THE HINDU

TODAY FARM NEWS

05.01.2013 A.M

Move to run special train to transport farm produce

A proposal is under preparation to operate a train from Salem to Agra to transport the agricultural produce, including banana, to the northern parts of the country, thus, providing better marketing opportunities to the farmers in the State, according to E. Vadivel, Project Officer, Precision Farming and e-Extension, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Participating in a seminar on Grand Naine Banana held at Gobichettipalayam on Friday, Mr. Vadivel said the proposal envisaged the transportation of banana, mango, tender coconuts, spices, various agricultural produce, eggs and chicken in 90 specially-designed refrigerated wagons to Agra. The train, in the return journey, would carry apple, potatoes, dry nuts, onions, kinnow, wheat and other agricultural produce from the northern parts of the country.

Apart from increasing the business prospects of the farmers, the introduction of the special train would also ensure lower wastage, quicker and economical transportation of bananas, he said.

About 20-30 per cent of the horticulture produce goes waste because of lack of modern storage and transportation facilities, he pointed out.

Tamil Nadu accounts for about 25 per cent of the banana produced in the country.

A significant amount of the banana produced in the State is being exported to various countries. If the banana farmers in the State have a good access to the markets in the northern parts of the country, they can earn more, Mr. Vadivel pointed out.

The train would be able to transport about 12,000 tonnes of agricultural produce and other perishable goods.

Stating that the proposal was still under the initial stages, Mr. Vadivel said, “It will be implemented under the public-private partnership mode.

Discussions with the government agencies and private firms were going on," he added.

Call for paradigm shift in paddy cultivation practices in kharif

V. Nagi Reddy, Principal Secretary, Department of Agriculture, on Friday appealed to the paddy farmers to shift from the traditional paddy varieties in kharif to save themselves from cyclones in the Godavari delta region.

The authorities from the Agricultural Research Station (ARS) at Maruteru have arranged an interaction with the farmers from the Godavari delta region in East and West Godavari districts involving Mr. Reddy.

The Principal Secretary highlighted the need for a paradigm shift in the management practices in paddy cultivation also to mitigate the heavy crop losses reported in the delta region during every kharif season in view of cyclones.

Mr. Nagi Reddy asked the personnel from the Agriculture department, extension officers from the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and the District Agricultural Advisory and Transfer of Technology (DAATT) Centre to reach out to the farmers with the twin objectives—promotion of alternative paddy varieties and change in the crop management practices in kharif.

Swarna, a leading paddy variety, makes the growers vulnerable to heavy crop losses in the kharif due to cyclones in view of its susceptibility to lodging and inability to withstand the water-logging conditions in the delta.

Still, the farmers's love for the variety is failing to die down due to its high yielding traits. The scientists at the ARS at Maruteru have developed MTU-1061 (Indra), MTU-1064 (Amara), MTU-1075 (Pushyami) as 'viable' alternatives to the Swarna with all the 'admirable' qualities associated with the latter. But, they found few takers for want of awareness among the farmers.

Mr. Nagi Reddy requested the farmers to go for direct seeding under the canal ayacut with the help of early showers in June and July without having to wait for release of water.

The direct seeding would help the growers avoid late transplantation as observed at present and harvest the crop before the onset of cyclones. Besides, the duration of the crop in the method of direct seeding would come down by one week-10 days, he added. It may be recalled that there was a growing demand from the delta farmers for release of water in the second week of May from the Godavari river and help them avoid late transplantations and save themselves from cyclones in kharif. M. Bharata Lakshmi, Associate Director (Research), ARS, was in the chair.

Sivaji urges Centre to constitute Agriculture Price Commission

The former Rajya Sabha member and farmer leader Yelamanchili Sivaji has asked the Union Government to devise an index to gauge the impact of thousands of crores of rupees it spends on rural development, agriculture and welfare activities on the lines of the UNDP's human development index. In a release here on Friday, Dr. Sivaji said that he attended the Pre-Budget meeting of Farmers' interest group on January 2 at New Delhi chaired by Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and gave his suggestions that would bring cheer to the farming community in the country. He was for creating Agricultural Price Commission in every State and Indexation of Agriculture Price system, decentralisation of procurement of food grains and abolish all statutory taxes and cesses on procurement of State agencies.

The former MP wanted lifting of the restrictions on storage, processing and movement of agricultural produce, asked Government to formulate consistent policy for agri exports by ending export control raj.

Suggestions

Allowing Foreign Direct Investment in agro processing industries with emphasis on locating agro industries in rural areas, promoting allied activities to supplement farmers' income, and encouraging mechanisation coupled with research and development to suit the local needs, to reduce the drudgery in the agriculture sector, were some suggestions in his multi-page memorandum.

The skills among the rural folk should be improved to augment their productive capacity, he opined and wanted crop loans be made interest free. He suggested to Mr. P. Chidambaram to introduce agriculture in the curriculum at school level and reservations for rural students in professional colleges.

The health of rural population should be taken care of. Cattle and crop should be covered with regular insurance, he said. The Governments should take steps to make agriculture a paying proposition as the farmer is not in a position to dictate the price of his produce because of the operation of cruel market forces. The FDI in multi-brand retail will not have any impact on farmers' fortunes, but in agro processing industries like tobacco will show results, he added.

"I appeal to the Government to launch a concerted drive to improve production of pulses and oilseeds and make the country self-sufficient," he said.

Red gram growers reject MSP, to intensify protest

The State government's decision to announce the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs. 4,000 for a quintal of red gram and its failure to release funds to the Red Gram Development Board (RGDB) to intervene in the market to stabilise the falling prices of the produce has stirred up a hornet's nest.

Farmers and trade organisation representatives have decided to intensify their agitation against the government for failing to fix the MSP at Rs. 5,000.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner E.S. Prasannakumar has said that procurement centre to purchase red gram directly from farmers at MSP fixed by the government will be established on Monday here.

President of the Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha Maruti Manpade, president of the Hyderabad Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Umakant Nigudgi and its secretary Basavaraj Hadgil came down heavily on the government for hiking the MSP from Rs. 3,850 for a quintal (fixed by the Union government) to only Rs. 4,000 when farmers were demanding that it be fixed at Rs. 5,000. Mr. Manpade and Mr. Nigudgi told journalists here on Friday that they were deeply disappointed by the government's response to farmers' problems.

The State government offered Rs. 4,000 as MSP for red gram and intervened in the market last year. The same price was being offered now when the input costs had gone up by several folds, they said.

They said the government's response to the woes of red gram growers was shocking. Agriculture Minister Umesh Katti had kept himself away from the process of fixing the MSP and was busy with his son's marriage. Mr. Katti did not even attend the Thursday's Cabinet meeting which decided to increase the MSP to Rs. 4,000, he said.

Mr. Manpade was part of a team of farmers and trade organisation representatives which met the Deputy Commissioner to express dismay over the government's failure to fix the MSP at Rs. 5,000.

Mr. Prasannakumar told them a procurement centre would be opened in Gulbarag on Monday and within a week the centres would be established in all taluk headquarters.

Farmers and trade organisation representatives, however, told the Deputy Commissioner that farmers would suffer losses if they sell red gram at Rs. 4,000 a quintal.

Mr. Manpade said that farmers and trade organisation representatives, who met later in the evening, decided to launch an indefinite dharna outside the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee office here demanding the government to revise the MSP to Rs. 5,000 a quintal.

Mr. Manpade said that the Deputy Commissioner, who was also chairman of the District- level Task Force Committee, had agreed to send a proposal to the government to reconsider its decision on fixing the MSP at Rs. 4,000.

SC directive to Centre on gazetting final award hailed by delta farmers

Farmers of Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court's observation condemning the Central government for not gazetting the final award of the Cauvery River Water Disputes Tribunal, and directing the Centre to inform its decision on gazetting before January 31.

However, they said that the need of the hour is the direction to Karnataka to release water as Tamil Nadu government has asked for 20 tmc of water to save the samba crop in the petition filed which came in for hearing on Friday. They also welcomed the SC order to convene the Cauvery Monitoring Committee (CMC) meeting on January 11 and assess the water requirement.

S. Ranganathan, secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, criticised the attitude of the Central government. “When the SC had directed the Centre earlier to gazette the order, it has not done so. The decision of the Centre to seek advice of experts before gazetting the final award is unfortunate and is an insult to Supreme Court. The Central government seeking experts’ advice after the SC direction is like going to lower courts after the apex court gave its decision on an issue,” Mr. Ranganathan said. At least now the Central government should gazette the final award.

He also said that Supreme Court should have addressed the issue of release of water as the standing samba crop in the Cauvery delta districts of Thanjavur and Tiruvarur started withering for want of water.

“We need water now. There is no point in discussing gazetting or not gazetting now as even if the SC orders, Karnataka may not gazette the order,” Mr. Ranganathan said.

P.R.Pandian, State council member of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said that the Central government should now announce a date on which it would gazette the final award.

The CMC should tour Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, and assess the real need of water in Tamil Nadu and the availability in Karnataka, and take a decision.

Higher MSP for paddy sought

The Puducherry unit of the All India Kisan Sangh (AIKS) has urged the Centre to increase the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of paddy considering the steep hike in input production cost.

A resolution adopted at a general council of AIKS held here recently said that as per the existing MSP, farmers were given Rs.1,330 per quintal of common variety, which included the States’ support price. Similarly, MSP for A grade variety was fixed at Rs.1,380. The existing MSP was not enough for farmers, who faced multiple issues, including a steep hike in the prices of fertilizers, pesticides, transport cost, wages for agricultural labourers and others. Hence, there was an urgent need to fix MSP for paddy at Rs. 2,000 per quintal. The Puducherry administration should also urge the Centre to increase the MSP for paddy.

Call to release water from Veeranam for samba crop

Ayacutdars of the Veeranam tank have made a fervent plea to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to immediately release water from the tank to save samba paddy crops on 52,000 acres spread across the Chidambaram and Kattumannarkoil blocks.

They have also appealed to the government to revise the water management policy to ensure supply of adequate water to meet the irrigation requirements of the tail-end delta region.

President of the Kollidam-Keelanai Paasana Vivasayigal Sangam P.Vinayagamoorthy in a representation to the Chief Minister said the standing crops in the region were withering Therefore tapping of water from the tank for meeting the drinking water requirements of Chennaites should be stopped. Instead, water from 40 deep borewells sunk at a cost of Rs. 49 crore, dotting the landscape from Sethiathope to Panruti, could be harnessed.

Mr. Vinayagamoorthy further stated that for the current crop season, Mettur water was released only on September 17, 2012, three months behind schedule. Subsequently, water was released from the Kallanai on September 21 and from the Keelanai (Lower Anicut) on September 30.

Even though water from the Lower Anicut reached the Veeranam tank and raised its level to 42.5 ft (maximum level 47.5 ft), the authorities had opened the sluices of the tank only on two occasions - on November 17 and December 2 - that too after several agitations. Mr. Vinayagamoorthy noted that to save the crops, water ought to be released from the tank from January 10. The Association also sought increased allocation of water from the Lower Anicut to the Veeranam tank.

As of now, 10 % of water realisation at the Lower Anicut was being released to the Veeranam tank. It must be enhanced to 15 % t to compensate about 5 % of the water being drawn by the local bodies in the districts of Thanjavur, Airyalur and Perambalur from the borewells struck on the Kollidam river bed (which would otherwise be utilized by the farmers for irrigation).

Bee-keeping training in TNAU

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training in bee-keeping on January 7 on the university premises.

According to a university release, hands-on training will be imparted in identification of bee colonies and their rearing, artificial group rearing of bees, queen bee rearing and production techniques, and identification of natural enemies of bees and their management.

Interested candidates have to reach the Department of Entomology before 9 a.m. The fee of Rs. 150 has to be remitted. The training is from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. A certificate will be given at the end of the training. Candidates can call 0422-6611214, or e-mail to entomology@tnau.ac.in

weather

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Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Partly Cloudy

Saturday, **Jan 5**

Max	Min
30.2°	21.8°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 62
Wind: normal
Sunrise: 06:32
Sunset: 05:55
Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast

Cloudy

Sunday, **Jan 6**

Max	Min
30°	22°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday Jan 7	Tuesday Jan 8	Wednesday Jan 9	Thursday Jan 10	Friday Jan 11
30° | 23°	26° | 24°	26° | 24°	26° | 24°	25° | 23°
Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Cloudy	Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi Delhi

Rain: 0
Humidity: 93
Wind: normal
Sunrise: 07:14
Sunset: 05:38
Barometer: 1015.0

THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

05.01.2013 A.M

4th jan 2013

Sugar ends quiet on some support

The wholesale sugar market held steady in the national capital on Saturday on sporadic buying support against adequate stocks positions.

Marketmen said small buying in the face of sufficient stocks position mainly held prices unmoved for the second straight day.

The following were today quotations per quintal:

Sugar ready: M-30 3,270-3,470, S-30 3,245-3,445.

Mill delivery: M-30 3,140-3,325; S-30 3,125-3,300.

Sugar mill gate (including duty): Mawana 3310, Kinnoni 3430, Asmoli 3390, Dorala 3305, Budhana 3320, Thanabhavan 3325, Dhanora 3310, Simbholi 3410, Modi Nagar 3305, Khatuli 3330, Dhampur 3270, Ramala 3230, Bulandshar 3270, Anupshar 3230, Baghpat 3240, Morna 3240, Sakoti 3260, Chandpur 3270, Amroha 3270 and Nazibabad 3230.

Chilli, turmeric recovers on fresh buying

In thin trading, prices of red chilli and turmeric recovered by Rs 100 per quintal in the national capital on Saturday, largely influenced by fresh buying support from local parties as well as overseas enquiries.

Red chilli and turmeric prices rose by Rs 100 each to settle at Rs 6,500-11,500 and Rs 6,500-9,500 per quintal, respectively.

Traders said buying support from retailers and exporters against fall in supplies from producing belts, mainly pushed up chilli and turmeric prices in the wholesale kirana market here.

The following are today's quotations:

Ajwain 10,000-15,000, black pepper (per kg) 420-555, betel-nut (kg) 160-195, cardamom brown-Jhundiwali (kg) 800-900 and cardamom brown-Kanchicut (kg) 950-1,050.

Cardamom small (kg): Chitridar 750-880, cardamom (colour robin) 730-870, cardamom bold 740-840, cardamom extra (bold) 950-1,060 and cloves (kg) 610-680.

Red chillies Rs 6,500-11,500, Turmeric Rs 6,500-9,500

Gur closes steady on little buying

The wholesale gur prices ended quiet in the national capital on Saturday following small buying support.

Muzaffarnagar and Muradnagar gur market too remained unchanged in thin trade.

According to marketmen, ample position of ready stocks against restricted demand mainly kept prices unmoved.

The following are today's quotations per quintal:

Gur chakku 2,700-2,750, pedi 2,900-3,000, dhayya 3,000-3,100 and shakkar 3,200-3,300.

Muzaffarnagar: Rasket 2,300-2,350, chakku 2,550-2,700 and khurpa 2,500-2550.

Muradnagar: Pedi 2550-2,600 and dhayya 2,600-2650.

Cashew rises on fresh buying

Cashew prices rose by Rs 5 per kg in the national capital on Saturday largely on the back of fresh buying by retailers and stockists. Tight supplies from growing regions also supported the upside in prices.

Cashew kernel No 180, No 210, No 240 and No 320 rose by Rs 5 each to conclude at Rs 700-755, Rs 675-695 Rs 595-615 and Rs 515-565 per kg, respectively.

Marketmen said increased buying by retailers and stockists against tight supplies from growing regions, mainly pushed up cashew prices.

The following are today's quotations (per 40 kg):

Cashew Kernel 1 kg (no 180) Rs 700-755 Cashew Kernel (no 210) Rs 675-695 Cashew Kernel (no 240) Rs 595-615 Cashew Kernel (no 320) Rs 515-565 Cashew Kernel Broken 2 pieces Rs 320-400 Cashew Kernel Broken 4 pieces Rs 290-375 Cashew Kernel Broken 8 pieces Rs 270-330 Copra (qtl) Rs 6,300-6,700

Raw cotton edges out iron ore in export mix to China

The ban on iron ore export, coupled with the slump in infrastructure development in China, has pushed raw cotton as the major export commodity from India to the Dragon.

"India is supporting immensely the development of the garments industry in China," said Amitendu Palit, Head (Partnership and Programme) and Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore.

In 2005-06, out of the total exports from India to China, 51.65 per cent was ore and its concentrates. This share dropped by half to 25.5 per cent in 2011-12.

On the other hand, the share of raw cotton exports to China during the same period increased three-fold to nearly 26 per cent. In the last five years, raw cotton has gradually replaced ore and its constituents as the largest export commodity to China.

There has been a subtle, but notable shift in the export of various commodities to China, he said in a talk on India-China trade relationship, organised by the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In 2004-05, India was importing a huge quantity of readymade garments from China. However, India started exporting a huge volume of raw cotton to China, which in turn manufactures readymade garments for exports.

Due to the enormous demand for raw cotton, the price of the commodity too has increased significantly. This forced buyers to look at India as a major source for raw cotton, said Palit, whose current research focuses on comparative aspects of federalism in China and India.

96% of tea on offer sold at Coonoor auctions

Coonoor Tea Trade Association’s auction for this year opened on Thursday and Friday on an encouraging note with higher volume being bought despite rise in prices.

Thanks to increased demand for hot tea from the northern States reeling under severe cold, prices rose to average Rs 99.76 a kg from Rs 97.90 at the final auctions of 2012.

This was the highest price fetched among all the auctions of 2012, reveals our analysis of the market reports.

Nevertheless, nearly 96 per cent of the 23-week high volume offered for sale was bought when the market reopened after 15 days closure for Christmas and New Year.

In all, 15.03 lakh kg were sold against 13.87 lakh kg at the final auction of 2012. This was the highest volume of the last 22 auctions.

Buoyancy prevailed with an increase of as much as 1.16 lakh kg in the off-take even as prices rose by Rs 1.86 for every kg sold.

Consequently, the overall turnover increased to Rs 14.99 crore from Rs 13.58 crore in 2012 year-end sale.

This was the highest turnover among all auctions of last year. This increase of Rs 1.41 crore marked a growth 10.38 per cent on auction-on-auction basis.

Palm oil may test support, rise

Malaysian palm oil futures on the Bursa Malaysia Derivatives exchange ended higher on Friday as the US averted a fiscal crisis and traders look forward to better demand for the edible oil on a lower export tax structure. Market participants are also betting on Malaysia's zero export tax in January to spur demand and help clear record-high stocks which has dampened sentiment so far. Also, lower December production and disruption to supply due to heavy rain could help ease record-high stocks of 2.56 million tonnes. Industry regulator the Malaysian Palm Oil Board will release official data on December's stocks and output next week which could provide further direction.

CPO active March month futures are moving perfectly in line with our expectations. As mentioned in the earlier update, March futures could find support in 2,435-40 Malaysian ringgit (MYR) a tonne zone and gradually start rising higher again. Prices have been unable to take out the resistance at 2,520 MYR/tonne so far. Further upside towards 2,620 MYR/tonne or even higher looks likely in the coming sessions. As we have been maintaining, the big picture price structures are still favourable for a push higher towards 2,600-25 MYR/tonne. Immediate resistance for March futures is at 2,525 MYR/tonne levels followed by 2,620 MYR/tonne. Stronger resistance will be noticed at 2,670 MYR/tonne subsequently. Supports will be seen at 2,430-35 MYR/tonne followed by 2,385 MYR/tonne. The extended correction to 2,200 MYR/tonne levels materialised in the form of an extended wave “C”. It looks like a possible wave “C” could have ended at 2,220 MYR/tonne now. Once above 2,625 MYR/tonne, potential exists for the impulse rally to extend to 2,755-2,800 MYR/tonne range. Only an unexpected decline below 2,300 MYR/tonne could force us to abandon our bullish view. RSI is in the neutral zone indicating that it is neither overbought nor oversold. The averages in MACD have gone above the zero line of the indicator hinting at a bullish reversal. Only a crossover below the zero line again could indicate a bearish trend. Therefore, look for palm oil futures to test the supports and then rise.

Supports are at MYR 2,435, 2,420 and 2,375. Resistances are at MYR 2,525, 2,610 and 2,670.

(The author is the Director of Commtrendz Research and also in the advisory panel of Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd (MCX). The views expressed in this column are his own and

not that of MCX. This analysis is based on the historical price movements and there is risk of loss in trading. He can be reached at gnanasekar_thiagarajan@yahoo.com.

Soyameal exports slide 34% in Dec

Soyameal exports fell by 34 per cent last month to 5,10,698 tonnes, according to industry data released on Saturday.

The country had exported 7,78,382 tonnes in December 2011, Soyabean Processors Association of India (SOPA) said in a statement.

During the first three months of the current oil year, exports declined by 27 per cent to 10,78,852 tonnes as against 14,69,220 tonnes in the year—ago period. The oil year runs from October to September.

Chana remains weak on hopes of higher output.

The chana futures for April fell by Rs 19, or 0.53% to Rs 3,562 per quintal in 45,980 lots at the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange today.

The January contract traded marginally lower by Re 1, or 0.03% to Rs 3,950 per quintal in 20,490 lots.

Analysts said speculators offloading their positions on hopess of a higher output kept pressure on chana futures.

Pepper up 0.96% on rising demand

The pepper futures for February shot up by Rs 335, or 0.96% to Rs 35,245 per quintal in 2,915 lots at the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange today.

The March contract moved up by Rs 165, or 0.49% to Rs 34,165 per quintal in 696 lots.

However, estimates of higher output limited the upside.

Analysts said speculators enlarging their positions, strong spot market and rising winter-demand kept pepper futures higher.

Cardamom down 0.27% on sluggish demand

Cardamom futures for February went down Rs 2.90, or 0.27%, to Rs 1,055.70 per kg in 152 lots at the Multi Commodity Exchange today.

The January contract shed Rs 1.20, or 0.12% to Rs 1,018.80 per kg in 530 lots.

Analysts said sluggish demand against adequate stocks and increased arrivals led to decline incardamom futures rates

THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

05.01.2013 A.M

Dharmapuri farmers to protest ban on social gatherings for Pongal

DHARMAPURI: District collector R Lilly has declared a ban on socially celebrating Pongal due to the enforcement of section 144(1) of the CRPC which bans all social gatherings of four or more persons, a consequence of the violence against dalits in Natham. This includes a ban on bull fights and traditional dance involving animals. This blanket ban has irritated some farmers and encouraged members of Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sanghom to tell farmers in the district to hoist black flags at their residence and refuse to accept the free dothies and saris distributed by the government on account of the festival.

Pongal is a festival of harmony and it has nothing to do with the recent caste violence in the district. The same district administration allowed Christmas and New Year celebrations irrespective of the prevalence of the CRPC section," said sanghom president, S A Chinnasamy.

"We imposed section 144(1) of CRPC across Dharmapuri district from December 14, 2012, to prevent any untoward incidents. As per the rule, any massive gathering would be treated as unlawful assembly. The decision has been taken and imposed by us after several incidents of caste violence reported across the district, including the burning of houses in Natham colony," said collector Lilly.

"Any protest, demonstration, procession etc will not be allowed until section 144 getting revoked. Only educational institutions, commercial groups and corporate companies can carry out awareness processions with previous permission from the police department," she added. She warned of severe action against those violating the ban.

"Pongal is an important festival for farmers and it is cruel to ban all activities that are part and parcel of it. Dharmapuri is an agrarian district where majority of the population are farmers and agricultural workers. We were eagerly looking forward to celebrating Pongal and are thoroughly disappointed," said Chinnasamy.

"Bull rackla race and bull dance are very famous in our district. People from other districts including Salem, Krishnagiri and Vellore come to Dharmapuri district to witness these colourful festivities. Are we living in a democratic country or in a dictatorship," Chinnasamy asked.

As of now, farmers from 15 village panchayats have decided to observe black Pongal. They will also spread the message to other villages hoping to increase participation, in the days leading up to Pongal.