

New improvised tool for SRI paddy planting method



One of the main steps Tamil Nadu farmers are advised while growing paddy under 'System for Rice Intensification,' method, popularly called as SRI, is to adopt seedling distance while planting.

"Planning the planting space is important for a good yield. Normally about 500 seedlings are planted from the nursery to the main field at a rough spacing of 20X10 cm.

"This spacing differs in some regions according to the labour availability and convenience. Whereas under SRI, about 16 single seedlings are planted at spacing of 25X25 cm," says Dr. G.Kathiresan, Director (Planning & Monitoring, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore.

Initial stage

During the initial stages of SRI introduction, a lengthy rope was used for marking the seedling space.

Two labourers used to hold the rope at the ends on either side of the field bunds and walked across the field, while another person made markings on the field for planting.

But this system did not prove popular because the line of planting was not straight due to naturally occurring slopes or partition in the fields.

The line of planting also used to get altered. Physical labour was also more for this work.

Considering the demerits of rope marking, an iron roller marker was introduced. It requires two labourers to pull the iron marker which has pegs on it to mark the place of planting.

The rolls are fitted in such a way as to mark 25 cm. But this did not prove to be easy, the main reason being the roller was heavy in weight and farmers found it difficult to pull it in the slushy, water laden fields. The marking was also not visible.

The University came out with yet another simple and improvised device for planting.

Bamboo sticks

A low weight triangular pointer with three straight bamboo/casuarina sticks or polyvinyl chloride pipes was introduced.

“These three lengthy sticks tied with small sticks (25 cm length), or 6 mm iron rod fitted with half an inch GI triangular shape pipe holder with 60 angles in each corner. For convenience, ten feet sticks (three numbers) are sufficient for planting by two labourers,” explains Dr. Kathiresan.

The iron rod measuring 25 cm in length, represents the intra row spacing and the ten feet sticks in which markings are made represent inter row spacing.

Iron rods

For measuring the spacing, a triangular shaped iron rod fitted with the lengthy (10 feet) sticks at every five feet is also introduced.

Six points are marked on the lengthy sticks at the spacing of 25 cm to point the exact place for planting the seedlings. The planting can be done by a single labourer for an acre.

Farmers can use this device by placing it in the field parallel to the field bunds. The seedlings can be planted inside the triangular lengthy sticks. This is quite easy though cumbersome for some workers.

Normally for SRI planting, 45 labourers are needed to cover one hectare land. In the case of SRI planting with this new tool, 33 labourers are sufficient to cover the same area, according to him.

“The main objective for introducing this device is to help farmers to plant the seedlings at the exact location without any confusion and at the same time to maintain appropriate space between seedlings,” says Kathiresan. The device is presently being used by farmers in Tanjavur, Ambasamudram, and Tirunelveli districts.

General opinion

The general opinion among some of the farmers who used this device is that it would be a good initiative if this work can be mechanised instead of doing it manually, as sourcing labour for the same is proving to be very difficult.

For more details contact Dr.G.Kathiresan, Director (Planning & Monitoring, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641 003, email: directorplanning@tnau.ac.in, phone: 0422-6611566.

New seeds facility planned

Rajasthan State Seeds Corporation will shortly examine the scope for production of gram seeds in the newly developed command area of Indira Gandhi Canal in Jaisalmer district. More facilities will be provided to local farmers for growing the crop.

Seeds Corporation Chairman Dharmendra Singh Rathore, visited the border areas of Jaisalmer district recently and said special measures would be taken to enable farmers to get remunerative prices for their produce. Scope for expansion of crop patterns would also be explored for farmers of the Nachna canal area, he added.

Mr. Rathore said the Seeds Corporation would supply seeds of good quality to farmers and assist them in getting agricultural land. He called upon the farmers to join the State Government's programmes for seed production in order to expand the range of their agricultural activities.

Say it with flowers that last months

The orchid is slowly but surely finding its footing in the floral market



QUEEN OF FLOWERS:From a negligible contribution, the orchid's market in Bangalore is now around Rs. 3 crore annually.

Sporting myriad hues with rich ornamental value, the orchid has long fascinated collectors, especially in the West. But now, our own flower markets are cashing in on this queen of flowers, what with florists reporting rapid growth in demand over the past couple of years, mainly from flower arrangers. Most of this demand is being met by imports as local production remains low due to high input cost. But the orchid ranks among the high value flowers with higher returns, and is one of the fastest growing segments in floriculture.

Demand doubles

“The demand for orchid here is doubling each year. From a negligible contribution, its market in Bangalore is now around Rs. 3 crore annually,” said S.K. Gutgutia of Florance Flora, a leading plants dealer. He estimated that in the next two to three years its market size would be around Rs. 10 crore. Recent years have seen the demand for the bright and beautiful phalaenopsis double, overtaking that of the dendrobium.

Mr. Gutgutia sees huge potential for the orchids market, which is now a very modest 2 lakh plants a year compared to countries such as China where about 10 million orchid plants are sold each year.

Bangalore imports phalaenopsis (for both pot plants and cut flowers) from Holland, dendrobium (cut flowers), cattleya (pot plants), vanda and makara (both cut flowers) from Thailand.

Flowers also come from Singapore and Taiwan.

“There is a demand for about 5,000 to 10,000 flowers daily. The State’s production meets only a fraction of this demand,” says Sadananda Hegde, president, The Orchid Society of Karnataka.

High input cost

One of the main reasons attributed to low interest in orchid cultivation in Karnataka is the high input cost and long gestation period.

Dr. Hegde said: “Though manpower requirement is limited, investment is very high. It costs between Rs.35 lakh and Rs.40 lakh to create infrastructure to grow orchids. It will take a minimum of two years to start harvesting.”

Import of orchid seedlings, planting material and technology has resulted in high cost though the climate is very conducive, he added.

Despite this high cost, a small group of about 60 farmers in Sirsi region in Uttara Kannada district is currently cultivating dendrobium and phalaenopsis varieties, selling them in Bangalore, Goa and Mumbai.

In all, Karnataka has just a few hundred orchid farmers while the blooms register very little movement even in the International Flower Auction Bangalore.

Dr. Hegde said that though the National Horticulture Mission is now promoting orchids, the government needs to make efforts to promote cost-effective cultivation, create market connectivity as well as storage and collection centres.

Coconut palm insurance scheme launched

There is relief for farmers reeling under drought. The Coconut Palm Insurance Scheme has been launched in Tuticorin district.

S. Kasivelu, Coordinator, Agriculture Insurance Company, Tuticorin, said here on Wednesday that under the scheme, coconut trees could be insured against natural calamities, including flood, cyclone, drought, lightning strikes and insect attack. The scheme was introduced in 11

districts across Tamil Nadu five years ago, but was extended to all districts in Tamil Nadu in December 2012.

The scheme is spearheaded by the Agriculture Insurance Company of India in association with the Coconut Development Board and the state government.

Fifty per cent of the insurance premium is proposed to be borne by the Coconut Development Board and 25 per cent premium contribution by the state government, with the rest shouldered by the farmers.

The insurance premium is determined on the basis of the age of the coconut trees. Around 8000 hectares are under coconut cultivation in the district.

Team apprises Chief Minister of woes of red gram growers

Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar has promised the two-member team, representing red gram growers in Hyderabad Karnataka region, that met him in Bangalore on Wednesday that the issue of offering a minimum support price of Rs. 5,000 a quintal for red gram would be taken up at the Cabinet meeting slated for Thursday.

President of the Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha Maruti Manpade told *The Hindu* over phone that he, along with president of the Karnataka Red Gram Growers' Association Basavaraj Ingin, apprised Mr. Shettar of the seriousness of the situation. Red gram growers, particularly small and marginal farmers, were forced to sell their produce at a low price now, he said.

Mr. Manpade said they also expressed their shock and opposition to the recommendation of the Cabinet subcommittee, headed by Deputy Chief Minister K.S. Eshwarappa, to fix the MSP of red gram at Rs. 4,200 a quintal.

They said that nothing less than Rs. 5,000 a quintal as MSP was acceptable.

They also expressed their dismay over the indifferent attitude of Minister for Agriculture Umesh V. Katti, who had no time to attend to the problems of the farming community.

Mr. Katti, who was scheduled to be in Bangalore to discuss the issue of fixing the MSP of red gram did not make it, Mr. Manpade said.

Later, Mr. Shettar promised Mr. Manpade and Mr. Ingin that although the issue of fixing MSP of red gram was not on the agenda of the Cabinet meeting, he would take it up.

Consortium makes case for hiking cane price

The Consortium of Indian Farmers' Association-Tamil Nadu has made a plea to the State government to enhance sugarcane price from Rs. 2,350 a tonne to Rs. 3,000 a tonne, according to R. Virdhagiri, general secretary of the association.

He told *The Hindu* that for the 2012-2013 sugarcane season, the government had fixed the price of cane at Rs. 2,350 a tonne, including Rs. 100 towards transport charges.

But, given the escalating costs of inputs, including fertilizers, labour charges, and, water and power shortage, the price offered by the government was inadequate.

Mr. Virdhagiri pointed out that the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam in its election manifesto had stated that if it came to power, it would offer a price of Rs. 2,500 for a tonne of sugarcane.

However, after assuming office, the party offered only Rs. 2,100 a tonne for the 2011-2012 season and Rs. 2,350 a tonne for the 2012-2013 season.

Stressing this point, the Consortium members observed a hunger strike in Chennai recently.

The consortium also appealed to the government to waive the "ways and means" loans sanctioned to sugarcane farmers through sugar mills in the cooperative and public sectors.

Mr. Virdhagiri noted that such loans would also help to revive mills located at places such as Madhuranthagam, Tirupattur, Tiruttani and Ambur that had become sick.

Since machinery in these mills had become obsolete, crushing capacity fell drastically, causing heavy losses to farmers. While the average recovery rate from sugarcane stood at 9.2 per cent in the State, it was a mere 7 per cent in these outdated mills.

The consortium was of the opinion that only when these mills were modernised, their production capacity could be considerably increased and arrears to farmers cleared without delay.

It also urged the State government to prevail upon the Centre to release funds to settle the outstanding amount to farmers arising out of the scrapping of Clause 5 (A) of the Sugar Control Order, 1966.

This clause that provided for profit sharing between the mills and the farmers on a 50-50 basis was taken out of the statute book on November 10, 2010. Because of such a move, payment had fallen due for six years - from 2004-2005 to 2009-2010.

Mr. Virdhagiri also put forth the view that the Rangarajan Committee constituted to go into the issues such as control on sugarcane and sugar should elicit views of the consortium before finalising its recommendations.

Active research work in organic fertigation

Fertigation, a practice of conjunctive application of fertilizers and water to crop plants is an inevitable component of modern day scientific agriculture.

Soluble fertilizers like urea, potash and a wide variety of fertilizer mixtures available in the market could be well mixed with irrigation water, filtered and then passed through the irrigation unit.

In the normal sense it refers to the conjunctive application of chemical fertilizers and water

However in the present situation of increasing demand for organic products and an inclination to organic farming practices, the scope for "Organic Fertigation" is very large. However, there are many hurdles to overcome, in making organic fertigation a reality.

The major hurdle is regarding the solubility of organic manure.

More residues

Solid residues are more in organic manures. The best filtering mechanism will be required to screen out the solid wastes.

Otherwise, they could clog the drippers and sprinkler heads thereby making the irrigation system inefficient.

The Agronomic Research Station, Chalakudy functioning under the Kerala Agricultural University Thrissur is conducting active research in organic fertigation.

The research was initiated with the popular organic manure — cow dung. The optimum proportion of cow dung water has been experimentally worked out so as to get quality filtrate.

Also a multitier filtration mechanism using three sets of sieves has been standardized for screening out the organic residues to get clear filtrate.

Ensuring quality

The quality of the filtrate was ensured through laboratory tests. It was noticed that the filtrate still contained almost the same quantity of plant nutrients as compared to the solid manure.

The filtrate was mixed with water and passed successfully through drip irrigation system without any problem of clogging.

Research works are going on to standardize the filtration techniques for other organic manures.

Work is presently being carried out to fabricate a portable organic fertigation with a multitier filtration mechanism unit suitable for homes.

(B. Sudha and E.B. Gilsha Bai, scientists, Agronomic Research station, Chalakudy, Kerala Agricultural University , Thrissur, email: sudhabpillai@yahoo.co.in, phone: 0480-2702116.)

Coffee exports, production decline



Arabica coffee berries

Sluggish demand in the European market on account of economic slowdown, incidence of pest attacks and an erratic monsoon have taken a toll on coffee exports as well as production in the just ended calendar year.

Sources in the Coffee Board told *The Hindu* that coffee exports dropped by 9.35 per cent in 2012 (January to December) to 3.10 lakh tonnes as compared to 3.42 lakh tonnes during the previous calendar year. It is now estimated that coffee production in 2012-13 will be 3.15 lakh tonnes against the original post-blossom estimate of 3.25 lakh tonnes. Among the reasons attributed for the decline in production are the above normal berry drop during the monsoon period apart from the pest attacks in certain pockets of the coffee growing areas.

The post-monsoon crop estimate for Karnataka is 2.27 lakh tonnes, Kerala 63,825 tonnes, Tamil Nadu 17,750 tonnes, non-traditional areas of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha 6,525 tonnes and north eastern region 195 tonnes.

Coffee exports in rupee terms was down by 1.96 per cent at Rs.4,728.71 crore in 2012 against Rs.4,823.48 crore in 2011. In dollar terms, it was down 11.19 per cent at \$926.27 million against \$1,043 million. In terms of unit value, it was Rs.1,52,104 against Rs.1,40,645 a tonne a year ago. Exports in October-December of the crop year 2012-13 were also down by 16.53 per cent at 47,159 tonnes against 56,499 tonnes in the year-ago period. The unit value was Rs.163,593 a tonne.

According to the Karnataka Planters' Association, India is the seventh largest producer of coffee accounting for only 4 per cent of the world's output. In 2011, India produced 5.3 million bags (60 kg). However, in shipments, India is the fifth largest exporter accounting for 5.6 per cent of the world market. India exports about 70 per cent of the total domestic production.

During 2011-12, Brazil produced 33 per cent of the world's coffee though in the off year, followed by Vietnam (15.2 per cent), Indonesia (6.3 per cent), and Colombia (5.9 per cent). India was pushed to the seventh position from the sixth. Domestic demand for coffee was around 1.15 lakh tonnes.

Centre, State should pay relief to farmers for crop loss: CPI(M)



G.Ramakrishnan, State secretary of CPI(M), at a press meet in Thanjavur on Wednesday.—

Photo:B.Velankanni Raj

The Central and State governments should pay relief to farmers and farm labourers of Cauvery delta districts as they had lost both kuruvai and samba in canal-irrigated areas, according to G. Ramakrishnan, State secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

He told presspersons here on Wednesday that farmers were not able to take up kuruvai in canal-irrigated areas as water was not released on the traditional date of June 12. Though water was released for samba late, it was inadequate.

He claimed that 12 farmers had allegedly committed suicide.

Mr. Ramakrishnan said the CPI (M) would support the picketing of Collectorates in delta districts by the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam and the Tamil Nadu Vivasaya Thozhilalargal Sangam on January 7. The party cadre would take part in the agitation. He said Centre should declare the situation in delta districts as national calamity and pay relief. State government should pay a solatium of Rs. 10 lakh to the families of farmers who had allegedly committed suicide due to crop loss, Rs. 25,000 as relief per acre to farmers who had raised and to those who had also not raised samba crop and Rs. 10,000 to each family of farm labourers.

On the Delhi rape incident, Mr. Ramakrishnan said the CPI (M) would organise on January 4 State-wide agitations against sexual assault against women.

He said in Thalanayar dalit girl rape case in Nagapattinam district, the case had been registered under IPC and not under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

Banana farmers get compensation

For the first time, perhaps, the district administration has compensated banana farmers whose crops were damaged during gale and rain in April 2012. This compensation – Rs. 11.23 lakh – was possible because of Collector M. Karunakaran's efforts, say officials in the Horticulture Department.

They say that the Rs. 11.23 lakh will, to an extent, offset the loss suffered by 409 farmers, who had cultivate banana on over 150 hectares.

For every hectare of loss suffered, the farmers will get Rs. 7,500.

The officials say that the farmers, whether insured or otherwise, will not get compensation if the loss suffered is because of winds.

Mr. Karunakaran says that the officials often make a mistake in only reporting gale and not rain.

In April 2012, the gale was accompanied by hail and that enabled him to take up the issue of damage to crops with the Government.

The Department sources say that majority of the farmers who suffered the damage were in and around Pollachi. And when the crop damage occurred, the plants were ready for harvest.

The farmers had aimed at the Tamil and Malayalam New Year for harvest and that was when the damage happened, they add.

And most of the crops that suffered damage were the traditional, long varieties because they are weightless.

To help the farmers overcome the problem, the Department of Horticulture has been promoting hybrid dwarf varieties like 'Dwarf Cavendish' and 'red banana'.

Ultimatum by Noida farmers

Farmers in Noida under the banner of Kisan Sangharsh Samiti threatened on Wednesday to block all development work in the city unless the Noida Authority fulfils its promise on back lease of land.

At a panchayat held at Gadhi Sahadra, they alleged that Authority officers wanted to keep the back lease issue pending.

A Samiti spokesperson said the Authority officers had not yet implemented the written agreement with farmers. "They now pass the buck to other officers."

Former Noida CEO Balvinder Kumar had entered into a written agreement with farmers, following which farmers had stopped their agitation. A total of 244,000 square metres of village land was under litigation and in several cases there were stay orders from the court in favour of the farmers. - PTI

Model compost yard to produce biogas

The compost yard at Nakkavanipalem will be made a model in utilising wet garbage collected from house-holds.

During a visit to the yard on Wednesday, Municipal Commissioner M.V. Satyanarayana said it was planned to produce biogas from the waste and supply it to the nearby apartments on an experimental basis.

As a part of the plan to take up collection of garbage from two wards each and turning it into compost, it is expected that from one tonne of organic waste 200 kg of compost can be made.

As a part of the plan measures are afoot to acquire 15 push-cards for each ward and calling for expression of interest to run the manure plants were afoot, Mr. Satyanarayana said.

Plans were also chalked out to introduce 24X7 sanitation in the city, he said

Project consultant Suresh Bhandari, and Zone II Commissioner P. Durga Prasad were present.

Let farmers produce Neera, says SJ(D) chief

Coconut farmers should be permitted to produce Neera in order to tackle the fall in the price of coconut, State president of Socialist Janatha (Democratic) [SJ(D)] M.P. Veerendra Kumar.

Inaugurating a dharna at the Kozhikode Collectorate as part of the party's State-wide campaign on Wednesday, he said that the government should stop importing Palmoline and stop its subsidy while marketing coconut oil at subsidised rates through Civil Supplies Corporation retail outlets, in order to save the coconut farmers.

He said his party would go on with protest measures until the farmers were given the right to produce Neera. District president Manayath Chandran presided over the function.

Conference

A two-day international conference on 'Increasing agriculture productivity and sustainability in India: The future we want' will be held from January 8 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies.

Coconut palm insurance scheme launched

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Fifty per cent of the insurance premium is proposed to be borne by the Coconut Development Board and 25 per cent premium contribution by the state government, with the rest shouldered by the farmers.

The insurance premium is determined on the basis of the age of the coconut trees. Around 8000 hectares are under coconut cultivation in the district.

Free goats: Namakkal second in terms of productivity

“The district stands second in the State in terms of productivity of goats that were distributed free of cost, said Joint Director of the Animal Husbandry, Namakkal Region, P. Sakthivel.

He said that this was announced by the Monitoring Cell of the department that monitors the free goat scheme at the joint directors review meeting in Chennai on December 27. With a productivity of 36 per cent in two years (2011-12 and 2012-13) Namakkal is next only to Ramanathapuram district that has 41 per cent productivity. Mr. Sakthivel said that 11,624 goats were distributed to 2,906 beneficiaries in 2011-12.

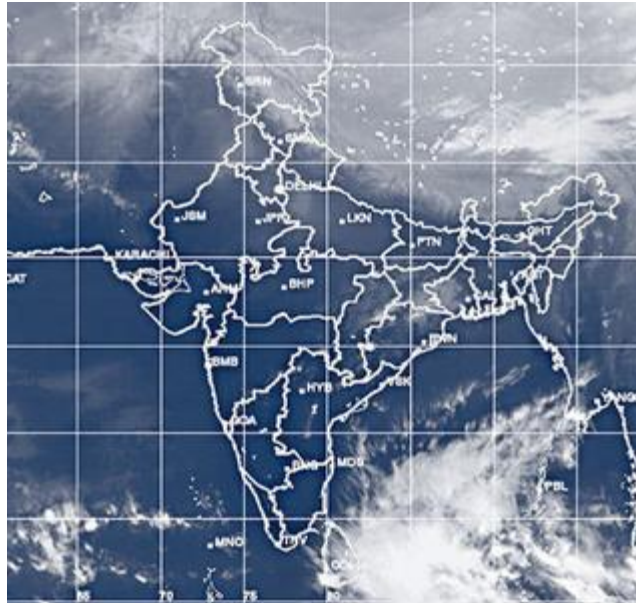
“In 2012-13, 11,824 goats were distributed to 2,956 beneficiaries till date. While 23,448 goats have been distributed to beneficiaries, population of the free goats has gone up to 34,035 – with the birth of 10,587 kids as on December 31.

“The 8,718 does distributed in 2011-12 have yielded 7,729 kids, while 8,868 does that were distributed in 2012-13 have yielded 2,858 kids. Goats aged about six months are distributed to the beneficiaries and it takes another three to six months for them to be mature enough to get pregnant. They deliver kids after a gestation period of 150 days.

“Most of the kids distributed this year are too young to give birth to young ones and this is the reason for productivity remaining less. But these goats will be as productive as the goats distributed in 2011-12 in the coming year,” he said. He also ruled out claims that many beneficiaries sold goats.

“The goats are government property till they are two years old and beneficiaries cannot sell them. A fine of Rs. 2,500 a goat is collected from those who sell the goats,” he added. The police have registered cases against 18 people for selling the goats

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	13	5	0	0
New Delhi (Sfd)	13	4	0	0
Chandigarh	11	7	0	0
Hissar	13	5	0	0
Bhuntar	19	4	0	0
Shimla	13	5	0	0
Jammu	11	7	0	0
Srinagar	9	-3	0	0
Amritsar	10	5	0	0
Patiala	12	7	0	0
Jaipur	22	5	0	0
Udaipur	21	7	0	0
Allahabad	25	10	0	0
Lucknow	23	4	0	0
Varanasi	25	11	0	0
Dehradun	20	4	0	0

Agartala	23	9	0	0
Ahmedabad	27	12	0	0
Bangalore	29	20	0	0
Bhubaneshwar	30	16	0	0
Bhopal	23	14	0	0
Chennai	31	23	0	0
Guwahati	25	10	0	0
Hyderabad	31	21	0	0
Kolkata	26	13	0	0
Mumbai	31	23	0	0
Nagpur	31	19	0	0
Patna	24	10	0	0
Pune	32	20	0	0
Thiruvananthapuram	32	23	0	0
Imphal	24	4	0	0
Shillong	15	5	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 to severe cold wave conditions are prevailing in some parts of west Uttar Pradesh and cold wave conditions are prevailing in some parts of east Uttar Pradesh. Cold day conditions are prevailing in most parts of Punjab and Haryana.

Weather was mainly dry over the region.

MINIIMUM TEMPERATURES: The minimum temperatures fell appreciably in Himachal Pradesh, fell in west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and changed little elsewhere. They were appreciably below normal in west Uttar Pradesh, below normal in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh,

west Rajasthan and Uttarakhand and normal in the rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 0.6°C recorded at Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 4th JANUARY 2013: Rain/Snow would occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh from 3rd January onwards and mainly dry weather over rest of the region. Fog/dense fog would occur in some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan during morning hours.

WARNING: Cold day conditions would prevail in some parts of Punjab and Haryana during the next 48 hours.

Cold wave conditions would occur in some parts of Uttar Pradesh. Dense fog(Visibility less than 200metre) would occur in some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and North Rajasthan during the next 48 hours.

Ground frost would occur in isolated pockets of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh during the next two nights.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 4th JANUARY 2013: Mainly clear sky. Fog in the morning hours.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jan 3

Max Min

29.9° | 21.3°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 83

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:31

Sunset: 05:54

Barometer: 1012

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Jan 4

Max Min

31° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Jan 5	Sunday Jan 6	Monday Jan 7	Tuesday Jan 8	Wednesday Jan 9
32° 23° Cloudy	25° 22° Overcast	26° 22° Overcast	26° 24° Cloudy	26° 24° Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 98

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:14

Sunset: 05:36

Barometer: 1016



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

03.01.2013 A.M

3st jan 2013

Profit booking crushes castorseed



On the back of weak demand in spot castorseed, traders resorted to profit booking in futures which pulled down prices of the oilseed on Wednesday.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX), castorseed for March delivery declined by Rs 84 to Rs 3,836 a quintal.

RCX spot castor decreased Rs 30 to Rs 3,627.50.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), castorseed January contract was down by Rs 73 at Rs 3,616 with an open interest of 49,760 lots.

NCDEX February castor was weak by Rs 78 to Rs 3,710 with an open interest of 102,850 lots.

About 22,000-23,000 bags of castor arrived in Gujarat and price was down Rs 11 to Rs 717-725 for 20 kg. Around 2,300-2,400 bags arrived in Saurashtra for Rs 695-725.

A Rajkot-based castor trader said: "Currently, export demand is weak, especially from China and Europe."

It is pulling down castorseed price in the spot market since last couple of days.”

Castor production this year has been pegged at 13-14 lakh tonnes with a carryover stock of 4.5 to 6 lakh tonnes.

Steady input costs keep poultry feed flat



With the cost of production being steady, prices of poultry feed products remained unchanged this week.

Aditya Mishra, a commodity expert, told *Business Line* that good demand and a steady input cost kept the prices of feed products unchanged. Feed products have been ruling flat since the last week of November and may continue to rule around current levels for the next few days too, he added.

Soyameal ruled flat and quoted at Rs 2,900 a quintal. Bajra, too, remained unchanged and sold at Rs 1,400 , while maize quoted at Rs 1,555, down by Rs 15. Di-calcium phosphate sold at Rs 36.50 a kg, while meat and bone meal went for Rs 32 a kg. Rice bran oil was at Rs 56 a litre while mustard de-oiled cake was at Rs 1,670 a quintal.

Traders expect that it is unlikely to see any major alteration in the prices of the most of the key ingredients of feed while the mustard de-oiled cake may go up by Rs 50-60 a quintal in near future, he said.

Feed Prices

Broiler concentrates feed quoted at Rs 1,860 for a 50-kg bag while Broiler Starter Mash was at Rs 1,460.

“Broiler pre-starter concentrate 30 per cent” sold at Rs 1,600 for a 30-kg bag while layer concentrate quoted at Rs 1,425 for a 50-kg bag.

Pre-lay mash quoted at Rs 1,030 while broiler finisher sold at Rs 1,440 for a 50-kg bag.

Poultry Products

Meanwhile, increased off-take pushed egg, broiler and chick prices upwards, on Wednesday.

Egg increased marginally by 12 paise and sold at Rs 3.45, broiler went up by Rs 4 and quoted at Rs 64-66 a kg, while chick improved by Rs 3 and sold at Rs 11-13. Poultry products may rule range-bound following a steady domestic demand coupled with an easy availability of stocks, said Aditya Mishra.

Bearish futures, ample supply drag sugar



Sugar prices dropped by Rs 30-40 at naka level on Wednesday on increased selling pressure of old season's stocks in resale and mill level. Mill tender rates eased by Rs 20 a quintal as good quality old stocks were sold by some producers at lower rates. In ready market, on support of routine activities, prices ruled almost steady with minor changes. The morale was slightly weak in line with bearish futures markets that dropped by Rs 15-20 till noon.

Jagdish Rawal of B. Bhogilal and co., said: “The volume in the physical market remained as usual despite month beginning. Bearish sugar futures weighed on the sentiment. Neither stockists were interested in fresh big inventory buying nor were retailers active. Producers are forced to sell commodity with current market trend as they are under pressure from stocks due to peak crushing season. The market is witnessing routine demand and ample supply since long.”

Sources said with sufficient inventory Vashi traders are not willing to bet for fresh buying as local demand is still not showing improvement. Routine retail demand kept overall volume arrested at market and mill level. Mills are continuously selling hence supply is ample. In Vashi market, arrivals were 63-64 truckloads (each of 100 bags), while local dispatches were 60-62 loads. On Tuesday about 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold 48,000-50,000 (each of 100 kg) bags in the range of Rs 3,160-3,200 (Rs 3,160-3,220) for S-grade and Rs 3,270-3,310 (Rs 3,290-3,330) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 3,266-3,352 (Rs 3,270-3,351) and M-grade Rs 3,352-3,511 (Rs 3,342- 3,512). **Naka delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,220-3,260 (Rs 3,250-3,300) and M-grade Rs 3,300-3,400 (Rs 3,330-3,450).

N. India demand, bullish futures add colour to turmeric



Spot turmeric prices gained Rs 200 a quintal on Wednesday on the back of improved buying from North India and futures hitting the upper circuit.

“Spot turmeric prices showed an uptrend today, the first market conducted in 2013. This is due to the demand received by traders from Kolkata and Bihar. Also, prices in the futures market increased by 4 per cent. The current trend will continue for the next couple of days and from next week, we are expecting further hike in price as we are waiting for orders from Delhi and Maharashtra also,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. He said the hybrid variety fetched good price as the demand was very high. Most of the traders purchased quality goods by quoting higher price.

Farmers expect that the price may touch Rs 8,000 a quintal by the end of this month. After that, the new crop will arrive in the market and prices may fall down. The harvest will begin next week.

The price of Salem Hybrid variety was up by Rs 786 a quintal on Wednesday.

Similarly, other finger varieties were higher by Rs 150-200 a quintal.

Totally 4,500 bags of turmeric arrived for sale of which 70 per cent stocks was sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,399-6,527 and the root variety Rs 4,063- 6,016 .

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,469-7,190; the root variety Rs 5,196-6,410. Of the 770 bags that arrived, 207 were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety fetched Rs 5,799-6,610; the root variety Rs 5,569-6,069. Of the 680 bags up for sale, 509 found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety quoted Rs 5,658-6,329 and the root variety Rs 5,201- 6,169. Of the 719 bags that arrived, 663 bags found takers.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,669-6,639; the root variety Rs 5,469-5,889. All the 89 bags were sold.

Pepper moves up on circular trading

The pepper market after remaining highly volatile moved up on Wednesday on circular trading after the bulls got back into the driving seat. Consequently all the active contracts closed above the previous day's closing prices.

The market opened at Rs 34,100 a quintal and then fell to touch the lowest price of Rs 33,975 a quintal, down by Rs 175 from the opening price in the afternoon. However, in the evening session, it moved up and touched the highest price of the day at Rs 34,765, up by Rs 790 a quintal from the lowest price of the day. Amid high volatility, the last traded price was at Rs 34,515. The last half-hour average price was given as the closing price.

Of the total turnover, 86 per cent was in February while it was 11 per cent in March and 3 per cent in April. In spite of the high turnover, February open interest was down by 6 tonnes, implying good circular trading by the bull operators who got back and pushed the prices up as the fundamentals were in their favour, market sources told *Business Line*.

Farmers, small and medium traders claimed that the high volatility in the market was making it not conducive to them because of the continuous tug of war between both the operators.

They said that the 4 per cent daily fluctuation band for the Rs 400 a kg commodity was not in their interest and hence it should be brought down to 2.5 per cent.

Fresh arrivals

On the spot, 17 tonnes of fresh pepper arrived. As they were of high moisture content, said to be 24 per cent, and with 450 GL bulk density, the material was traded at Rs330 a kg. Total off take was around 19 tonnes.

February contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 290 a quintal to close at Rs 34,465 a quintal while March and April also moved up by Rs 140 and 90 a quintal respectively to close at Rs 33,825 and 33,750 a quintal.

Total turnover rose by 675 tonnes to close at 1,599 tonnes. Total open interest went up by 29 tonnes to close at 3,678 tonnes.

February open interest declined by 6 tonnes to 2,806 tonnes while that of March and April increased by 10 tonnes and 25 tonnes respectively to close at 692 tonnes and 159 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend went up by Rs300 a quintal to close at Rs36,800 (ungarbled) and Rs38,300 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$7,300 a tonne (c&f) at spot prices of Rs 383 a kg while at February futures market price it was at \$6,600 a tonne (c&f).

Pepper futures slip on higher output estimates, weak exports demand



Pepper prices moved down by Rs 160 to Rs 34,015 per quintal in futures trade on Wednesday as speculators trimmed their positions, driven by reports of higher output estimates and weak export demand.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, pepper for delivery in February fell by Rs 160, or 0.47 per cent to Rs 34,015 per quintal with an open interest of 2,817 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in March declined by Rs 85, or 0.25 per cent to Rs 33,600 per quintal in 682 lots.

Marketmen said, besides higher output estimates, weak overseas demand and approaching fresh supply season, led to a fall in pepper prices at futures trade.

Meanwhile, pepper output is likely to be higher next year due to expectations of good yields in the top producing states of Kerala and Karnataka.

Farm sector seeks stable export policy, higher R&D outlay at pre-Budget meet



The agriculture sector wants the Government to formulate long-term, stable export policies for agricultural products, besides incentives and higher outlay to boost research and development (R&D).

At the pre-Budget meeting with Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Wednesday, experts from the sector, representing farmers and private companies, stressed the need for a stable export policy and regulate, if required, using the tariffs.

The Finance Minister kick-started the pre-Budget discussions by meeting the farm sector representatives.

“A stable export policy is a must for providing good incentives to farmers. If there is a need to moderate exports of any commodity, the Government should regulate it using duties rather than imposing a ban on shipments,” said Ashok Gulati, Chairman, Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP). He was talking to reporters after the meeting.

Gulati, in his presentation, stressed the need to contain subsidies – food and fertilisers. The food and fertiliser subsidy in FY 2013-14 may touch Rs 2,00,000 crore if the National Food Security Bill is introduced and wheat and rice are sold at Rs 2 a kg and Rs 3 a kg, respectively, as promised, and if fertiliser prices were not revised upwards, he said.

Implementation of conditional cash transfer could potentially reduce food subsidy by over Rs 50,000 crore by plugging the leakages, Gulati said.

The CACP estimates that 40 per cent of food distributed through the public distribution system does not reach the targeted beneficiaries and leaks away in the system.

The CACP also suggested having a viable strategy and long-term commitment to boost cultivation of oil palm, which can help cut down the rising imports of edible oils.

The experts also stressed the need to hike R&D allocation to various Government research institutes to boost productivity and develop climate change resilient varieties.

P. Chengal Reddy, Secretary General, Consortium of Indian Farmers Association (CIFA) said the Government should announce incentives to attract private investments in food processing, infrastructure, irrigation projects and agro service centres.

The CIFA wants the Government review the terms of reference of CACP in recommending the minimum support price for ensuring profitable prices to farmers. It also wants the Government to declare region-wise MSP as cost of production varies from region to region.

The CIFA sought duty exemption on all imported farm equipment and machinery for a period of five years and extend long-term credit to farmers at 3 per cent interest rate to purchase farm machinery.

Y. Sivaji, a former MP, suggested setting up of a CACP in each State so that State Commissions could fix the minimum support price considering local conditions. Sivaji also suggested that the Government should consider an indexation system for the MSP as in done in calculating the dearness allowance according to the cost of living.

Horti, floriculture expo from Jan 11



New Delhi will host the 5th International Horti Expo 2013, along with the 8th International Flora Expo 2013 from January 11 to 13.

The events will be held at NSIC Exhibition Complex, Okhla, New Delhi, in which the theme pavilion will be on fresh fruits and vegetables, farm machineries and equipment, potato products and technologies, cold-chain and logistics, among others, according to S. Jafar Naqvi, President, Indian Flowers and Ornamental Plants Welfare Association (iFlora), here.

The expo, which has the Union Ministry of Agriculture as its principal sponsor, is being sponsored by a host of other departments including National Horticulture Mission, National Horticulture Board and Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States.

It is also supported by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Food Processing & Packaging

Machinery Industry Association, Irrigation Association of India, National Medicinal Plant Board, and iFlora.

Fresh fruits, vegetables and food intake contribute 13 per cent to total organised retail and offers significant scope for investment in all related sectors.

He said the events aimed to increase per capita flower consumption to give more impetus to floriculture industry.

The Ministry of Agriculture is aiming to double the production of all horticulture crops and creating opportunities of mass employment for people in rural areas by encouraging them to diversify from traditional crops to high value horticulture crops, he said.

Fresh fruit imports are dominated by apples, which, in volume terms, account for more than 75 per cent of the total fruit imports. Import of apples grew 35 per cent to 1,22,878 tonnes in 2010 compared to the year before.

Jute prices seen ruling stable despite drop in demand



The lacklustre demand from the sugar industry notwithstanding, raw jute prices are likely to remain stable due to lower production in 2012-13.

Jute production is estimated to be seven per cent lower this season.

The raw jute prices (TD5 variety) are hovering at around Rs 2,700 a quintal currently against Rs 2,550 a quintal during the last week of November.

According to Manish Poddar, raw jute production for 2012-13 is estimated at approximately 92 lakh bales, down from 99 lakh bales in 2011-12.

“There has been practically no demand for jute bags for packaging from the sugar industry so far,” said Manish Poddar, Chairman, Indian Jute Mills’ Association.

Typically close to 40 per cent of the sugar industry’s total demand for packaging comes in by November-December.

However, the prices are not likely to inch up much from the current levels due to the high carry over stock and low demand. Currently, the carryover stock in jute mills is close to 40 lakh bales, which along with the current year’s production of 92 lakh bales, would be sufficient to meet the whole year’s demand, Poddar said.

Dilution

The Union Government recently diluted packaging norms under the mandatory Jute Packaging Materials Act (JPMA) of 1987. The Centre has permitted up to 60 per cent dilution in JPMA for packing sugar and 10 per cent dilution for packing food grains in 2012-13.

The JPMA directs all sugar factories to use jute bags for packing sugar to the extent of 100 per cent.

However, with jute mills often failing to meet the demand from sugar mills on time, and availability of cheaper substitutes of packaging materials in the plastics industry, the packaging norms were diluted in favour of sugar mills.

The jute industry is estimated to suffer a blow of nearly Rs 1,500 crore on account of the dilution.

Other markets

The jute industry is exploring other markets to offset the drop in demand from sugar industry.

“We are looking at increasing the supply of jute bags for food grain packaging. This apart, we are also looking at boosting our exports by focusing on markets such as Thailand and Vietnam where there is a good demand for jute bags,” Poddar said.

Mixed trend in spot rubber



Spot rubber were mixed on Wednesday.

The market failed to recover in tune with the overall gains in domestic futures on buyer resistance.

Meanwhile, the supply situation continued to remain tight as farmers held back their produce expecting higher price levels in the succeeding weeks.

Sheet rubber slipped to Rs 162 (162.50) a kg, according to traders.

The grade finished unchanged at Rs 162 a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

The January series improved to Rs 166.48 (164.44), February to Rs 169 (166.89) March to Rs 171.95 (170.00) and April to Rs 176 (175) a kg for RSS 4, while the May and June series remained inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) increased to Rs 178.76 (177.75) a kg at Bangkok. **Spot rates were (Rs/kg):** RSS-4: 162 (162.50); RSS-5: 157 (157); ungraded: 152 (152); ISNR 20: 151.50 (151.50) and latex 60 per cent: 105.50 (105.50).

Rise in wheat MSP pushes Food Ministry's economic cost by 5%



The Food Ministry's economic cost of wheat – the amount incurred in procuring and storing the grain – is set to rise by 5 per cent to Rs 19,147 per tonne with the increase in the minimum support price (MSP) of the grain, an official said.

Last month, the government had raised the MSP of wheat by Rs 65 to Rs 1,350 per quintal for the 2013-14 marketing year (April-March).

“The hike in wheat MSP will also lead to a rise in the economic cost of procuring and storing the grain. It will now rise to Rs 19,147 per tonne in 2013-14 marketing year from Rs 18,225 per tonne in the 2012-13 marketing year,” a senior Food Ministry official said.

The government had procured 38.15 million tonnes of wheat in 2012-13 rabi marketing year, which was 10 million tonnes more than the procurement made in the 2011-12 marketing year.

“With a higher MSP, conducive weather and progress in sowing, the procurement of wheat is expected to rise. Already rice procurement is expected to touch 40.13 million tonnes in 2012-13 marketing season (October-September) and this will lead to a rise in the food subsidy bill,” the official added.

Food Ministry has already sought an additional Rs 14,300 crore during this fiscal for rice procurement in the 2012-13 marketing season.

Another Food Ministry official said with the rise in MSP and other incidental costs involved in procurement, the economic cost of wheat and rice procured by public agencies have been increasing.

“As the Central Issue Price (CIP) remains unchanged, the gap between the economic cost and CIP, which is borne by the Centre, as food subsidy has been rising,” the official added.

CIP is the rate at which the Central government issues food grains for the public distribution system (PDS) to states and union territories.

The Centre incurred an expenditure of Rs 72,370 crore on food subsidy in 2011-12 fiscal and in the current financial year, out of the total allocation of Rs 74,552 crore it has spent Rs 61,259 crore till December 15, 2012.

Sugar output up 2.5% at 7.9 mt during Oct-Dec



Sugar production in the first three months of the 2012-13 sugar year was up 2.5 per cent at 7.96 million tonnes over the corresponding period last year.

The overall increase in output was bolstered by higher production in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

During October-December, 496 mills across the country have crushed 83 million tonnes of sugarcane, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said.

Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh, where the mills started crushing in late November, the output was 11 per cent lower at 1.92 mt over last year.

Sugar recovery stood at 8.74 per cent, same as that of last year. Till date, about 121 sugar mills were operational in the State.

Maharashtra

Maharashtra produced 2.90 mt of sugar, about 4 per cent more than last year. The higher output has been attributed to the early commencement of crushing season and better operational utilisation.

About 161 sugar mills were operational till date against 167 in the corresponding period last year. Sugar recovery in Maharashtra stood at 10.46 per cent, almost the same as that of last year.

The reason for slowing pace in recovery revival is due to partially dry cane arrival to sugar mills. ISMA has projected a sugar output of 6.5 mt in Maharashtra in the current year.

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh

In Karnataka, the output was higher by 17 per cent at 1.55 mt with a slightly better recovery at 9.87 per cent. Tamil Nadu has produced 3 lakh tonnes so far, while Andhra Pradesh has registered a 12 per cent increase at 3.28 lakh tonnes.

ISMA has reiterated its earlier projections of 24 mt for the year. The Government has pegged the 2012-13 output at 23 mt. The industry body is expected to review the situation by mid-January.

Pulichintala irrigation project on Krishna river will be ready by July

The Pulichintala irrigation project on Krishna river in Andhra Pradesh will be completed by July this year, state secondary education minister K Pardhasaradhi has said.

Being constructed since 2004 at a cost of Rs 600 crore with a storage capacity of 42 tmc water to facilitate irrigation for Krishna delta, the project “will be completed in the next six—seven months,” Pardhasaradhi, who hails from Krishna district where the project is being undertaken, told reporters.

Also, the land acquisition project for port at Machilipatnam on East Coast in Krishna district will be taken up shortly, the minister added.

The government has notified 5,000 acres of land for acquisition towards the construction of the port.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

03.01.2013 A.M

Rise in wheat MSP increases food ministry's cost by 5%

The food ministry's economic cost of wheat — the amount incurred in procuring and storing the grain — is set to rise by five per cent to Rs 19,147 a tonne, with the increase in the minimum support price (MSP) of the grain, an official said. Last month, the government had raised wheat MSP by Rs 65 to Rs 1,350 a quintal for the 2013-14 marketing year (April-March).



“The hike in wheat MSP will also lead to a rise in the economic cost of procuring and storing the grain. It will now rise to Rs 19,147 a tonne in 2013-14 marketing year from Rs 18,225 a tonne in the 2012-13 marketing year,” a ministry official said.

The Centre had procured 38.15 million tonnes of wheat in 2012-13 rabi marketing year — 10 million tonnes more than the procurement made in the 2011-12 marketing year.

“With a higher MSP, conducive weather and progress in sowing, the procurement of wheat is expected to rise. Already rice procurement is expected to touch 40.13 million tonnes in 2012-13 marketing season (October-September) and this will lead to a rise in the food subsidy Bill,” the official added.

The food ministry has already sought an additional Rs 14,300 crore during this financial year for rice procurement in the 2012-13 marketing season.

Another food ministry official said with the rise in MSP and other incidental costs involved in procurement, the economic cost of wheat and rice procured by public agencies had been increasing.

“As the central issue price (CIP) remains unchanged, the gap between the economic cost and CIP, which is borne by the Centre, as food subsidy has been rising,” the official added.

CIP is the rate at which the central government issues foodgrains for the Public Distribution System (PDS) to states and union territories.

The Centre incurred an expenditure of Rs 72,370 crore on food subsidy in 2011-12 and in the current financial year, out of the total allocation of Rs 74,552 crore it has spent Rs 61,259 crore till December 15, 2012.

Cotton arrival declines by 11.74% in India

Cotton arrivals in India as on 31st December has declined by about 11.74 per cent to 8.80 million bales (each weighing 170 kg) as against 9.97 million bales corresponding period last year.

According to industry sources, cotton arrivals decreased this year due to decline in production, mainly in Gujarat, which is largest cotton producer state in country.



As per Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) data, cotton arrival in Gujarat has declined from 3.32 million bales to 1.94 million bales. After Gujarat, lowest arrival has been noted in Punjab with 683,000 bales as against 819,000 bales, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 515,000 bales as against 699,000 bales.

"The increase in gap of cotton arrivals between last year and this year is mainly because of Gujarat. Estimated production of cotton in Gujarat is down by 40 million bales due to poor monsoon." said Arvind Patel, vice president of Saurashtra Ginners Association (SGA).

On an average, about 55,000 bales cotton arrives every day in Gujarat. Out of this, around 28,000-30,000 bales of cotton have been arriving this year from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan as against around 8,000 bales last year. Price of cotton is ruling at Rs 850-880 per 20 kg in Gujarat.

"Farmers are not selling their cotton as they want more prices. Arrival flow from other states has also restricted the price from rising in recent times," said Patel.

According to Arunbhai Dalal, an Ahmedabad-based trader and exporter, currently Gujarat farmers are not selling their cotton enough as they had seen price levels of Rs 951-1000 per 20 kg last year. "Only when prices will reach to this level, farmers will increase their cotton selling," said Dalal.

Meanwhile, cotton arrival in Andhra Pradesh has increased while in Maharashtra it is almost same. According to CCI data so far 2.23 million bales cotton arrived in Andhra Pradesh as against 1.54 bales in last year and 1.62 million bales cotton arrived in Maharashtra, last year it was 1.69 million bales.

Chana down 0.72%



Chana futures traded lower by Rs 28 to Rs 3,850 per quintal today.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the January contract traded lower by Rs 28, or 0.72% to Rs 3850 in 6,3350 lots.

Similarly, the February contract lost Rs 19, or 0.53% to Rs 3,553 per quintal in 44,160 lots.

Analysts said hopes of a higher output this year triggering off-loading of positions by speculators influenced the chana futures.

Sugar production up 2.5% in first three months of the season

Despite fewer mills started crushing of cane, sugar output registered 2.5 per cent growth in the first three months of the season beginning October 1, 2012.



Data compiled by the apex trade body Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) showed that sugar production was up by 0.2 million tonnes to 7.96 million tonnes until December 31, 2013 compared to 7.76 million tonnes by the same time last year.

During the same period, however, number of operational mills registered a decline to 496 units, down by 2.4 per cent of 12 units compared to 508 units in the same period last year.

“This necessarily means, the operational mills crushed more cane across the country,” said an ISMA official.

Operational mills crushed more than 83.4 million tonnes of cane in the first three months of the current sugar season in comparison with 82.36 million tonnes in the same period last year.

Although, the crushing season begins with harvesting of cane on October 1, sugar mills commence crushing only in mid-November as a normal practice.

Uttar Pradesh reported a total production of 1.93 million tonnes of sugar output with at 8.74 per cent of recovery. The sugar production in the state works out to about 11 per cent less than the last year with around same recovery level. Initial pace in recovery gain has been lost due to arrival of stale sugarcane from farmer’s field. Moreover, farmers are in hurry to sow wheat by clearing their sugarcane ratoon fields. Till date, 121 sugar mills were operational in the state, lower by 1 from the same time last year.

Maharashtra posted total sugar production at 2.91 million tonnes, about 4 per cent higher than last year due to early commencement of cane crushing and higher capacity utilization. Till date, 161 sugar mills are operational in the state down by 6 sugar mills. The recovery from sugarcane was same as that of last year at 10.46 per cent. The reason for slowing pace in recovery revival over last year in Maharashtra is because of partially dry cane arrival to sugar mills. ISMA has projected 6.5 million tonnes of sugar production in the state.

In Karnataka, the sweetener production was 17 per cent higher at 1.55 million tonnes with around same number of operational sugar mills at 56. This year to date, recovery is slightly better at 9.87 per cent compared to 9.3 per cent in the same period last year.

ISMA estimated sugar production at 24 million tonnes this season, over 2 million tonnes lower than the last year’s output at 26 million tonnes.

Jeera sheds 0.68%

Jeera futures fell by 0.68% to Rs 14,680 per quintal today.

Sluggish demand in the spot market also put pressure on the spice prices at futures trade.



At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the March contract softened by Rs 100, or 0.68%, to Rs 14,680 per quintal in 14,616 lots.

Similarly, the October contract declined by Rs 75, or 0.51%, to Rs 14,745 per quintal in 3,387 lots.

Marketmen said, off-loading of positions by speculators due to favourable weather and a higher area under cultivation weighed on the jeera futures.

Potato down on profit-bookings

Potato futures declined by Rs 2.80 to Rs 718.10 per quintal today.



At the Multi Commodity Exchange, the April contract dipped by Rs 2.80, or 0.39% to Rs 718.10 per quintal in 3 lots.

The March contract also traded lower by 20 paise, or 0.03% to Rs 763.10 per quintal in 46 lots.

Analysts said profit-booking by participants and fall in spot market demand kept pressure on potato futures.

Cardamom remains up as demand picks up



Cardamom prices rose by Rs 5.20 to Rs 1,038 per kg in futures market today.

Tight supplies further fuelled the uptrend.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, the January contract added Rs 5.20, or 0.50% to Rs 1,038 per kg 479 lots.

Similarly, the February contract gained Rs 4.40, or 0.41% to Rs 1078 per kg in 124 lots.

Analysts said speculative positions by participants and firm trend at spot market on pick-up in demand kept cardamom prices higher for the second day.

Pepper down on higher output estimates

Pepper prices moved down by Rs 160 to Rs 34,015 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators trimmed their positions.



At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the February contract fell by Rs 160, or 0.47% to Rs 34,015 per quintal in 2,817 lots.

Similarly, the March contract declined by Rs 85, or 0.25% to Rs 33,600 per quintal in 682 lots.

Marketmen said higher output estimates, weak overseas demand and approaching fresh supply season led to a fall in pepper futures.

Meanwhile, pepper output is likely to be higher next year due to expectations of good yields in Kerala and Karnataka.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

03.01.2013 A.M

Agriculturists come up with measures to improve yield

NAGPUR: Agrarian crisis in the country has worsened over the years despite concerted efforts by the government to support the sector. While wrong [pricing policies](#) and inept use of technology in farming are cited two major reasons for this situation, agriculturists are also focusing on ways to handle vagaries of climate.

Some NGOs from the region, which came together during a workshop organized by Hyderabad-based NGO [Centre for Sustainable Agriculture](#) recently, discussed ways to overcome difficulties posed by these issues. On the basis of the conclusions derived from the deliberations, agriculturists from these NGOs would submit suggestions to the Central as well as the state government to help take some policy decisions.

"Basically, we aim to promote right agricultural practices suitable to a particular region while discouraging use of chemical fertilizers at the same time. Prices of seeds and insecticides have kept on increasing in the past few years. So much so that growing certain crops which were earlier thought to be cash crops is no more economically viable for the farmers," said Chandrashekhar Dorlikar from Dorli village, a field coordinator with the centreas Vidarbha branch.

"Three major problems ail Indian agriculture today - economic, technical and climatic. The cultivation cost has gone up tremendously while the returns are decreasing. The government does not take into account the amount invested by a farmer to grow certain crops while fixing their prices. Prices of essential products have increased 400 times in last five years alone. This is responsible for the growing indebtedness of the Indian farmers," said agricultural scientist executive director of the organization, GV Ramanjaneyulu, who has earlier worked with [Indian Council of Agricultural Research](#) (ICAR).

Changing techniques of farming from cyclical to linear, over dependency on chemical fertilizers, shift in land use pattern and monocultures are things that also degrade the land, said Ramanjaneyulu. "While the first two factors can be controlled, one can only adapt to climatic changes. Considering the alteration in climatic pattern, farmers should shift to other crops and adopt different farming techniques," he said.

The scientist stressed that agricultural crisis has only worsened in the last couple of decades. asThe number of farmer suicides over the years also proves this. Between 1995 and 2011, Maharashtra alone has witnessed around 54,000 farmers' suicides. Till 2002, on an average 2508 farmers committed suicide in the state annually. Since 2003, it has risen to 3802," he informed.

Some suggestions

- *While fixing price of a farm produce, government must consider inflation and increased cost of living in rural areas
- *Removal of quantitative restrictions and allowing cheaper imports
- *Creating awareness about problems arising due to chemical use; checking use of all pesticides banned world over
- *Restricting use of genetically modified crops
- *Organizing farmers into groups to improve their bargaining power
- *Reducing cost of cultivation - promote low-cost methods; recast input subsidies - fertilizer, seed, labour
- *Crop insurance and disaster relief

Farmers in parched lands get additional 17% power subsidy

The state cabinet granted Wednesday a further 17 per cent subsidy on power bills to farmers in areas facing water scarcity.

With this, the total subsidy goes up to 67 per cent.

At present, 6,250 villages have been declared water scarcity-affected.

Villages where kharif yield is less than 50 per cent of average produce are termed scarcity-hit.

Electricity bills sent post April 1, 2012, under water supply schemes in these villages will get a 50 per cent subsidy from the water supply department and 17 per cent from the relief and rehab department.

“The remaining 33 per cent will have to be paid by gram panchayats or regional water supply scheme operators such as those under Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran,” said relief and rehab department principal secretary Milind Mhaiskar.

The state has already decided to allow payment of bills issued before April 1, 2012, in 12 installments under Abhay Yojana.

While the state has spent Rs 180.61 crore on cattlesheds, the Wednesday meeting decided that from January 1, the expenditure limit for big animals will be Rs 60 each a day and Rs 30 for small animals.

The government has set up 107 cattlesheds in Ahmednagar, two in Osmanabad, seven in Beed, one in Pune, 90 in Satara, 20 in Sangli and 109 in Solapur, housing 2,99,239 animals.

Meanwhile, there was 61 per cent water in the 2,468 supply projects in the state Wednesday. The maximum, 80 per cent, water availability was in Konkan and minimum, 19 per cent, in Marathwada.

'Artificial' shortage of urea hits farmers

Farmers are facing an acute shortage of urea this wheat sowing season after dealers across the state have been found forcing farmers to buy fertilisers such as zinc, biopesticides etc., in addition to packets of urea. This has resulted in the artificial shortage of urea in the market, which has forced Director of Agriculture Dr Mangal Singh Sandhu to make a visit various state districts.

Dr Sandhu ordered that license of any such dealer will be cancelled if found indulging in creating an artificial shortage. "As per the data available, 90 lakh metric tonne of urea is required by farmers, and we have stocks of more than 10.20 lakh metric tonne which have been dispatched, there is no shortage as such, but it has been created by a few dealers who will be taken to task, if more complaints are received."

Rs 536 per quintal is the rate of urea in the market, but dealers are forcing farmers to buy additional sprays, or pesticides along or they refuse to sell product, complained Darshan Singh Koohli from Bharti Kisan union.

Sandhu said: "I have travelled to almost all Punjab districts and have cancelled leaves of officers. Have told them to be in field to address the problems of farmers. I am sure, now they will not find any more harassment."

DECCAN Chronicle

TODAY FARM NEWS

03.01.2013 A.M

Colours draw huge crowd



Kochi: A large number of flower lovers have been visiting the Cochin Flower Show 2013, which opened at the Siva temple grounds on Friday. Hundreds of flower lovers are visiting the venue and there are many takers for seeds and plants, especially orchids and anthuriums.

Plants are being arranged in different categories like flowering plants, medicinal plants, vegetables and organic varieties. Around 20,000 varieties of flowers have been exhibited as part of the event this year. There are rows of roses in many colours, carnations, gerbera, lilliums, anthuriuams, orchids, chrysanthemums, gladioli and tulips.

Private nurseries, gardens and other organisations have beautifully displayed bonsai plants, medicinal and aromatic plants. The plants exhibited will be sold on the final day of the expo. The beautifully designed landscapes with waterfalls, lawn and pebbles arranged by agencies which specialise in landscapes are a major attraction.

Several government and private organisations like State Horticulture Mission, Kerala state Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd, National Horticorp Mission and Coir Board have stalls in the expo.

One of the most sought-after products in the show is the chitone tablets, used to reduce cholesterol levels, at Matsyafed stall. More than 100 packets of tablets are being sold per day, said Matsyafed officials.