

Bumper Bengal gram harvest expected in State

Growers of Bengal gram (kadale bele) are expected to harvest a bumper rabi crop owing to increase in the area under cultivation as well as timely and adequate rainfall in October-November in major growing areas of the northern districts of the State.

11.18 lakh hectares

Acreage under Bengal gram increased during the rabi season due to shortfall in the coverage of pulses during the 2012 kharif season. Acreage under the crop was 11.18 lakh hectares this season against the normal coverage of 8 lakh hectares.

Area under pulses — toor, horse gram, black gram, cowpea and others, avare and moth bean — was 11.56 lakh hectares against the target of 15.96 lakh hectares during the 2012 kharif season. Most of the crops sown in May and June were destroyed during the vegetation period itself owing to deficit rainfall, officials in the Agriculture Department told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Crops sown in a majority of places in north Karnataka districts, except in Gulbarga and Bidar, were destroyed owing to erratic monsoon. The yield of pulses will be around two to three quintals a hectare against six to seven quintals, the officials maintained.

11 districts

Rain that lashed the State in the wake of cyclone Nilam in October-end brightened the prospects of Bengal crop growers. The crop is cultivated mainly in 11 districts of north Karnataka — Bidar, Bagalkot, Belgaum, Bellary, Bijapur, Chitradurga, Dharwad, Gadag, Gulbarga, Koppal and Raichur.

Officials said farmers were expected to get a yield of 10 quintals a hectare owing good vegetative growth compared with previous years. The State's normal yield of Bengal gram is 6 quintals a hectare.

Moreover, under the Union government's National Food Security Mission (NFSM), farmers had been provided chemicals and equipment to control pests and diseases affecting Bengal gram plants. Seed of high-yielding varieties, nutrient kits and pest-management kits were distributed under the Accelerated Pulses Production Programme (A3P) in north Karnataka districts for increasing the area under the crop, the officials said.

According to Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, growers expected to get Rs. 3,100 to Rs. 3,300 for a quintal of Bengal gram in February, March and April 2013. The Union government has fixed the minimum support price (MSP) at Rs. 2,100 for a quintal.

Jalaprabha will change farmers' lives: Kiran

The State government is making arrangements to make 10 lakh acres of wastelands cultivable in the next three years by providing irrigation under Indira Jalaprabha scheme. This will provide livelihood to six lakh families belonging to the SC/ ST categories. This will entail an expenditure of Rs. 1.8 lakh per acre to the State government.

Announcing this here on Sunday, Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy said that the lands had remained unused for the last four decades only because of absence of irrigation. "Our idea is to assist the landowners, who are small and marginal farmers, to go for pumpsets. The government through the MNREGS and the NABARD schemes will undertake the task," he explained while launching the scheme here along with Union Minister for Rural Development Jairam Ramesh.

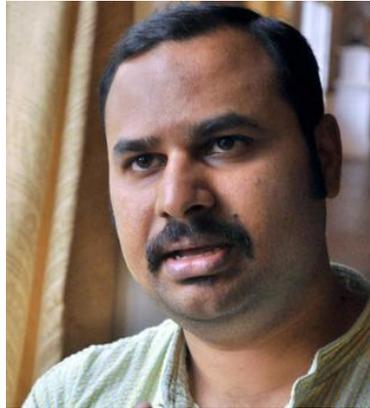
Six farmers with a total extent of 9.25 acres have been identified as beneficiaries for launch of the programme for whom a sum of Rs. 12.27 lakh has been disbursed through the Direct Benefit Transfer mode.

The Chief Minister had a brief interaction with the beneficiaries. Vasa Bhimaraju, a farmer owning three acres, told the Chief Minister that he was planning to cultivate Banginapalli and

Mallika varieties of mango, besides sowing brinjal, tomato and chilli. Mr. Kiran Reddy said that irrigation was more important for agriculture and one could go for any sort of crops if the land had irrigation facility. “That is why we are keen on implementing this scheme,” he said.

Pesticide residue hampers exports of horticulture produce, says expert

‘India one of the largest horticultural producers but a failed exporter’



The excessive use of pesticides by farmers in India is hindering the country’s efforts to penetrate the global market for fruits and vegetables in a big way, according to Sreejith Aravindakshan from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Talking to *The Hindu* here on Sunday, Dr. Aravindakshan, who was here to participate in the National Biodiversity Congress, said India’s horticultural exports to northern Europe were largely constrained by the inability of the smallholder-dominated production system to meet western food safety standards marked by low tolerance for pesticide residue.

“With an annual production of 75 million tonnes of fruits and 147 million tonnes of vegetables, India is one of the largest horticultural producers in the world but a failed exporter. In the absence of clear public food safety standards and good agricultural practices, smallholder vegetable farmers in India are excluded from global high-value chains. Success stories of collective efforts such as Kudumbasree groups in Kerala and Mahagrapes in Maharashtra are the only exceptions,” he said.

Observing that India was still stuck in the Green Revolution era, Dr. Aravindakshan said the inappropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides by farmers had contaminated soil and water with a

heavy load of toxic residues. “In most cases, the blanket application of fertilizers and pesticides is based on recommendation by dealers of these products,” he said.

A Sutorfor Erasmus Mundus Fellow at the University of Copenhagen, Dr. Aravindakshan said Indian food products were seen as a toxic cocktail in many other parts of the world because of the pesticide residue.

Collective action

“The negative health effects of pesticide residue have been increasingly reported from States such as Kerala. Regaining the soil and water is an arduous task and not possible with individual effort. Smallholders’ access to demanding markets will depend on collective action in the domain of pest management for food safety,” Dr. Aravindakshan said.

In vegetable production, he said, the extensive use of pesticides often drove pests to neighbouring fields or caused them to develop pesticide resistance. “The best results occur when the majority of farmers in an area adopts integrated pest management practices using bio-control agents or a combination of pesticides with crop rotation or intercropping of different varieties,” Dr. Aravindakshan said.

An expert in conservation agriculture, Dr. Aravindakshan highlighted the importance of an institutional mechanism to address pesticides safety. He said the certification process in India had to match global standards if small farmers were to be equipped to tap the demanding overseas markets. It will ensure better food for domestic consumption while pushing up export earnings, he said.

Training in hydroponics for farmers

They learn methods to grow protein-rich fodder at a much faster rate



For increased productivity: Farmers having a look at the fodder-producing model using hydroponics at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Namakkal on Sunday. -Photo: M.K. Ananth

About 100 proactive farmers were trained on using hydroponics – to grow plants with water as base, without soil – to grow fodder. “Fodder grown in about a month can be harvested in seven days with much higher protein content through this technology,” Head of the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Namakkal, Dr. B. Mohan told *The Hindu* .

Technology

The programme was organised by the KVK and a Maharashtra-based private firm that is promoting the technology.

He said that this technology has been successfully put to use by the University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad, Karnataka. “In Tamil Nadu a farmer in Chennai has implemented it to produce fodder for his goats.

“Hydroponics retains 21 percent protein in fodder unlike protein loss (due to dissolving in sunlight) when it is grown in the field. I

t takes more than eight months for a goat to reach full weight but protein-rich fodder grown hydroponically helps goats reach the same weight in about four months. This is a boon for farmers who have very small space to reap big returns quicker,” Dr. Mohan added.

P.B. Upase who heads the Sales and Marketing division of a firm that is promoting this technology said that a kilogram of seed can produce eight kilos of fodder in seven days using this technology. He said that only about 250 sq. ft. is required to grow a tonne of fodder every day, irrespective of changes in the climatic conditions.

Seven racks

The setup has seven racks – one for each day.

The track in the lowest level is taken to the next on the following day to facilitate growth with the conditions that support it on that day in that level.

It has sprinklers to water the plants and maintain the temperature at 24 degree Celsius, UV lights and machines to dispense carbon dioxide and ozone.

“A kilogram of seed requires about 80 litres of water to grow in soil. But hydroponics requires only two to three litres in seven days. It is ideal for areas deprived of rainfall and very poor groundwater sources.

With a few modifications the machine could also be used to cultivate a few varieties of greens and vegetables for human consumption.

“Handling the technology is also easier and cost effective compared to the traditional mode of growing fodder.

One labourer can harvest one tonne in two hours every day, and it can be directly used to feed cattle.

This fodder can be used as 75 percent of the feed of goats and cows to gain weight and to yield more milk that is thicker and of better quality, cost efficiently,” he noted.

Zonal Project Director of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research Dr. S. Prabhu Kumar, Head of the KVK in the University of Dharwad Dr. Jitendrakumar Jillli, Dr. Mohan and Mr. Upase addressed farmers and also clarified their queries.

Awards for progressive farmers

University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, has decided to confer two awards — Raitha Vigyani and Raitha Mahila Vigyani — to progressive farmers, recognising their achievements in the adoption of new and improved agricultural practices to improve crop yield.

A press release issued by UAS, Raichur, recently stated that the award would carry a purse of Rs. 50,000, a certificate, plaque and shawl.

They would be presented during the annual convocation programme scheduled to be held in Raichur in February.

Progressive farmers eligible for the award should provide details through the prescribed application forms available on the varsity's website (www.uasraichur.edu.in) or get the application from the Krishi Vigyan Kendras in Bidar (94806-92318), Gulbarga (94806-96315), Raddewadigi (94806-96348), Raichur (94806-96314), Gangavathi (94806-96335), Lingasugur (94806-96334), Koppal (94806-96319), or Hadgil (94806-96336).

The last date to submit application is January 31. For details, contact Extension Director on 94806-96313.

....in search of a farming paradise



C ontinued from Page 1

looking to make a profit by re-selling land at a premium.

Among them is Dubai-based Pradeep Singh who has bought up a couple of thousand hectares in different parts of Georgia and has begun advertising in India. “Approximate land prices range from \$2,200 to 8,000 per hectare and a foreigner keen on farming can buy land from 50 hectares onwards. Many Punjabis are growing sunflower and wheat and we are now trying to tap the grape growers of Maharashtra also, because Georgia is known for its grape and citrus, used for its famous wines,” he told *The Hindu* in an email response.

Georgia is only the most recent chapter in a long history of migration of farmers from Punjab.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, many Punjabi farmers — Jats — migrated first as policemen and soldiers and later as railroad workers as part of the British empire.

In the 80s, Punjabi farmers bought land in Bolivia, which, says Swarn Singh Kahlon, author of the book *Sikhs in Latin America*, was the first case of farmers buying land in other countries and migrating as farmers. Mr. Kahlon says the migration was triggered by the problems Punjab was facing then — terrorism and the resulting hostility from the government. Sikh men living and working alone in Dubai and the Middle East bought lands in Bolivia so that they could take their wives and children and live as family in that country.

But, the Bolivia experiment failed. Though land was cheap, it had little irrigation. So when the rains failed, farming collapsed, says Mr. Kahlon, adding that the Bolivian government did not support in marketing the produce. Georgia, too, has its potential risks and only time will tell if a thriving community of Punjabi farmers will take root in that country.

Krishi Mela to focus on dryland farming

Farmers encouraged to adopt high-yielding varieties



Learning the latest: Farmers going through the stalls at the Krishi Mela at the Regional Agricultural Research Station near Hittinahalli in Bijapur district on Sunday.

The two-day Krishi Mela being organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, (UAS-D) on the premises of the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) near Hittinahalli village, will focus on dryland farming and dryland horticulture.

The fair, that started here on Sunday, is also aimed at educating farmers about the new studies done at RARS and encourage them to use the improved varieties of crops, said V.V. Angadi, Assistant Director (Research), RARS.

Addressing presspersons, he said Bijapur being a district with large tracts of dryland, needed crops that were drought-resilient and high-yielding even during adverse climatic conditions.

“The university and RARS have been working on various varieties of crops including jowar, a major crop in Bijapur district. We have developed some improved varieties of jowar and other pulses that are not affected by unstable climatic conditions,” Dr. Angadi said.

According to him, an important objective of the mela was to encourage dryland horticulture, a potentially high-paying venture.

Climate suitable

“Bijapur’s climate is suitable for some of the popular horticultural crops such as sapota, grape, guava, pomegranate and fig. Switching to dryland farming would increase profits while keeping expenditure to a minimum,” he said. The RARS has been organising the mela for the last decade and is expecting about 40,000 farmers to visit during the two days.

In his inaugural address, district in-charge Minister S.K. Bellubbi said it was regrettable that never had any government taken up an irrigation project, utilising water from the five rivers close to Bijapur district.

R.R. Hanchinal, Vice-Chancellor, UAS-D, urged the Minister to provide irrigation to at least 10 acres of the 450 acres of RARS for taking up research.

State revokes ban on pulpwood cultivation



A ban imposed on the cultivation of pulpwood — eucalyptus and acacia — in the forest lands of the State has been revoked.

As per a stamp of approval given by the State Cabinet at a recent meeting, pulpwood saplings will be planted across 1,500 hectares of forest land during the year. It will also include *Acacia auriculiformis* (for timber), which will be harvested after a longer duration compared to eucalyptus.

The exercise is similar to the one undertaken every year over the past several decades. However, in 2011, pulpwood saplings were planted in a mere 500 hectares and in 2012 there was a total ban.

Sources in the State Secretariat told *The Hindu* that the government, apparently considering the serious shortage of pulpwood largely sought by paper mills and wood industries, as well as the potential impact that it could have over the years, decided to give a fillip to pulpwood production, which is also a money spinner for the Forest Department.

Karnataka has been a leader in pulpwood cultivation for over 50 years although in recent years, Tamil Nadu is also engaged in large-scale cultivation of pulpwood.

In the meanwhile, the Karnataka Forest Development Corporation, which is solely in charge of pulpwood cultivation on the forest land, has decided to restrict the cultivation to a mere 18,000 ha compared to the 53,000 ha provided to it. It is stated to be in the process of returning the remaining 35,000 ha to the Forest Department.

Further, pulpwood will not be cultivated where the forest cover includes trees such as rosewood, teak and other species.

Pulpwood is grown in the districts of Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Hassan, Bangalore Rural, Kolar, Dharwad and Belgaum and on an average, fetches a return of Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000 a tonne.

Karnataka took to pulpwood plantation in 1971 largely as a commercial crop to serve companies such as the Mysore Paper Mills, the West Coast Paper mills, Harihar Polyfibres and in recent years, wood-based industries.

Eucalyptus is one of the species that produces quality pulpwood for paper and newsprint making.

Interestingly, while Karnataka imposed a ban, Tamil Nadu stepped up production to meet the increased demand in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The eucalyptus and the routine variety of acacia crops are harvested once in seven years.

While around 70,000 tonnes is harvested in Karnataka every year, it was a mere 15,000 tonnes in 2012 owing to what has been described as “red tape”.

The low level of planting in 2011 and the lack of it in 2012 is expected to cause an impact in 2019-20.

Papers invited on ‘inclusive growth in agriculture’

The Department of Economics, Osmania University, is organising a one-day national seminar on ‘Inclusive Growth in Agriculture’ on March 9 under the UGC-SAP-DSA-III.

Seminar Director, M. Upender said that academicians and subject experts can send empirical full papers with an abstract (one page) on important elements of inclusive growth in agriculture for presentation at the seminar by February 15.

Papers can be submitted on ‘ns_iga2013@rediffmail.com’.

Further details can be had on ‘www.osmania.ac.in’.

Sponsorship for research

The Amrita University, in co-ordination with the University Politecnico Di Torino of Italy, is offering the European Commission-sponsored scholarship, India4EU II-ERASMUS MUNDUS, to Indian nationals for research on a variety of subjects. Undergraduates, masters, doctorates and post-doctorates are eligible for the scholarships.

The academic programmes under this project provide mobility opportunities in areas as Agricultural Sciences, Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning, Business Studies and Management Sciences, Education, Teacher Training, Engineering, Technology, Geography, Geology, Law, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.

The scholarship application processing has already begun and will end on February 18th, 2013. The scholarship covers all expenses including subsistence allowances, travel costs, tuition/registration fees and insurance costs.

Test Track

Agriculture entrance tests

The Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) has invited applications for the All India Entrance Examination for admission to 15 per cent of the seats in undergraduate programmes in Agriculture and allied subjects offered at State-level agricultural universities and all seats in the B.Tech. Dairy Technology course at the National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal, and for the award of national talent scholarships for those who join the course outside the State of domicile.

The test will be held from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. on April 20. The centres include Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Mannuthy (Thrissur), Coimbatore, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Tirupati.

Admissions will be given to the degree programmes in Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, Forestry, Home Science, Sericulture, Biotechnology, Agricultural Engineering, Dairy Technology, Food Science, Agricultural Marketing and Cooperation.

There will be two streams in the entrance examination. Stream A will have Agriculture and Biology and Stream B Mathematics. An applicant can choose one at the time of submitting application.

Those choosing Stream A should have passed Plus Two with Physics, Chemistry and Biology or Agriculture or Home Science and they can seek admission to the degree programmes in Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, Forestry, Home Science, Sericulture, Food Science and Biotechnology.

Those opting for Stream B should have passed Plus Two with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics and they can get admission to the degree courses in Agriculture Engineering, Dairy Technology, Agricultural Marketing and Cooperation, Forestry, Food Science and Biotechnology.

The applicants must have passed Plus Two with minimum 50 per cent marks in aggregate (40 per cent for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged). They should be in the 17-23 age group as on August 31, 2013 (born between September 1, 1990 and September 1, 1996), the upper limit raised by five years for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged.

The application fee is Rs. 500 (Rs. 250 for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged) and the application can be submitted either online or offline. The application form and information bulletin can be had from the registrars of the agricultural universities and select branches of Syndicate Bank till February 15.

Kerala Agricultural University, Mannuthy, Thrissur; Kerala Veterinary and Animal Science University, Wayanad; Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Kochi; Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore, and so on will distribute the forms. Only the Syndicate Bank branch at MS City Centre on Bank Road in Kasaragod will do so in Kerala.

Apply online on www.icar.org.in till February 15. Take a printout of the computer-generated confirmation page. Send the filled application form or printout of the online application to the Office of the Controller of Examination (Education), ICAR, Room no. 216, Krishi Anusandan Bhavan II, Pusa, New Delhi – 110 012 so as to reach there on or before February 15.

The entrance examination will be held in two streams and the question paper will have 180 objective-type, multiple-choice questions from Physics, Chemistry and Agriculture or Biology or Mathematics. Question for Physics and Chemistry will be common for both streams. Visit <http://icarexam.net> or www.icar.org.in for details.

Postgraduate admission

The ICAR has invited applications for the All India Entrance Examination for admission to postgraduate courses to be held on April 21 across the country for admission to the Master's programmes in Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Agricultural Engineering, Home Science, Biotechnology, Dairy Science, Fisheries Science, Veterinary science and other allied sciences.

Based on the merit list of the examination, 475 ICAR junior research fellowships will be awarded to the students admitted to the Master's course. Those with a degree in the relevant discipline with minimum 60 per cent marks (50 per cent for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged) or those appearing for the final qualifying examination may apply.

The application fee is Rs. 600 (Rs. 300 for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged). The application form and information bulletin can be had from the registrars of the agricultural universities and select branches of Syndicate Bank till February 15.

Kerala Agricultural University, Mannuthy, Thrissur; Kerala Veterinary and Animal Science University, Wayanad; Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Kochi; Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore, and so on will distribute the forms. Apply online on www.icar.org.in. The last date for receipt of the completed application forms is February 15.

The ICAR will conduct an all-India competitive examination on April 21 for the award of 202 senior research fellowships for pursuing the Ph.D. programmes in various discipline.

The fellowship will run for three years. The application fee is Rs. 1,200 (Rs. 600 for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the physically challenged).

Download information bulletin and apply online on www.icar.org.in before February 15.

Gopakumar Karakonam

Crushing comes to a halt

Owing to a technical snag in Alanganallur sugar mills



sad: Trucks with sugarcane waiting at Alanganallur.— Photo: G. Moorthy

: A large number of sugarcane-laden trucks from many southern districts and as far as from Udumalpet have been waiting here for over a week in front of the state-run sugar factory at Alanganallur as crushing has “been suspended temporarily”.

According to truck drivers and farmers, there is no official word from the sugar factory authorities for the sudden suspension of activity. “They keep repeating that some technical snag had developed in the boiler plant. It would be rectified soon,” said a lorry driver Siva from Mettupatti, near here.

The sugarcane growers said that the endless wait had only resulted in mental agony. Though the weather is chill, the temperature during the day is worrying all of us. The sugarcane had started drying due to this, a farmer Anbu from Sivaganga district said.

Some truck drivers from Udumalpet said, the sudden stoppage of the plant had come as a shock. We have no change of clothes. The money we had for filling diesel in the return direction had been spent on food all these days, they claimed.

Another driver Mani from Melur said, “I am the owner-cum-driver of the lorry. Since Wednesday afternoon, I am waiting here with the 10-ton load of sugarcane cut from a near by farm...We are all clueless as to when they would off-load the goods and relieve us,” he added.

When *The Hindu* photographer was taking a few pictures of trucks waiting with the sugarcane, some persons under the pretext of security guards prevented from taking any pictures. However, a staff at the plant intervened, but said, that he was not authorised to speak about the reasons for the non-functioning of the plant and directed to speak to senior officials.

A reliable source, who had knowledge about the sugar factory, told *The Hindu* that the crushing activity for the season commenced since December 1, 2012. So far, a little over 50,000 tons of sugarcane had been crushed in the last 30 days. There was a leak in the boiler. It is being attended. In a day or two, it should be completely set in, he hoped.

Sugarcane likely to cost more this year

Owing to drop in the area of cultivation of the crop



Sweet crop:Harvest of sugarcane for Pongal has begun in Erode. –PHOTO: M.GOVARTHAN

Sugarcane, the indispensable part of the Pongal festival, will cost more this year following the drop in the acreage under cultivation.

The chewing cane, which is traditionally related to the harvest festival, is placed along with turmeric, pots of rice and other essentials used for worshipping the Sun God.

The cane was sold for Rs. 30 a pair during the last year. But this time, people have to spend at least Rs. 40 to 45 to buy a pair of good quality chewing canes.

The price may even go up depending on the demand during the days prior to Pongal. Chewing cane is cultivated primarily in Gobichettipalayam, TN Palayam, Sathyamangalam, Bhavanisagar, Kavunthapadi and Kodumudi blocks in the district. Apart from catering to the local demand, farmers also sell the cane in bulk quantities to traders in neighbouring Tiruppur, Coimbatore, Salem and Namakkal districts. A few farmers also send the sugarcane to markets in other states including Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

“Many farmers in the district have not taken up the cultivation of chewing canes because of serious shortage of water. The storage in Bhavanisagar reservoir was poor,” pointed out Lower Bhavani Farmers Association president S. Nallasamy.

Power crisis was also one of the reasons that discouraged farmers from taking up the crop. The district had been experiencing 10 to 14 hours of power outage.

This left even the farmers with motor pump sets to drop the idea of cultivating the crop. The fall in the production, however, turned out to be good for the farmers, who took the risk of cultivating the crop. “We expect handsome returns this year as the market will witness a poor arrival. Even the buyers who purchase in bulk offer a good price this time,” said A. Thangavel, another farmer who commenced harvesting the crop in his field.

Sugarcane cultivators brace up for bitter times



Farmers growing edible variety of sugarcane in Cuddalore district are in a tight spot because returns this season might be less. Besides decline in volume of production, the size of cane too has decreased owing to various reasons.

Farmers are wondering whether the crop would fetch them returns even to meet the production cost. The area under sugarcane cultivation has drastically come down.

They attribute such a state of affairs to monsoon failure, dip in groundwater level and no canal irrigation. Even if sub-surface water is available, it could not be tapped owing to power shortage.

M. Jayalakshmi (42) of Appiampettai near here, belonging to a traditional farming community, told *The Hindu* that earlier she used to raise sugarcane on four acres. But, lack of rain had forced her to cut down the area and grow cane only on an acre.

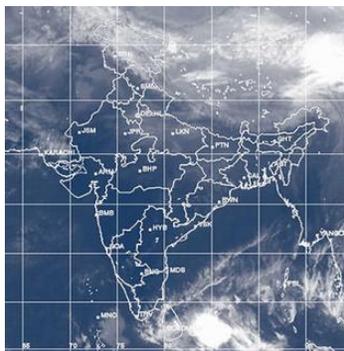
However, the crop did not flourish as enough water could not be obtained periodically. This had reduced the size of cane - in girth and height. Sugarcane stalk, which would attain a height of 6 ft to 7 ft during normal season, hardly measured 4.5 ft to 5 ft now. Its girth too shrunk and its juice content would also be much less.

Ms. Jayalakshmi said that even achieving such a minimal growth, she had to spend a lot on pesticides. For tapping groundwater, she had to spend Rs. 100 per hour on generator sets.

Transport charges should also be taken into account while fixing the sale price in tune with the market demand. When all these factors were taken into reckoning, the economics would not work in her favour because each sugarcane stalk would hardly fetch Rs. 8, instead of Rs. 15 apiece of normally grown sugarcane.

She said that despite the hardships faced by them, sugarcane farmers would not give up cane cultivation for the simple reason that they still value tradition as the Pongal festival could not be celebrated without cane.

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	12	3	0	0
New Delhi (Sfd)	13	2	0	0
Chandigarh	9	3	0	0
Hissar	11	-1	0	0
Bhuntar	17	-1	0	0
Shimla	11	1	0	0
Jammu	9	6	0	0
Srinagar	9	-5	0	0
Amritsar	7	4	0	0
Patiala	9	3	0	0
Jaipur	20	3	0	0
Udaipur	23	6	0	0
Allahabad	13	5	0	0
Lucknow	12	4	0	0
Varanasi	12	4	0	0
Dehradun	18	2	0	0
Agartala	25	8	0	0
Ahmedabad	26	9	0	0
Bangalore	31	18	0	0
Bhubaneshwar	29	18	0	0
Bhopal	23	7	0	0
Chennai	31	23	0	0
Guwahati	23	11	0	0
Hyderabad	34	21	0	0
Kolkata	25	14	0	12
Mumbai	27	16	0	0
Nagpur	30	13	0	6

Patna	18	4	0	0
Pune	30	8	0	0
Thiruvananthapuram	33	24	0	0
Imphal	23	2	0	0
Shillong	14	4	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.

Cold wave

Cold wave conditions are prevailing in some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Cold day conditions are prevailing in some parts of Punjab.

Weather was dry over the region.

MINIMUM TEMPERATURES: The minimum temperatures changed little over the region. They were appreciably below normal in Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, below normal in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand and normal in the rest of the region.

The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was -2.2°C recorded at Churu

(Rajasthan). **FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 8th JANUARY 2013:** Weather would be mainly dry over the region. Fog conditions would continue to prevail in some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan in the morning hours during the next 48 hours. **WARNING:** Cold wave conditions would occur in some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan during the next 48 hours. Cold day conditions would occur in some parts of Punjab during the next 48 hours.

Ground frost would occur in some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan during the next two nights. Dense fog (Visibility less than 200 meters or less) would occur in some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan during the next 24 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 8th JANUARY 2013: Mainly clear sky. Fog in the morning hours.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Jan 7

Max Min

30° | 21.8°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:33

Sunset: 05:56

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Jan 8

Max Min

30° | 22°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jan 9	Thursday Jan 10	Friday Jan 11	Saturday Jan 12	Sunday Jan 13
30° 23° Cloudy	26° 24° Cloudy	26° 24° Overcast	25° 23° Cloudy	24° 23° Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:15

Sunset: 05:39

Barometer: 1016



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

07.01.2013 A.M

6st jan 2013

TN to get food park soon

The Union Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Rakesh Kacker said at Thanjavur on Friday that a food park will be coming up in Tamil Nadu, one of the thirty food parks approved in the Eleventh Plan.

He was inaugurating the third 'Incofttech 2013' international conference on food technology at Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT), Thanjavur.

One another food park is coming up in Puducherry.

Seventy nine cold storage projects have been approved in the Eleventh Plan period, of which eight have been completed, he said and called for quality research and development in food processing.

Two institutions – IICPT, Thanjavur, and National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, New Delhi – are doing quality and extensive research in food processing, he added.

Pepper prices continue to stay volatile

Pepper futures continued to remain volatile as a result of the tug of war between the bull and bear operators and last week, saw the bull operators supported by the market fundamentals getting into the driving seat and pushing the prices up.

Availability has been tight so far, as fresh pepper arrivals failed to pick up as anticipated. Cloudy weather conditions are said to be hampering the harvesting in Kerala.

Add to this, interstate dealers from Tamil Nadu were active in the primary markets and were covering whatever available at terminal market prices.

Good demand was there for high bulk density pepper from Mumbai, Delhi, etc. and investors were selling 7-8 years old pepper at Rs 385 a kg.

Dealers from Cumbum, Theni, Erode in Tamil Nadu and from Kumily in Kerala were buying good quantity. Meanwhile, non-availability in Wayanad has forced dealers to come to Idukki to buy pepper, market sources told *Business Line*.

Low bulk density pepper but looking bold with high moisture content was bought by Jharkhand, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh dealers. The Sabarimala pilgrims were also buying pepper. Consequently, the arrivals at the terminal market continued to remain very thin.

On the exchange platform also availability is likely to be very thin. The current supply squeeze seems to be a temporary phenomenon given reports of a good crop, they said. Once the cloudy weather conditions disappeared, arrivals are expected to pick up.

About 75 per cent of pepper growers in Kerala are of small and medium category. Hence, there would be a selling pressure pushing the arrival up in the coming days. Meanwhile, the pipelines/inventories in the upcountry markets are said to be empty and, hence, the domestic demand is expected to remain strong absorbing much of the output and that in turn would keep the domestic prices almost steady at current levels. However, availability in the international market may marginally outstrip the demand and, hence, slight fluctuations with an easier slant could be expected, they said.

All the active contracts moved up last week following bullish activities. Feb, Mar and Apr contracts increased by Rs 1,365, Rs 525 and Rs 65 respectively last week to close at Rs 35,375, Rs 34,300 and Rs 33,930 a quintal respectively.

Total turnover stood at 8,029 tonnes up by 2,431 tonnes. Total open interest moved up by 105 tonnes to close at 3,630 tonnes.

Spot prices last week surged by Rs 900 to close at Rs 37,400 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,900 (MG 1) a quintal in tandem with the futures market trend and limited supply of physical pepper.

Crude oil prices mixed in Asian trade

Oil prices were mixed in Asian trade today as weak energy demand and concerns over more fiscal battles in Washington tempered the news of a modest growth in the US jobs market.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in February, shed two cents to \$93.07 a barrel while Brent North Sea crude for February delivery gained 14 cents to \$111.45.

Data on Friday showed that the US economy generated 1,55,000 jobs in December, and the unemployment rate held at 7.8 per cent.

However, a US government report last week showing softer fuel demand outweighed that news, Phillip Futures said in a market commentary.

Weaker US energy demand "added to bearish concerns about oil markets, which have been closely monitoring economic data for signals about consumption, which is under pressure because of the struggling economy", Phillip Futures added.

The US is the world's biggest oil consuming nation and the health of its economy is a key influence on crude prices.

Other analysts said markets remain concerned over more brinkmanship in the US Congress after last week's 11th-hour deal that averted the fiscal cliff of tax hikes and spending cuts that threatened to tip the economy into recession.

While the lawmakers put off the huge tax hikes on many wage earners, agreement on spending cuts was put off until the end of February, when they must also hammer out a deal to raise the country's borrowing limit.

"The bears are worried that US lawmakers will struggle, between now and end-February, to agree on budget spending cuts," DBS Group Research said in a market commentary.

UP cane growers forced to sell below State-advised price



A bigger cane crop does not seem to be doing any good to the sugarcane farmers of Uttar Pradesh this year.

Sugar mills, while complaining of high State-advised price (SAP), are apparently buying a lot of cane out of the system 'for cash'. This would mean a realisation lower than the SAP for the farmer.

Seeking liquidity, the farmers, who are also under pressure to clear cane-fields to plant wheat (a key winter crop), are selling cane to the intermediaries for cash, which in turn is being bought by sugar millers, people in the know said.

"Cash purchases are being made by mills through middlemen at Rs 210-230 a quintal, much lower than the SAP of Rs 280. The State is doing nothing about it at all," said V. M. Singh, Convenor, Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sanghatan.

Alleging a nexus between the millers and the State government, Singh said farmers are being put to a lot of hardship as the middlemen are fleecing them.

The delay in announcement of SAP by the UP Government has led to a delayed start to the crushing season this year. UP announced a 17 per cent hike in SAP, at Rs 280 a quintal, on December 7.

Poor implementation

Despite a better cane crop compared to States such as Maharashtra in the 2012-13 season, sugar production in UP was down 11 per cent till end-December, at 1.92 million tonnes, over the corresponding period last year.

“The SAP announcement is just on paper and not being implemented properly,” Singh said, adding that farmers have been protesting in various parts of the State.

The UP sugar output in the current year is projected to be 13.7 per cent higher, at 7.9 million tonnes, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association.

This is mainly on account of higher acreage and better yields, aided by good rains.

When asked about the cash purchases by mills, S. L. Gupta, Secretary of the UP Sugar Mills Association, said he “did not have any idea of such a trend”.

“I don’t think it is possible,” Gupta added.

However, Sudhir Panwar, President of Kissan Jagriti Manch, alleged that the mills were not interested in purchasing the cane at SAP rates. Only a few co-operative and private mills are doing it.

Panwar said mills were buying unauthorised cane through middlemen, mainly in Western Uttar Pradesh and adjoining Haryana. Western UP has seen cane inflow from neighbouring Haryana, where the prices are relatively lower. Estimates of such unauthorised cane purchases were not available.

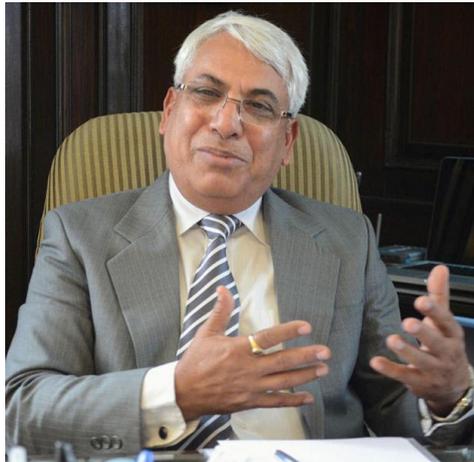
Further, Panwar alleged that mills were colluding with the functionaries of the cane societies and are delaying cane purchases. Such a trend is exerting pressure on farmers, who want to plant a second crop, particularly wheat.

Panwar said the concept of middlemen in sugarcane, which was mainly prevalent in the central and eastern UP has now spread to the western side as well.

Time value of cane

However, the cash purchases by mills seem to have come in handy for farmers — who seemed to have made a trade-off in favour of getting cash in one go rather than wait for a delayed payment. According to Panwar, sugar mills have made about 30 per cent of the payment in the current year.

Tea companies need to change their mindset about workers



The tea companies need to change their mindset about those working in tea gardens, even if for nothing else, only to fight the problem of increasing absenteeism among the workers and the tendency of the younger people among them to opt for jobs in cities.

“The retention of workers is proving to be a major challenge to tea garden owners”, according to A.N. Singh, the newly elected Chairman of the Indian Tea Association (ITA), the body of nearly 200 tea companies having gardens in Assam, Dooars and Darjeeling.

“The world is changing fast and with it the aspirations of people and the lure of city life is becoming irresistible to many of the younger people who do not want to have their future sealed in the gardens mostly located in remote areas”.

Singh did not think the rural employment guarantee scheme was entirely responsible for the present level of absenteeism among tea garden workers.

“MGNREGA explains only part of the story”, he said. “The crux of the issue is that the labour policies pursued for the past 100 years or more will not work any more”.

He, therefore, emphasised the need for more welfare schemes covering health, education, housing and other amenities for workers in partnership with the State-level welfare boards.

The Indian Institute of Plantation Management too could be involved in it, he said.

“In fact, the attitude of the society in general towards tea garden workers must change” , he observed. “They must not be treated simply as labour class any more”.

The mechanisation of plucking, he felt, was not the answer to the problem of labour shortage.

“The human touch guarantees quality which the machines cannot”, he said adding that the enhancement of skill among workers, the better quality of life for them and , if necessary, participatory management should receive priority to stop the flight of human capital for the gardens.”

The ITA Chairman said also expressed himself strongly in favour of a focused approach to push Indian tea in the world market.

“ India produces wide varieties of teas which often create problems, particularly the problem of choice, for foreign buyers”, he said suggesting the need for highlighting the region specific teas with all their unique attributes.

The Tea Board was already doing it by developing separate logos for teas from Darjeeling, Assam, Kangra Valley and Nilgiris, he said.

ITA , in collaboration with Tea Board, was identifying a few major markets such as Iran, Kazakhstan, Baltic region and Pakistan.

Coonoor sale: Homedale tea fetches record price at Rs 183



A new price record was created by Homedale Tea Factory at the first sale of 2013 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions.

“Our broken pekoe leaf tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, reached a new-high when Mittal Tea Company bought it for Rs 183 a kg.

“This was the highest price fetched by any CTC leaf and dust grade from any factory in this auction.

“Besides, it was the highest price fetched by us ever since our factory started manufacturing tea 61 years ago. Also, we have broken our own record established in the final auction of 2012 when we got Rs 180 as the highest price until then”, Homedale Managing Partner Prasant Menon told *Business Line*.

Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 168, Hittakkal Estate 160, Cross Hill Estate and Shanthi Supreme Rs 151 each.

In all, 219 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Highfield Estate got Rs 270, Chamraj Rs 226, Havukal and Kairbetta Rs 190 each, Prammas Rs 180 and Mailoor Rs 175. In all, 42 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Orthodox leaf was dearer by Rs 2-4 a kg. High-priced CTC leaf fetched Rs 2-5 more and at times, as much as Rs 15 more, better mediums Rs 2-3 and plainers up to Rs 3.

“Orthodox dust lost Rs 2-3. High-priced CTC dust was up by Rs 2-3, better mediums Rs 1-2 and plainers were irregular”, an auctioneer said.

On the export front, Pakistan was strong in Rs 89-104 range. The CIS gave fair support at Rs 90-100. There was some purchase for European ports at Rs 92-99.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 89-92 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 110-150 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 89-91 for plain dusts and Rs 105-150 for brighter liquoring dusts.

India may lose top slot as rice exporter in 2013

India may lose global leadership in the rice market in 2013 as shipments are likely to slide by 30 per cent to 7 million tonnes due to weak prices and surplus grain in Thailand, according to government advisory body CACP.

India had emerged as the world's largest rice exporter in 2012 beating its Asian counterpart Thailand with shipment of around 10 million tonnes. The country was at the third slot in 2011, it said.

"I feel India should not be exporting more than 7 million tonnes this year," Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP) Chairman Ashok Gulati told PTI.

Rice shipments from the country could slowdown because of shrinking export profit margin, he said.

"Our margins would take a hit with rise in the minimum support price of paddy and if global prices weaken due to aggressive exports from Thailand and Vietnam," Gulati said.

The world rice market is 35 million tonnes. Shipments from Thailand are expected to rise as the country has surplus stock of 12 million tonnes of the grain, he added.

On wheat, the CACP chief said India is expected to double exports to 7-8 million tonnes in 2013, as against an estimated 4 million tonnes last year.

"Wheat exports were 2.9 million tonnes during January- September of 2012. Expecting another 1 million tonnes export to undertake during fag end of last year, taking total wheat export to 4 million tonnes," Gulati said.

Sufficient domestic supply and better global prices would prompt private players to aggressively export wheat this year, while more stocks from central pool can be shipped if the government acts quickly, he said.

In September, government lifted the ban on rice and wheat exports after it was convinced that the central pool has sufficient stocks to meet the demand of PDS and the proposed food security bill.

India has sufficient rice and wheat stocks due to bumper output. Last year, their output was at record 104.32 million tonnes and 93.90 million tonnes, respectively.

Wheat exports can offset gold imports



If the Government is worried about excessive gold imports, it should be equally concerned about the rising stockpile of wheat, which will cross more than 60 million tonnes (economic cost of about \$21 billion or Rs 1,15,000 crore) by June 2013, or 300 per cent of the mandated reserves.

Foreign exchange requirements of rising gold imports and increased dollar realisations from wheat exports can substantially offset each other. Liquidating stocks of golden grain will also save on fiscal deficit, as it will cut the food subsidy bill.

WRONG STRATEGY

In case policy makers increase the efficiency of wheat export and target it to 10 million tonnes, as recently recommended by the Commission of Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) in its meeting with the Finance Minister, this will generate export of approximately \$3 billion (Rs 16,500 crore), equivalent to a 7.5 per cent reduction on provisional gold imports of \$40 billion anticipated this year. There is always apprehension that higher duties on gold imports may create a parallel 'hawala' market that will defeat the purpose of duty.

Are wheat exports of 10 million tonnes in 2013-14 logistically feasible? Yes they are, provided the private sector is also allowed to partake in FCI stocks, in addition to the existing canalised route of three PSUs. Exclusion of private trade from exporting Government's glut of grain is a highly restrictive policy framework, acting as a deterrent in swift evacuation of grains.

During August-December 2012, PSUs contracted two million tonnes and shipped 1.2 million tonnes (or an average of 400,000 tonnes per month) with proactive back-up operations of FCI. PSUs can achieve the limited objective of exporting a maximum of five million tonnes annually through a staggered tender-centric mechanism. This leaves the effort required to ship additional five million tonnes by private players to achieve 10 million tonnes of export.

The timing of export is critical for better value realisation. As of now, average realisation of two million tonnes is \$315/tonne fob while the minimum and maximum range has varied between \$296 and \$328.

If port handling and fobbing expenses of \$25/tonne are excluded, net realisation to FCI is $$(315-25) = \$290/\text{mt}$, which is close to today's CBOT (Chicago Board of Trade) March futures. All transit/port handling shortages and demurrages are to the account of FCI — which may work out to a minimum of 2 per cent — reducing the net accrual to FCI by another \$6/tonne or \$284/tonne as of today.

Generally wheat prices retreat by June-July every year, when Northern hemisphere crop (the US, EU, Black Sea, Canada) is harvested. Tenders formalised during December 2012–early January 2013 through three PSUs point to a declining pattern. Egypt, the world's biggest wheat buyer, is staying on the sidelines both due to its internal compulsions and expects prices to plunge.

EXCESS STOCKS

Indian wheat export needs to attain maximum momentum in the next six months — January to June 2013. And from April 2013, wheat will start flooding Indian mandis, creating a crisis of plenty with no safe storage space.

The monsoon in July-September can damage poorly stored grains in kuchcha CAP arrangements. If Government agencies don't move quickly, they will be saddled with huge stocks, rising fiscal deficit, and high degree of wastages.

The world is not waiting for India to sell wheat at its own speed — but surely awaiting and anticipating a fall in prices. Recall that in July 2012, highest bids for Indian wheat were received at \$228 fob and other bids ranged \$200-\$225. Should that situation re-emerge internationally,

Indian wheat will have to be traded around Rs 12540/tonne — below MSP of Rs 12,850/tonne of 2012-13 and almost Rs 7,000 below economic cost, with massive subsidisation.

Wheat of 2010-11, 11-12, 12-13 — that is old grains and new grains — be offered at differential pricing both to private and public sector. Private sector can make upfront pre-shipment payments at district HQs of FCI v/s post shipment payments remitted by PSUs with a lag of two-three months.

The entire performance risk, including transit and handling shortages of 2-2.5 per cent, will be on the private trade, rather than that of FCI. Simultaneously, domestic traders can blend old/new grains at the port and price them intelligently for greater penetration in the markets directly or in formal association with PSUs.

FCI disposes old/damaged wheat through domestic tenders in three types of feed categories in price range of Rs 5,000-7,000/tonne and for industrial use (distillery) at Rs 3,850/tonne. Export realisation can be much better than these values even for older wheat.

The Government should have no hesitation in acknowledging lower prices for old wheat as a pragmatic solution to create much-needed storage space.

There could be a question in the coming years on prioritising shipments of the best quality wheat of Madhya Pradesh and Punjab, while burdening the exchequer with old wheat, which bears a carrying cost of Rs 5,000 per tonne for two years. There is a great demand for general purpose/feed wheat, where shipments of old crops will be appropriate.

The net effect of reframing the export guidelines would be (a) exchange earnings can reduce pressure on restricting gold imports which may create a parallel market; (b) higher volume of wheat export can be attained by the immediate involvement of private sector for warehousing bumper wheat crop of 2013-14 (c) money blocked in old inventories can be encashed and fiscal and current account deficits reduced and (d) will save the Government from adverse criticism of not disposing of stocks faster.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

07.01.2013 A.M

Farmers to go on foreign study tour to get updated on latest technology in agriculture sector

AURANGABAD: In order to update the [farming community](#) about the latest technology and [mechanization in agriculture](#) and allied sectors, department of agriculture in the state is organizing a [farmers' study tour](#) in [foreign countries](#).

According to an official statement, farmers interested in availing the opportunity were requested to register their names along with the 7X12 and 8 A form. The statement also said that the farmers will have to return as soon as the study tour was over and if they failed to do so the [agriculture department](#) will not be responsible for their extended stay.

The touring farmers will also have to get their passports made and get their health insured. Moreover, the farmers will also need to produce a fitness certificate from a medical officer.

The farmers' age should not exceed above 65 years and they will need to attach a certificate as a proof of their age.

Farmers interested in going on the study tour seemed enthusiastic about learning more about modern technology and some unemployed youths were interested in the schemes for self-employment like mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, floriculture and diary farming.

The statement advised that the interested farmers of the district willing to participate in tours should contact respective zonal officers so that their names could be enlisted for more such tour programmes to be held in future.

Erode farmers use sewage water to save their crop

ERODE: K Perumal a 50-year-old farmer near Erode town has to resort to desperate measures to save his rose farm. Every day, he travels to [Kalingarayan Canal](#) to collect sewage water which he uses to irrigate his farm. Due to the feeble rains, there is not enough water in the canals he says, so he has no other go but to depend on the sewage water.

"Though some of us have motor pumps, we hardly have power, so they are not of much use," he says. Farmers of the region say that collective loss due to lack of rains is more than Rs 100cr. V N Velayuthan, another farmer in the area says that he is at least lucky to live close to the Kalingarayan canal where he can draw sewage water. Those who live far away, don't have this option, he said.

In the past, farmers did not suffer much because the rains were regular. But this year, only sewage water flows through the canals, said a farmer. "From Bhavani Sagar to Kodumudi there are more than 15,000 acres of agricultural land. From paddy to sugarcane, turmeric and bananas, several crops and products are being produced in these areas. Farmers in this region are suffering due to the lack of adequate rains," he said. There is no water for more than 6,000 acres in the region, he said.

Many of them are trying to make use of the meager water available in bore wells and others. The power crises makes it worse for the farmers. N Ravi who grows banana and ginger near Aanamadu says that due to the power shortage, many farmers have started using diesel pumps to bring water to the fields. However, the increasing cost of diesel is a concern. "One litre of diesel costs Rs 50 and we need 10 litres of diesel to irrigate one acre of land a day. Therefore we use it only once in three days," he said. They say that the use of sewage water is affecting the health of the crops. Velayuthan says that water from Bhavani Sagar must be released. "There is around 43 feet of water in the Bhavani Sagar Dam. If that is released, it will help the farmers to a great extent," he said. Water could also be released from some of the dams in Nilgiris, he added.

When TOI contacted PWD Minister K V Ramalingam he said the government would take adequate steps to bring water to the region. "We have requested the release of water to the region from some of the dams in Ooty. This will reach the area in a few days," he said.

Federation of Gujarat Industries Expo 2013 draws farmers and auto industry experts

VADODARA: The three-day Auto-Agro Expo 2013 organized by Federation of Gujarat Industries (FGI) concluded with a special awards ceremony for the exhibitors who participated in the exhibition. On Sunday, FGI conducted CEO panel discussions on automotive industry: Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities and seminars on opportunities in agro-based projects, agro industry perspective, micro propagation of blessed tree - date palms, research and innovation and best practices in agriculture sector.

The exhibition saw more than 2,000 farmers participate in various agro seminars and the top management of various corporate shared their experiences and views about the automotive industry in the panel discussion. The panel session was moderated by [Ernst and Young](#) (E&Y) who were the knowledge partners for FGI Expo 2013.

More than 35,000 visitors participated in the three day exhibition at [FGI Business Center](#) on Sevasi Road, which included about 5,000 students from various colleges and technical institutes, said FGI authorities. While more than 10,000 farmers visited the Agro expo 2013, out of which about 3,500 farmers also attended the concurrent seminars which were being held on the various subjects related to Agro sectors.

Chill a boon for wheat crop, bane for others: Meteorological department

HISAR/SIRSA: The [biting chill](#) might have taken a toll on human lives and disrupted daily routines, but the fog and mist is likely to become a blessing in disguise for [wheat farmers](#) of the region, who are now expecting a [bumper crop](#).

On Saturday, it was 0.5 degree Celsius in Hisar, while Sirsa district recorded 1.2 degree Celsius temperature. According to the met department of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agriculture University (CCSHAU), "The temperature will drop further in the coming days. This can become harmful for crops, as the minimum temperature is dipping constantly. However, the temperature of about 1 to 2 degree Celsius will be a boon for wheat farmers."

On Sunday, people could be seen covering themselves properly and taking to fire pots to save them from the [cold](#). Last year, the temperature had dipped to 0 degree Celsius in Hisar.

According to a scientist at HAU, "The temperature dipping constantly can affect crops like mustard, potato and tomato, whereas low temperature and fog will be profitable for wheat and gram." Giving tips to save the fields from chilly weather, he said. "Fumigation near the fields is the best option to save the farm land. Fumes in the direction of air will save the yield from cold."

Geoinformatics course at Cotton College now

GUWAHATI: [Cotton College](#) will be introducing a six-month certificate course on geoinformatics from January 21.

The course will be coordinated by the geology department of the college. The department has also been conducting one-month courses on geographic information system and global positioning system since 2004.

"The [geoinformatics course](#) will be conducted for duration of six months and the total fee for the course will be Rs 15,000. The course will lay emphasis on three aspects - remote sensing, which is mostly interpretation of [satellite](#) data, geographic information system, and global positioning system. The total number of seats for this course is 10. The criterion for admission, whether through an entrance exam or any other factor, is yet to be decided," said [Santanu Sharma](#), associate professor of the geology.

Sharma added, "The faculty, who will be teaching the course will comprise mostly professors from the department, but we will also call resource persons from outside. The candidates vying for the course must be a graduate and there is no age limit. The last date of submission of forms is January 5."

Jumbo herd destroys 100 tonnes of sugarcane

KRISHNAGIRI: A herd of 50 to 55 elephants created panic near Hosur early Sunday morning, damaging nearly 100 tonnes of sugarcane. The crop was ready for harvest and preparations were on to send the yield to the mills for crushing, when the incident occurred.

V Jayaraman owns two acres in Nallaralapalli village near Hosur in Krishnagiri district, on which he had cultivated the cane. "The cane was all tied up stored in bundles in the field. We were waiting for the trucks to transport the crop to the sugar mills when the herd damaged the crop. The crop was worth Rs 3lakh," he said.

According to forest officials, the elephant herd had come from the Udedurgam Reserve Forests. This is the ninth instance of elephants straying into human settlements in the region in recent months," forest officials said.

There were totally 104 elephants that entered the [Tamil Nadu](#) forest area from Kolar Reserve Forest in Karnataka a few weeks ago. They managed to drive 40 elephants back to Karnataka by blasting crackers, said AK Ulaganathan, District Forest Officer (DFO) Krishnagiri district. "While a team of forest officials and employees were able to chase away a herd of 40 wild elephants from Sanamavu and Podur Pallam reserve forests adjoining the [Chennai-Bangalore National Highway](#) two days ago, another herd consisting of 20 elephants entered Podur Pallam in Sanamavu forest and damaged ragi, paddy crops and sugarcane in Jingiripalli and its surroundings," Ulaganathan said. The survey on crop damage would be conducted soon by the officials and compensation would be disbursed to the farmers, Ulaganathan added.

While forest officials say they are doing the best they can to curb the man-animal conflict, these incidents continue to happen with increasing frequency.

Agricultural University to prepare action plan to fight drought in the state

THRISSUR: As the state is staring at another [drought season](#), [Kerala Agricultural University](#) (KAU) is preparing an action plan to fight it. The details of the plan will be finalized at a brainstorming session to be held in Thiruvananthapuram on January 22, said KAU director of extension Dr P V Balachandran, who will lead the session.

Chief minister [Oommen Chandy](#), officials from [agriculture department](#), scientists from KAU, Centre for Water Resources development and Management (CWRDM) - Kozhikode, Indian Metrological Department (IMD), Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) - Kasaragod and Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR) - Kozhikode and a few selected farmers will participate in the session. Farmers will be selected from Krishi Vinjan Kendras based on the data collected there. "We will seek how farmers have been using their traditional wisdom to counter drought situations and their views will be included in the plan," said Balachandran.

"We will evaluate the drought situation in the state, deviation of monsoon and its impact on various crops. A comparison on drought and monsoon deviation for the last 50 years in the state will be analyzed to find out whether drought is a recurring phenomenon," he said.

"Research projects on drought and monsoon done in and outside the state, location wise drought condition, rainfall and drought tolerant crops will be examined and discussed to formulate strategies," he added. "The short and long-term strategies evolved will be documented and submitted to the state government to implement in the state to fight drought," said Balachandran.

"The short-term strategies will be implemented this year itself whereas the long-term ones within a five-year period," Balachandran said.

Farmers demand release of Mettur dam water into 17 canals

TRICHY: Farmers' associations on Sunday urged the state government to release water into 17 irrigation canals from Mettur dam so that the cultivation in [Trichy](#) district can be salvaged.

A meeting of farmers' welfare association was convened in Vayaloor in the outskirts of Trichy to pass a resolution in favour of the farmers. More than 100 farmers, who took part in the meeting, demanded the release of 3,000 cusecs of water from the Mettur dam to the canals running through Trichy and Karur districts in order to salvage the withering samba paddy crops, banana plantations and sugarcane and also to prevent the depletion of groundwater level on the banks of Cauvery. The farmers also passed a resolution demanding Rs 40,000 per acre as compensation for samba crop failure.

Puliyur Nagarajan, state vice-president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee agriculture wing said, "We plan to stage protests in front of all the pumping station across Cauvery river, to insist upon the state government, to release water. Moreover, the dams should be constructed across the river to enhance the ground water level." Goundampatti Subramanian, a farmer alleged that the farmers in Namakkal and Karur districts illegally pump the water in Cauvery through lift irrigation. He said, "The water in Cauvery does not reach Trichy and other districts because of this. Hence, the district administrations of the two districts should disconnect electricity to such farmers who practice illegal water pumping."

The farmers also charged that MPs and Union ministers from the state were not taking any effective steps. Seplapatti Subramani, another farmer said, "It is pathetic that the members of parliament representing Tamil Nadu never prefer the water resource ministry. But they only eye only plum portfolios like chemical, road transport, shipping, finance ministries etc. It is clear that none of our politicians bother about the welfare of the farmers in our state."

"The samba crops in [Thanjavur](#), [Tiruvarur](#) and Nagapattinam districts could not be salvaged even if the water is released now. So, we urge the state government to release 3,000 cusecs of water under the system to at least save the crops in Trichy district," said [Ayilal Sivasurian](#), Trichy district secretary of [Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam](#).

Pongal may not be so sweet with rising prices



Chennai: With the delta farmers hit by drought, following the failed monsoon and Karnataka's refusal to release Cauvery water, preparing pongal for the coming festival will be costlier than ever.

Consumers say that all the ingredients for the traditional delicacy, particularly rice, are already getting dearer even as some traders resorted to hoarding in the hope of reaping bigger profits as the festival time nears.

“Everything has become so expensive, from buying new clothes for the festival to making the traditional delicacy, pongal. Spending more money, just a little pongal on the plate along with few pieces of sugarcane, and, of course, the power cuts; that's how Pongal this time is going to be celebrated,” said Ramakrishnan.

Grocer A.S. Lingam in Ramapuram said Pongal festival this time could be a low-key affair as almost all the Chennai households are hit by skyrocketing prices. “Jaggery costs `55 per kilo while pasiparuppu is sold at `85. Ghee is priced at `43 per 100 gm,” he said.

One sugarcane piece costs `25 at the Koyambedu wholesale market, while a turmeric sapling, another Pongal pooja requirement, will be sold for `10-15, according to Mr S. Srinivasan, a Koyambedu trader. Teacher Sivasankari of Anna Nagar said she would buy prepared sweets instead of making them at home.

“With the ingredients costing so much, I do not want to spend big money and waste time making pongal sweets at home for fulfilling the ritual,” she explained.

Realising the growing divide among the people around them, youth groups in Chennai have decided to spend their Pongal in the villages.

“While farmers are paying their tribute of tears to the drought-dried crops, how can we celebrate this Pongal? My friends and I have decided to share our Pongal with a farmer's family in Tiruvallur,” said 24-year-old S. Vignesh, English literature student in Chennai.