open interest of 68,740 lots.

NCDEX March castor moved up by Rs 39 to Rs 3,611 with an open interest of 87,920 lots.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange, castor for March gained Rs 38 to Rs 3,691 for 100 kg.

RCX spot castor increased Rs 120 to Rs 3,495.

About 29,000-30,000 bags of castor arrived in Gujarat and the price increased Rs 7 to Rs 692-701 for 20 kg.

Around 3,300-3,400 bags arrived in Saurashtra and was quoted at Rs 670-692.

According to market sources, strong domestic as well as overseas demand, amid restricted supply in physical markets, mainly attributed jumps in castor seed futures prices.

However, on the other hand some traders said that new arrivals have started and it will increase. Price may not gain much in the near future.

Talk of import duty hike boosts edible oils

Sentiment in edible oils market turned better on Wednesday tacking extended gain

in Malaysian and domestic futures markets. Despite that spot prices for most of oils remains unchanged. Palmolein, Soyabean, Cotton and Sunflower oils rule steady while Groundnut and rapeseed oil drop by Rs5 and Rs3 each. Late evening there was talk of government may further increase the import duty of edible oils to protect the local industry said sources.

Malaysian palm oil futures rose to their highest level in nearly 4 weeks on Wednesday on expectations that dry weather could hurt crops in top soy producer Argentina and shift demand to the cheaper edible oil. April futures closed above 2500 ringgits a tone. Analyst said dryness in parts of Argentina has raised supply concerns for soyabean and pushed up prices, potentially turning buyers to palm oil which is currently trading at a discount of more than \$300 a ton. The discount between palm and soya oil is quite big, and this will stir demand for palm oil from importing nations".

Domestic soya oil futures rose by more than Rs8 tracking higher closing Malaysian palm oil futures. In spot market Stockiest covered about 800 – 900 tons of palm oil during the day. Liberty sold about 400-450 tons of Palmolein at Rs.513-Rs515 and about 200-250 ton of Super Palmolein at Rs560 for delivery up to February. Resellers offloaded about 200 – 250 tons of Palmolein at Rs.504 - 505 ex JNPT and Rs507 -508 ex Patalganga sources said.

Towards the end of the day Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs515 for February.

Super palmolein Rs 563, Soya refined oil Rs730 and Sunflower refined oil Rs800 for Feb. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs518 ex Patalganga, Soyabean refined oil at Rs721 and Sunflower refined oil Rs800 for February. Allana's rate for Palmolein was Rs515 and Super palmolein Rs560. In Saurashtra – Rajkot groundnut oil was up by Rs10 to Rs1960 (Rs 1950) for telia tin and by Rs5 Rs1275 (Rs 1270) for loose (10 kg).

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil's February futures shot up to Rs734.10 (Rs725.50), March was Rs708.70 (Rs702.55) and April was Rs695.05 (Rs690.70). Malaysia's crude palm oil's February contracts settled higher at MYR 2,445 (MYR 2,402), March at MYR2,480 (MYR2,443) and April at MYR2,510 (MYR 2,475) a tone.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,275 (1,280), soya refined oil 718(718), sunflower exp. ref. 725 (725), sunflower ref. 800 (800), rapeseed ref. oil 807 (810), rapeseed expeller ref. 777(780) cottonseed ref. oil 620 (620) and palmolein 507 (507).

Pepper turns hot on robust demand

The pepper market turned hot on robust domestic demand amid short supply on Wednesday. Fear of non-delivery of material on the exchange platform also aided the rally. All the active contracts shot up and closed much above the previous day's closing.

The upcountry markets are said to be almost empty and in Jaipur those holding some stocks were reportedly selling at Rs 400 a kg now.

There were more and more buyers for spot pepper than sellers in the physical market, market sources told *Business Line*. The winter season is the peak demand period with 5,000-6,000

tonnes a month from January to March as against the normal month demand ranging between 3,000 and 4,000 tonnes, they said.

Leading exporters who were reported to have made commitments earlier for February shipments hoping the prices would drop once the new crop arrived in big quantity were also in the market to cover, having burnt their fingers. Market opened on an easier note at Rs 37,885 a quintal and hit the lowest price of Rs 37,845 down by 40 tonnes in the opening session itself. Thereafter it traded with volatility all through the remaining sessions and shot up to the highest price of the day at Rs 1,245 a quintal and crossed the first upper circuit level of 3 per cent in the closing session and the slipped to the last traded price of Rs 38,800. However, last half-an-hour average was given as Rs 38,880 a quintal.

Long position holders were liquidating while genuine hedgers were holding back, traders said. The turnover has shown a good rise while the open interest witnessed a marginal decrease.

February contract on the NCDEX shot up by Rs 1,165 a quintal to close at Rs 38,880. March and April increased by Rs 495 and Rs 670 respectively to close at Rs 37,140 and Rs 35,660 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover increased by 602 tonnes to close at 2,729 tonnes. Total open interest decreased by 78 tonnes to close at 3,366 tonnes.

February and March open interest dropped by 62 tonnes and 42 tonnes respectively to 1,140 tonnes and 1,484 tonnes while that of April moved up by 7 tonnes to 562 tonnes.

Spot prices on robust demand amid limited supply and in tandem with the futures market trend increased by Rs 700 a quintal to close at Rs 39,900 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,400 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$8,400 a tonne at spot prices for Feb first half shipments and \$7,650 a tonne (c&f) for Feb and \$7,100 a tonne (c&f) for March.

Cabinet panel may consider hiking sugarcane floor price by over 23%



The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Thursday is likely to consider raising the fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane for the 2013-14 sugar season by 23.5 per cent to Rs 210 a quintal.

FRP, the benchmark cane price for 2013-14 sugar year, starting October, is linked to a basic recovery rate of 9.5 per cent, subject to a premium of Rs 2.21 a quintal for every 0.1 per cent increase in recovery above 9.5 per cent. For 2012-13, the FRP was at Rs 170.

FRP is fixed by the Centre but there at least five States – Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu – that announce their own rates, called the State Advisory Price (SAP). SAP is higher than FRP.

to help farmers

The proposed hike in FRP, if approved, could help farmers offset the rising cultivation costs, including both labour and fuel.

Planting of sugarcane starts a year-ahead and an early announcement of FRP would help farmers make informed decisions.

The proposed FRP hike would be in line with the recommendation of the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices.

sugar output

India is expected to produce about 24 million tonnes (mt) of sugar in the current year, down from 26 mt last year. Domestic consumption of sugar is pegged at 22 mt.

Sugar output till mid-January is up by about 3 per cent at 10.8 mt aided by higher cane crushing in Karnataka and Maharashtra. In the corresponding period last year, sugar output stood at 10.5 mt.

Edible oils

The CCEA is also expected to consider allowing export of edible oil from the domestic tariff area (DTA) to special economic zones.

Besides, it is also likely to consider allowing export of coconut oil and permit the export of edible oils with a minimum export price (MEP) of \$1,500 a tonne in branded consumer packs of up to 5 kg without any quantitative restrictions.

In October last year, the Government had permitted export of edible oils in branded consumer packs of up to 5 kg with a ceiling of 20,000 tonnes to meet the growing demand from overseas Indians.

Lack of fresh buying dampens rubber

Physical rubber prices were almost steady on Wednesday. Moderate declines in domestic futures and the absence of fresh enquiries from major consuming industries dampened the market mood on late trades, but the prices managed to sustain at the prevailing levels due to low supplies. The trend was partially mixed.

Sheet rubber finished unchanged at Rs 158 a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The volumes were dull.

In futures, the February series weakened to Rs 155.51 (157.25), March to Rs 157.66 (159.24), April to Rs 161 (162.51), May to Rs 164.25 (165.69) and June to Rs 166.72 (167) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) slipped to Rs 174.64 (174.68) a kg at Bangkok. The February futures improved to ₹292.8 (Rs 171.13) from ₹290.4 during the day session and then to ₹293 (Rs 171.27) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 158 (158); RSS-5: 152.50 (152.50); ungraded: 146 (146); ISNR 20: 153 (154) and latex 60 per cent: 104 (104).

Coonoor tea auction volume rises

After two consecutive weeks of low arrival, the offer at Sale No: 5 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions to be held on Thursday and Friday has risen, reveals an analysis of the brokers' listing.

In all, 15.69 lakh kg has been catalogued. This is some 66,000 kg more than last week's offer and as much as 5.53 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 15.69 lakh kg on offer, 11.17 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.52 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades.

As much as 14.91 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.78 lakh kg, orthodox variety.

In the leaf counter, only 0.42 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 10.75 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.36 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 4.16 lakh kg, CTC.

Fresh tea accounts for 13.16 lakh kg while about 2.53 lakh kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions.

Upcountry traders are anticipating increased demand as hot tea consumption has shown increase in the Northern States which are reeling under severe cold.

Besides, volumes are low in the North due to reduced harvest and winter closure of factories.

Last week, in the leaf auction, Hindustan Unilever Ltd bought good medium varieties.

Duncans Tea Ltd chose medium broken. Godfrey Philips India Ltd was selective. Tata Global Beverages did not operate.

In Dust auction, HUL and Tata Global, were selective, Duncans Tea showed some interest on the good medium sorts. Indcoserve chose medium smaller grades.

Export enquiry was weak. There was good demand from upcountry buyers for brighter liquoring teas.

Coonoor to host specialty tea sale on March 23

The annual Nilgiri Winter Specialty Tea Auction is slated for March 23 at Coonoor.

This is the fourth edition of the event, organised mainly to showcase the Nilgiri Specialty Teas. Two of the earlier editions were held in Coonoor, while one was held at Las Vegas in the US.

Held periodically since 2005, this annual event organised by the Nilgiris Planters' Association is said to be more special this year because it is being held as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA), said the Chairman of Nilgiris Planters Association, Suresh Jacob.

The event is being sponsored by the Tea Board of India.

The auction, according to Jacob, would be conducted on the regular e-auction platform of the CTTA.

The association has proposed to have tea tasting sessions at the various tea auction centres ahead of the auction date to enable buyers taste the teas before they actually make the bid, Jacob said.

Corporate demand lifts maize prices 30%

Maize prices in Karnataka are trading 29.52 per cent higher at Rs 1,360 a quintal compared to last year.

“Due to large scale corporate demand, prices have firmed up in the last one month. Demand is mainly from starch manufacturers and poultry feed makers,” B.V. Gopal Reddy, Vice-President, Karnataka Maize Merchants' Association, told *Business Line*.

The major companies sourcing maize for starch extraction from Karnataka are Riddhi Siddhi and few Ahmedabad-based factories.

Along with starch makers, poultry feed makers such as Sugana and Venkateshwara Hatcheries are also buying.

According to Reddy, "At present, factory delivery which includes transportation and APMC cess is quoted much higher than the procurement (buying from farmers) price of Rs 1,450-1,470."

Late rains

Due to late rains in Karnataka, the maize crop harvested is fairly good. Crop grown in Davengere, Haveri and Shimoga have entered the market.

"Summer maize crop from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh is expected to enter market some time in February/March. Till then prices are expected to be firm," Reddy said.

According to the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (Demic)-Dharwad, Karnataka has 3.44 lakh hectares under maize and the productivity is estimated at 2,869 kg/hectare.

Maize price in Bidar market is ruling at Rs 1,385.

The Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the Central Government is Rs 1,175 a quintal.

Keeping in view the market price movements, Demic in its advisory to farmers has said, "Farmers can store maize up to April to get a margin of around Rs 100-150 a quintal compared to February and March prices."

Chennai to host 2-day global grain milling seminar

Chennai will host the first Global Milling Conference to be held in India during February 8-9.

The conference will focus on global and Indian grain production trends and market dynamics; use of grains as food, feed and fuel; logistics (storage, handling, transportation) issue of the

grains business; food safety and standards; sustainability of grains production and food security as well as a host of related topics.

Grain milling industries, manufacturers of processed foods using milled grains, extrusion processors, branded players in flour market, equipment manufacturers, food technologists, feed millers, ingredient suppliers, service providers and related others are expected to participate. Renowned speakers from India and abroad will share their domain expertise on a host of current topics including food and nutrition security.

Expo on cards

An exhibition will accompany the conference, according to Raj Kapoor of Assocom India, event organisers. India is one of the world's largest producers of grains including rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses.

Driven by rising purchasing power and population pressure, demand for grains is expanding.

However, land constraints, water shortage and global warming are emerging as challenges for the grains sector. Milling technology is evolving constantly and opportunities to employ the latest exist.

New products from ABT

ABT Industries Ltd has entered the Kerala market with its two new products – Sakthi skimmed milk powder and dairy whitener.

The official launch of the new products will be held in Kochi on Friday. C.P.Charles, president (operations), told reporters on Wednesday that the ABT Industries has chosen Kerala as launch pad for these two products, as Sakthi milk and milk powder have been present in the State for over 15 years with a comfortable market share.

The company is selling one lakh litres of milk a day and 25,000 tonnes of ghee every month in the State.

It has already achieved a sales turnover of Rs 125 crore from the State, he said adding, that a 25-30 per cent growth is expected in its sales with the launch of new products.

Rise in onion prices temporary phenomenon: Pawar



Amid soaring onion prices bringing tears to consumers, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar today termed the rise in its rates as a 'temporary phenomenon' and said supply would improve in the coming days.

Wholesale prices of onion at Lasalgaon in Nasik, Asia's largest onion market, have increased more than five-fold to Rs 20.50 per kg today from Rs 3.55 per kg in the year-ago period, according to Government data. A similar increase is seen in retail prices across the country.

"Prices have hardened as the onion area in Maharashtra, the major growing State, has been affected due to drought. Rise in prices is a temporary phenomenon," Pawar told PTI.

Stating that onion is grown in areas dependent on rains, the Minister said the onion area in drought-hit States such as Maharashtra has been affected but overall production would be sufficient to meet the domestic demand.

"I had visited the key onion areas yesterday, the crop from other parts of the States is good and availability will improve in the coming weeks," he said.

According to the Nasik-based National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), the area under onion crop is down by 10 per cent from 10.87 lakh hectares this year.

NHRDF Director R. P. Gupta said: "Prices of onion are rising in anticipation of a drop in output. But we expect overall production to be the same at last year's level of 174 lakh tonnes. Productivity is expected to be higher and there will not be a shortage of supply."

According to the official data, retail prices of onion have increased to Rs 28 per kg now from Rs 13 a kg in the year-ago period in most parts of the country.

Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat are the top three onion growing States which have suffered drought.

Last year, onion production in India stood at 174 lakh tonnes.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

31.01.2013 A.M

Cardamom extends losses on weak spot demand

Continuing its slide for the third day today, Cardamom futures for February declined by Rs 8.70, or 0.83%, to Rs 1,045.20 per kg in 1,037 lots.



At the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the March contract traded lower by Rs 6, or 0.55%, to Rs 1,083.60 per kg in 200 lots.

Speculators reducing their holdings, weak spot markets trend on sluggish demand affected the trade.

Increased arrivals from producing belts also kept pressure on cardamom.

Basmati rice exports to miss target as prices rally

India, the world's largest producer of aromatic basmati rice, may miss a target to boost exports by 25 per cent this year as a rally in domestic prices curbs demand from buyers in Europe and the West Asia, a trade group said. Shipments of the grain, which can fetch about double the rate of traditional white rice, may total 3.5 million tonnes in the year ending March 31, less than the four million tonnes forecast in August, M P Jindal, president of the All India Rice Exporters' Association, said in an interview on January 28. Exports were 3.2 million tonnes in 2011-12, he said.

Prices in India rallied 38 per cent this year after the government raised rates for the non-basmati variety to a record, potentially hurting earnings at exporters such as KRBL Ltd, Kohinoor Foods Ltd and LT Foods Ltd.

Farmers may boost planting to benefit from the surging cost of the grain used to make dishes, including biryani, potentially doubling the harvest and increasing exports, said Vijay Setia, a former president of the association. "Buyers are placing smaller orders because of higher prices," Setia said in a phone interview. "I don't see improvement in exports this quarter."

The average price of basmati has climbed to \$1,100 a tonne from \$800 a year earlier, said R.S. Seshadri, a director at Tilda Riceland Pvt Ltd, a New Delhi-based exporter. Benchmark 100 per cent grade-B Thai rice costs \$616 a tonne.

Basmati paddy production may double next year from 5.7 million tonnes in 2012-13, Setia said. Exports were 2.5 million tonnes in the nine months ended December 31, compared with 2.2 million tonnes a year earlier, he said.

India, Pakistan

India controls 65 per cent of the overseas basmati market, according to the state-run Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, while Pakistan, the only other main producer in the world, accounts for the rest.

The aromatic rice variety, specific to a geographic region, is cultivated in the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand in India, and in Punjab that straddles both the South Asian countries.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are two major buyers of Indian basmati. The US, Europe and Africa also purchase the grain. India's rice exports including the non-basmati variety, are set to drop 23 per cent to 8 million tonnes in 2012-2013 from 10.4 million tonnes in 2011-2012, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Production may fall to 99 million tonnes from 104.3 million tonnes, according to the agency.

Mega Food Park scheme will benefit farmers and consumers alike, says government

MUMBAI: The [Mega Food Park scheme](#) launched by the Centre has received a good response with 13 hubs already under implementation, said Rakesh Kacker, secretary, ministry of food processing industries. He was addressing the 'National Summit on Mega Food Parks: An Investment Destination' in Mumbai Wednesday.

The Mega Food Park Scheme will be set up along the hub and spoke pattern. The core processing facilities will be located in a central area with processing plants at the periphery. One park will serve a cluster of three to four districts. The central processing centre will have dry warehouses, cold chain infrastructure and an irradiation centre not to mention facilities for sorting, grading and packaging.

The ministry believes the scheme will benefit farmers and consumers alike by addressing infrastructure concerns. Presently, post harvest losses range from 4-6% for cereals to a whopping 18% for fruits and vegetables.

Kacker said the government has granted approval for 30 Mega Food Parks across the country. He said investment in food processing industry is set to grow with the decentralization of the approval process. According to the National Food Processing Mission, project assessment can be sanctioned by the state government itself. Moreover, 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is permitted in the food processing sector.

The secretary added that the government has accorded the food processing industry the status

of a sunrise sector. It has initiated measures to create infrastructure, cold chain development, technology upgradation and sanctioned various schemes for modernization, all of which could see a combined investment of about Rs 7,000 crore over 30 centres.

S K Goel, additional chief secretary, agriculture and marketing in the Maharashtra government, said there was vast scope for public-private partnership in the food processing sector. "There are at least seven central schemes including the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana ([RKVY](#)) and the National Horticultural Mission(NHM) which can take care of most of the backend linkages. The front end linkages of production and marketing will be the responsibility of private players," he said.

Co-organiser FICCI stressed the need for a stable export policy, pointing out that the frequent banning of particular commodities affects the feasibility of projects. Welcoming [FDI](#) in retail, the industry body said this will boost investment in the food processing sector.

Farmers lay siege at YEIDA office

GREATER NOIDA: Hundreds of farmers from 45 villages along Yamuna Expressway led by Bharatiya Kisan Union ([BKU](#)) on Wednesday locked the Yamuna Expressway Authority's ([YEIDA](#)) office. The agitation continued for six hours and was suspended only after senior officials assured to address their issues in 10 days.

Farmers reached the office at 10am riding buses, tractors and motorcycles and locked the office disrupting work. Farmers were demanding 64% hiked compensation, 10% developed plots, and abadi regularization.

A farmer leader said that Allahabad high court's judgment last year had directed the Authority to give hiked compensation, but even after a year the Authority has not given them any hiked benefits. "Officials have only given us empty assurances. Farmers are angry and will not let officials work peacefully until demands are met," said Virender Kasana of Dungerpur village,

whose 50 bhigas land was acquired by the Authority.

Farmers called off their protest after city magistrate Anju Lata and cops convinced them to do so. "Officials assured that CEO [Rama Raman](#) will meet us in the next 10 days and address our issues," said Anand Pal, another farmer. "If officials fail to fulfill their promises, then our agitation will be intensified," he added.

Modi holds talks with Bihar farmers

PATNA: If the demands made by farmers at the pre-Budget meeting with deputy CM [Sushil Kumar Modi](#) is any indicator, a large number of them in the state have said goodbye to their traditional two-crop (wheat and paddy) cultivation and, instead, have taken to 'integrated farming' by including fishery, poultry, goatery and dairy in their annual agriculture (cereal, pulses, cash crop and vegetable) production and allied activities.

"It is a huge positive development that has occurred in the state in the last six or seven years. Earlier, like in 2005-06, their demands for consideration in the Budget did not have so much of variety and persistence," Modi said on Wednesday after an interactive four-hour meeting with 76 farmers to elicit their pre-Budget demands and suggestions.

"Not all the suggestions they made can be included in the main Budget. However, ministers of agriculture and departments concerned can take steps all through the year during next fiscal in the light of those suggestions," Modi said. Those present at the meeting included animal and fisheries minister Giriraj Singh, cooperative minister Ramadhar Singh and bureaucratic heads of all the departments concerned.

Farmers from Begusarai, Khagaria, Bhagalpur, Purnia and Katihar districts demanded opening of maize and banana-based industries in their areas. "Bihar accounts for 10% of total maize production in the country and the districts concerned constitute the core area in the state," Modi said.

The farmers demanded easy bank loans at low interest rate for poultry, fishery and dairy activities like 7% of interest rate charged on agriculture loans. Incidentally, the Centre gives 3% of subsidy on agriculture loan, coupled with 1% given by the state government, on short-term agriculture loans, only to those farmers who are able to repay it in time, so that they get short-term agriculture loan only on 3% interest rate.

Modi said he had discussions with [Union finance minister P Chidambaram](#) for similar facility on short-term bank loans for poultry, dairy and fishery activities.

That apart, farmers demanded subsidy on the use of [solar energy](#) in dairy, poultry and fishery sectors, as also on heavy and light mechanized farm implements. "Since there has occurred acute labour shortage in the farm sector, farmers are going for brisk farm mechanization," Modi said.

Over and above that, farmers wanted exemption of stamp duty paid while going for lease agreement on land used for fishery. They also sought establishment of 'mentha' distillation plant for Munger and Begusarai and subsidy on production of fish food, apart from facilitation of training of advanced and progressive farmers in countries like Israel.

Kerala to seek compensation from Tamil Nadu for loss of crops

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala would approach the [Supreme Court](#) against the Tamil Nadu government that failed to abide by the Parambikulam-Aliyar treaty and would demand a compensation for the extensive damage of crops in Palakkad, chief minister OommenChandy said on Wednesday.

"Tamil Nadu is not responding to the letters written by the water resources minister. The all party meeting convened here has urged to take up the issue with the [Tamil Nadu](#) chief minister. The state government will do everything possible to get its share of water and will ask

compensation for the loss of crops," said the chief minister.

The committee, which was constituted to monitor the treaty, has also failed to convene. There was no response from Tamil Nadu to the letters sent to them regarding the treaty. Kerala has been vehemently opposing the Tamil Nadu Government's stand and the all party meeting had a united stand in this matter, he said adding that Kerala would demand that TN release water meant for the state.

Kerala would initiate legal steps and the state would demand the water that was to be released to Kerala.

The all party meeting is said to have suggested that a chief minister level talk be held to resolve the problem. A letter would be send to the Tamil Nadu chief minister soon, said Chandy.

Tamil Nadu has violated the Parambikulam-Aliyar river pact and was not responding to the letters on the issue written by the state. Palakkad district was facing severe drought conditions and the paddy cultivation in the district was under the threat of destruction.Ends/

'Soil deficiencies due to imbalanced fertilization'

VARANASI: The vegetable-growing soils of Varanasi are fast losing their fertility due to imbalanced fertilization.

According to Prof Surendra Singh, head of the department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, [Banaras Hindu University](#), the fact is based on the analysis of a large number of soil samples collected from vegetable fields and data published in the journal of Indian Society of Soil Sciences.He said the investigation showed that soil response to fertilizer application in terms of vegetable production has declined over the years. A part of Shahanshahpur village under Arazuline block of the district has been put under intensive vegetable farming of chili, tomato, brinjal and pea since 1980. In the present scenario of

vegetable cultivation, farmers of the area have started to use more nitrogenous fertilizers but proportionally less phosphatic and potassic fertilizers in cultivation of vegetables.

He said such imbalanced fertilization practice has aggravated the problem of deficiencies in available nutrients and is the root cause of deteriorating soil fertility and productivity of vegetables. Results further revealed that the intensively cultivated soils of the area showed deficiency of phosphorus, potassium, sulfur and zinc to extent of 54, 22, 46 and 33 per cent respectively. This suggests that excessive use of nitrogen over phosphorus and potash fertilizers and little use of organic source of nutrients have resulted in depletion of other soil available nutrients in the vegetable growing area. According to him, the decline in productivity in these soils over the years is a matter of great concern. Balanced fertilization of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur and zinc along with application of farmyard manure, compost, green manure and biofertilizers should be practiced for sustained soil health and enhanced productivity of vegetables in the years to come, he suggested.