THE HINDU

“Now Cauvery water is more needed for drinking than for crop”

The HinduBorewells being dug up on the dry Cauvery river bed at Kambarasampettai pumping station, Tiruchi. Photo: M.Moorthy

As monsoon has set in over Kerala, government urged to release water

“With the southwest monsoon setting in over Kerala on time, the time is ideal for the State to release water in the Cauvery to meet the drinking water needs of several parched districts,” observes M. Natarajan, former superintending engineer, PWD, and author of two books on the Cauvery.

Presently an advisor to the ‘Cauvery Family’, an inter-State forum of farmers in the river basin areas, he says there is every possibility that the Mettur dam will start getting some inflows soon. “The State government should release at least, 2,000 cusecs to quench the thirst of the population served by about 50 drinking water schemes between Mettur and Grand Anicut. This quantum need not be from the Mettur Reservoir alone. It could be from Bhavanisagar and

Amaravati also and the rains, especially in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri regions, are likely to be of considerable help in this regard."

According to official sources, more than 500 million litres a day (MLD) is drawn from the Cauvery for these combined water schemes, major ones being Ramanathapuram, Tiruchi, Salem, and Pudukottai.

Mahadanapuram V. Rajaram, working president of the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association, and a resident of the village on the banks of the Cauvery, laments that he has never witnessed a situation as bad as the current one in his more than seven decades of living there. "Even the borewells sunk along the banks of the Cauvery are not much of help. Our priority now is not kuruvai or samba, but drinking water," he asserts.

Official sources said even the functioning of the Tamil Nadu Newsprints and Papers Ltd., Pugalur, is affected because of the very poor flow in the Cauvery. The company has been drawing substantial water from the Cauvery.

Mr. Natarajan, who admits that the storage in the Mettur Dam is extraordinarily poor now (about 18 ft against the full level of 120 ft and the storage is less than four thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) against the total 93.4 tmcft). "All that the Mettur reservoir now has is only silt."

He also admits that storage in Karnataka reservoirs is equally poor. At the same time, he points out that the Kabini reservoir, whose catchment is in Kerala, used to be the first among Karnataka reservoirs to become full because its capacity is just 16 tmcft.

"But its total annual inflow is 97 tmcft. Thus the reservoir would be able to store only one sixth of the total inflow. However, Karnataka has chosen to pump as much as 28 tmcft to two tanks – Sagare and Dhoddagare – and it has already expanded its ayacut to 4.47 lakh acres.

In case of heavy rains in catchment areas of the Kabini, it would be impossible for Karnataka to tap the entire quantum which will be beneficial to Tamil Nadu," he adds. Besides, the seepage from the ayacut of Krishnaraja Sagar Dam, which is calculated as 15 per cent of its capacity of 45 tmcft, and rains in other places in the 64 km stretch between Billigundulu and Palar, near the Mettur Reservoir, would be very helpful to Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Natarajan says that If 2,000 cusecs were to be released in the Cauvery, apart from quenching the thirst of several lakhs of people, that could also help the TNPL.

It could fill the trenches created by the indiscriminate sand quarrying and help replenish the aquifers all along the Cauvery bank.

At the same time, it might be able to save the standing banana crop, especially in the 17-channel area.

More small farmers selling land, turning workers: experts

Experts say small farmers are selling their meagre holdings to become agricultural labourers. Photo: B.Jothi Ramalingam.

Steep rise in inputs and uncertainty over water availability are among factors

More and more small and marginal farmers are selling their meagre landholdings to become agricultural workers.

This is how agriculturists, policy-makers and economists explain the finding in the Census for Tamil Nadu: Between 2001 and 2011, the strength of cultivators declined and the number of agricultural workers went up. In the 10-year period, there was a fall of about 8.7 lakh in the number of cultivators and a rise of nearly 9.7 lakh among farm workers.

With agriculture remaining unprofitable generally, many cultivators are forced to give up farming and consequently sell their lands. Uncertainty over water availability, steep rise in inputs, particularly fertilizers, and inadequate procurement price for food grains are among the factors that drive out farmers from their basic calling.

According to the State Planning Commission's 12th Five Year Plan document, the overall average size of landholding had come down from 0.83 hectares in 2005-06 to 0.80 hectares in 2010-11.

"What is ironical is that when the scope for agriculture is shrinking, the number of agricultural workers is on the rise," says K. Balakrishnan, president of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam and Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLA from Chidambaram. Farmers not getting fair compensation in times of floods or droughts and cumbersome procedures associated with crop insurance are other reasons that make the farming community have second thoughts over continuing with agriculture.

S. Janakarajan, professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies, and a seasoned expert on agrarian issues, refers to the trend of agricultural land being purchased in a big way by institutions of higher education and companies that are putting up thermal power plants. “This is happening in the Cauvery delta,” says Prof. Janakarajan, who has just carried out field surveys in eastern parts of the delta, particularly in the Nagapattinam-Vedaranayam belt.

Pointing out that the big picture is extremely disturbing, he says that pull and push factors are in operation against farming. While the push factor pertains to the distress conditions in which agriculturists are placed, the pull factor refers to “greater opportunities,” as viewed by farmers, in urban areas, for their livelihood. According to him, the most important finding of the Census – the urban boom in Tamil Nadu – means conversion of rural poverty into urban poverty.

However, a senior policy-maker, who had a considerable stint in the State Agriculture Department in the last 10 years, sees the trend differently. “What we are witnessing is economic transition. When an economy matures, the contribution of the primary sector to the overall economy becomes less and less. At one stage, it will stabilise.”

What everyone acknowledges is that given the level of urbanisation in the State, many farm workers are no longer dependent solely on farming for livelihood.

For some months in a year, they get into non-farming activities such as construction. In fact, another policy-maker says there should be enough avenues for non-farm income for the agriculturists so that they do not find themselves in economic distress in times of successive spells of drought.As regards the Census finding on the increase in the strength of farm workers, not many are willing to agree with it. The policy-maker says that be it in the Cauvery delta or in Cuddalore-Villupuram belt, the dearth of workers has been the general complaint.

S. Ranganathan, general secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers’ Welfare Association, says there is a perceptible fall in the number of labourers even in the delta over the years. With vast improvement in connectivity, the practice of people in rural parts of the region going to faraway places for livelihood is no longer uncommon.

A substantial workforce in the Tirupur knitwear industry is from the delta, he points out.

Farmers hopeful of good harvest after heavy rain

Farmers rejoiced as they could start sowing as they had already prepared the land anticipating rains. —File photo

The heavy rain that lashed the district for two days, has brought cheers to farmers who were anxiously waiting to commence sowing.

The district, which received 9.7 mm rain on Saturday, has enabled the farmers to expedite sowing for the Kharif season.

Owing to the drought that prevailed in the district for the last two years, farmers were praying for a good monsoon this year to recover the loss they incurred.

On Saturday people were seen wading through flooded roads in Bijapur city after it rained for two hours.

While people in urban areas were happy with the drop in temperature, farmers were rejoicing as they could start sowing as they had already prepared the land anticipating rains.

The officials say that the department has already procured adequate quantity of seeds and fertilizers for distribution through the Riata Samparka Kendras in the district. The rain is also expected to mitigate the drinking water problem and fodder scarcity. Since more rain is expected in the coming days, the water level in the dried ponds, lakes and bunds will increase in the district.

AIKS opposes PPP in agriculture

As the Centre prepares to facilitate public private partnership (PPP) to transform agriculture into a profitable proposition for peasants, the All India Kisan Sabha on Sunday pitched for an alternative farmer-centric policy to find a permanent solution to unabated suicide by ryots in the era of globalisation.

"We will oppose tooth and nail the Centre's proposal to work out pact with farmers and 34 companies in 17 States and come out with recommendations to bring out the farm sector out of crisis", says AIKS national Vice-President S. Malla Reddy ahead of the three-day State meet of the AIKS, the peasants front of the CPI(M), from June 9 here.

The PPPs in the wake of Indian Council for Agricultural Research-Industry meet, envisaged pacts between leading domestic and multinational firms and peasants in select districts to improve productivity through introduction of newer technologies and transgenic crops and buy-back of ryots produce. However, the PPAs would only push the peasants out of farming and pave the way for corporatisation of agriculture over a period, opined Mr. Reddy while talking to reporters.

The AIKS national meet at Cuddalore from July 26 to 28 after the AIKS State meets, would prepare the farmers for a nation-wide agitation along with like-minded farmers organisations, for a special market intervention fund and supply of farm inputs including seeds and fertilizers with 100 per cent subsidy to farmers.

He expressed concern over commercial crops replacing food grains and pulse crops which ensured steady income to growers.

While paddy cultivation had come down from 2.50 crore acres to 2.00 crore acres in the State, the extent of cotton had increased from 35 lakh acres to 56 lakh acres during last cropping season, he said.

Tonnes of farm produce destroyed in inferno

It took over 12 hours to bring the flames under control

Several hundred tonnes of agricultural produce, including Bengal gram, coriander seeds, tamarind, chillies, and jowar, were destroyed in a fire at a cold storage on the outskirts of the city on Sunday.

Six fire tenders were pressed into service. It took Fire and Emergency Services personnel over 12 hours to bring the flames under control. The fire was reportedly caused by a short-circuit. Preliminary estimates put the loss at over Rs. 2 crore.

The fire was first noticed on the fifth floor of the building.

“As the prices crashed during the last two years, I kept the produce in the cold storage waiting for a good price. This year, the prices have gone up but my luck is such that the produce is gutted,” a distraught Basavanagouda told *The Hindu*.

He rushed from Balagudda village in Sandur taluk to Bellary on hearing about the fire.

‘NOC NOT OBTAINED’

Sources in the department told *The Hindu* that the owner of the cold storage had not taken any precautions to prevent fire accidents and had also not obtained no objection certificate from the department.

When contacted, the owner said that as it was a cold storage the possibility of a fire accident was remote and so he did not obtain an NOC. He added that the produce had been insured.

The Bellary (Rural) police have registered a case.

Safe-to-eat tag for vegetables

The KAU is working on an initial plan to produce and provide pesticide-free vegetables at a premium price for quality-conscious consumers.

KAU bid involves food safety certification, promotion of homestead horticulture

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has embarked on an initiative aimed at ensuring that vegetables and fruits consumed in the State are safe to eat and free of pesticide residue.

The programme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, involves food safety certification, promotion of homestead horticulture, and creating awareness of the hazards of pesticide residue.

The KAU is working on an initial plan to produce and provide pesticide-free vegetables at a premium price for quality-conscious consumers. The Pesticide Residue Research and Analytical Laboratory at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, will play a key role in the programme.

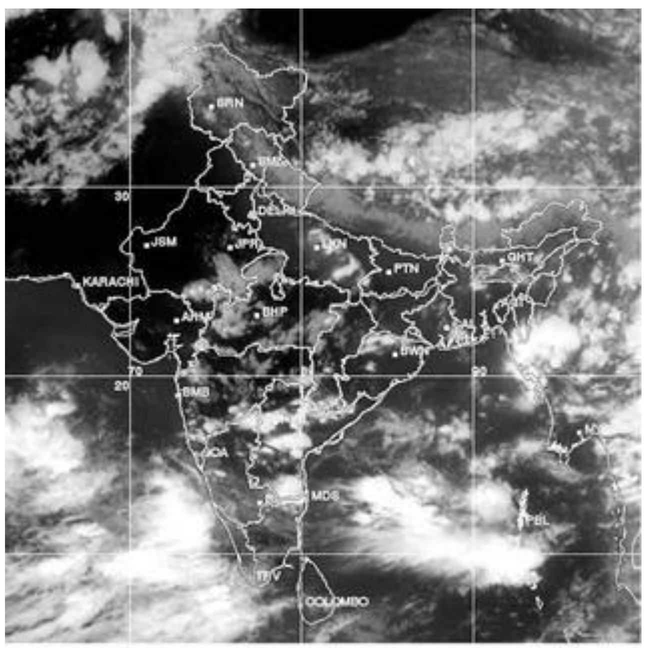
KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran said the laboratory had detected pesticide residue in 226 out of 1,024 samples, with 78 samples exceeding the maximum residue limit (MRL). “We are developing and popularising protocols to remove pesticide residue from high-risk vegetables and fruits based on already identified techniques,” he said.

Dr. Rajendran said efforts were afoot to equip the laboratory with more sophisticated instruments to cater to the analytical needs of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Family Welfare, Ground Water Directorate and other research agencies.

S. Nazeemabeevi, who heads the laboratory at Vellayani, said alarming levels of pesticide residue had been detected in cardamom, the key export commodity of the State. “All the samples showed residue and in most cases, the levels exceeded the MRL also. Pesticide residue above the MRL were seen in cabbage, cauliflower, cowpea, and bitter gourd. At least seven common pesticides, including endosulfan, were detected," she said.

Dr. Nazeemabeevi said the case of curry leaves was a matter of grave concern. "Of the 64 samples analysed, residue was detected in 39. Of the 242 vegetables tested, residue were detected in 79, of which five exceeded the MRL.

weather



	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	40	27	0	0
New Delhi (Sfd)	38	27	0	0
Chandigarh	36	27	0	0

Hissar	41	27	0	0
Bhuntar	35	21	0	0
Shimla	25	17	0	0
Jammu	38	29	0	0
Srinagar	31	14	0	0
Amritsar	46	27	0	0
Patiala	37	26	0	0
Jaipur	42	28	0	0
Udaipur	40	28	0	0
Allahabad	35	26	0	17
Lucknow	30	24	0	0
Varanasi	28	24	1	1
Dehradun	32	24	0	0
Agartala	34	26	2	9
Ahmedabad	41	30	0	0
Bangalore	26	20	13	113
Bhubaneshwar	37	27	0	0
Bhopal	42	28	0	0
Chennai	35	27	0	0
Guwahati	34	24	1	3
Hyderabad	35	25	0	7
Kolkata	35	27	0	0

Mumbai	35	28	0	0
Nagpur	45	29	0	1
Patna	29	25	0	29
Pune	37	22	1	1
Thiruvananthapuram	31	23	20	58
Imphal	30	20	0	5
Shillong	24	17	0	2

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st June.

RAIN AT FEW PLACES

Heat wave conditions are prevailing over some parts of west Rajasthan.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over east Rajasthan, east Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly dry over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: EAST RAJASTHAN: Chikali 1 and EAST UTTARPRADESH: Patti 5, Sultanpur 3 and Handia, Meja, Kunda and Pratapgarh 1 each.

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES: The maximum temperatures fell appreciably in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, fell in Himachal Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were appreciably above normal in west Rajasthan, above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, largely below normal in Uttar Pradesh, markedly below normal in Uttarakhand, appreciably below normal in Haryana and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 47.2ºC recorded at Churu (Rajasthan).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 4th June 2013: Rain/thundershowers may occur and at one or two places over Uttarakhand. Rain/thundershowers may occur and at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh from tomorrow onwards. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 4th June 2013: Mainly clear sky becoming partly cloudy sky.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti gives govt 1 month to reclaim farmland

The Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti(KMSS) has given a month's time to the state government to reclaim agricultural land in Kamrup (Rural) district that was procured by businessmen for non-agricultural purposes and hand it over to the original owners.

KMSS president Akhil Gogoi on Sunday here threatened that if the government failed to reclaim the land within a month, his organization would forcefully settle flood and erosion-displaced people in these plots procured by the businessmen.

The peasant body has been protesting against use of agricultural land for non-agricultural activities since businessmen and real estate developers procured large plots of cultivable land from farmers in Kamrup (Rural) district. Gogoi said that the Assam Land Revenue Regulation 1886 (amended) prevents large-scale transfer of cultivable land from farmers to non-agriculturists.

"We are holding a mass demonstration in front of the Kamrup (Rural) deputy commissioner's office on June 6. We will give one month's time to the government. If the government fails to take back the land, we will forcefully settle displaced people in these plots. There is a huge land scam going on in Kamrup district. We have collected documents through the RTI that prove how agriculture land is being misused," Akhil said.

He alleged that businessmen Suresh Prithani, Kailash Lohia and Ramavtar Burakia were involved large-scale agriculture land procurement in Kamrup (Rural) district and demanded a

CBI inquiry against them.

Last month, the KMSS held a large public protest here against Prithani, Lohia and Burakia

Bellary cold storage unit fire destroys chillies worth Rs 3 crore

A major fire broke out in a cold storage building in the Mundargi industrial area near Bellary destroying about Rs 3cr worth of red chillies in the wee hours of Sunday.

Electric short circuit is stated to be the cause of the fire that broke out in the godown of Sai Balaji Cold Storage India Limited on Bellary-Bangalore Road. Suleman Tahasildar, CPI, Bellary rural police station, said the 6-floor building belongs to Sreeman Narayana of Bellary. Around 1.20 lakh gunnybags of chillies were gutted, he said.

Water shortage hits fire operation

Five fire tenders from Bellary and one from Kurugod which came to the spot around 6am are still battling the fire and it may take many more hours to put out the fire completely, he said and added that they had to break down the walls of the building as there was no ventilation.

The fire which broke out in the second floor slowly spread to all the other five floors where pulses and wheat were stored. Hundreds of farmers had stored their produce there. Sreeman Narayana, the owner, said that the chillies were covered by insurance.

Narasimha Murthy, regional fire officer, Bellary, said lack of fire safety measures and ventilation in the building was hampering the operations. "We are trying hard to reach the top of the building. It will take one more day to douse the fire completely," he said. The other reasons obstructing the work are water shortage and the smoke caused by the burning of the chillies.

Torrential rain plays havoc in Keri-Sattari

Suresh TukaramGawas from Keri-Sattari suffered a loss of 50,000 after his banana plantation was destroyed due to torrential rains accompanied by cyclonic winds on Saturday night. Some farmers from Bicholim andSattaritaluka have also suffered losses due to natural calamities. Farmers in this area have demanded that the zonal agricultural department compensate them.

Sugar prices to remain stable

The fortune of sugar in the domestic markets is hanging between fundamental factors prevailing in the Indian markets and the international ones. The glut in the global markets has kept international sugar prices in the grip of bears over the past two years.

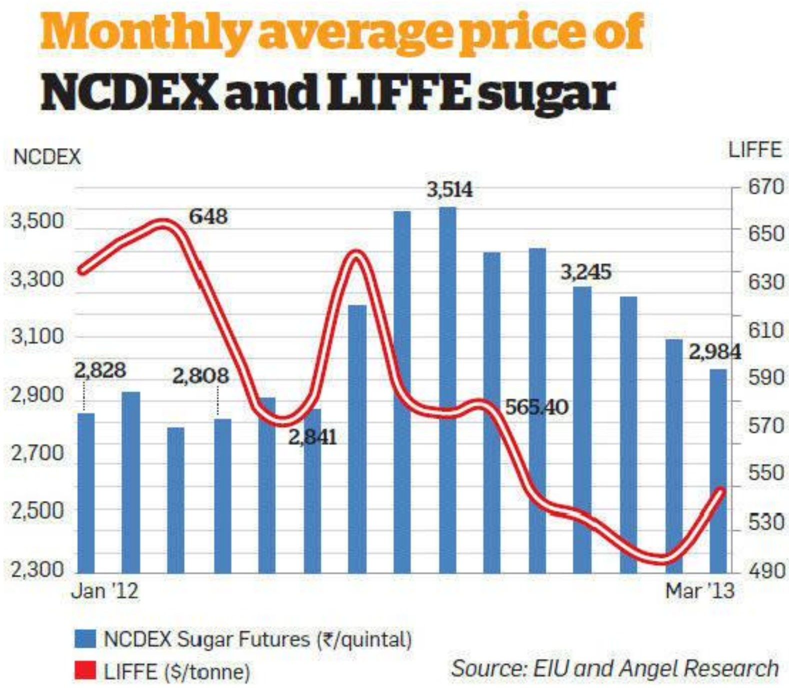
In the domestic markets too, sugar prices have declined significantly over the past six months due to various factors, such as excessive supplies, higher levy quota and weak exports as a result of low international prices. However, as the sugar industry is finally liberated from a few regulatory aspects, sentiments have turned positive for it.

Sugar is extracted from two crops, sugarcane and sugar beet, which account for 80% and 20% of the world's sugar supply, respectively. Sugarcane has been witnessing a metamorphosis in recent times, from that of a sweetener to a producer of alternate fuel, which has altered the structure of the sugar sector globally.

International sugar prices are largely dominated by the leading producing countries—Brazil (22%), India (16%), EU-27, China and Thailand—which together contribute about 60% of the global production.

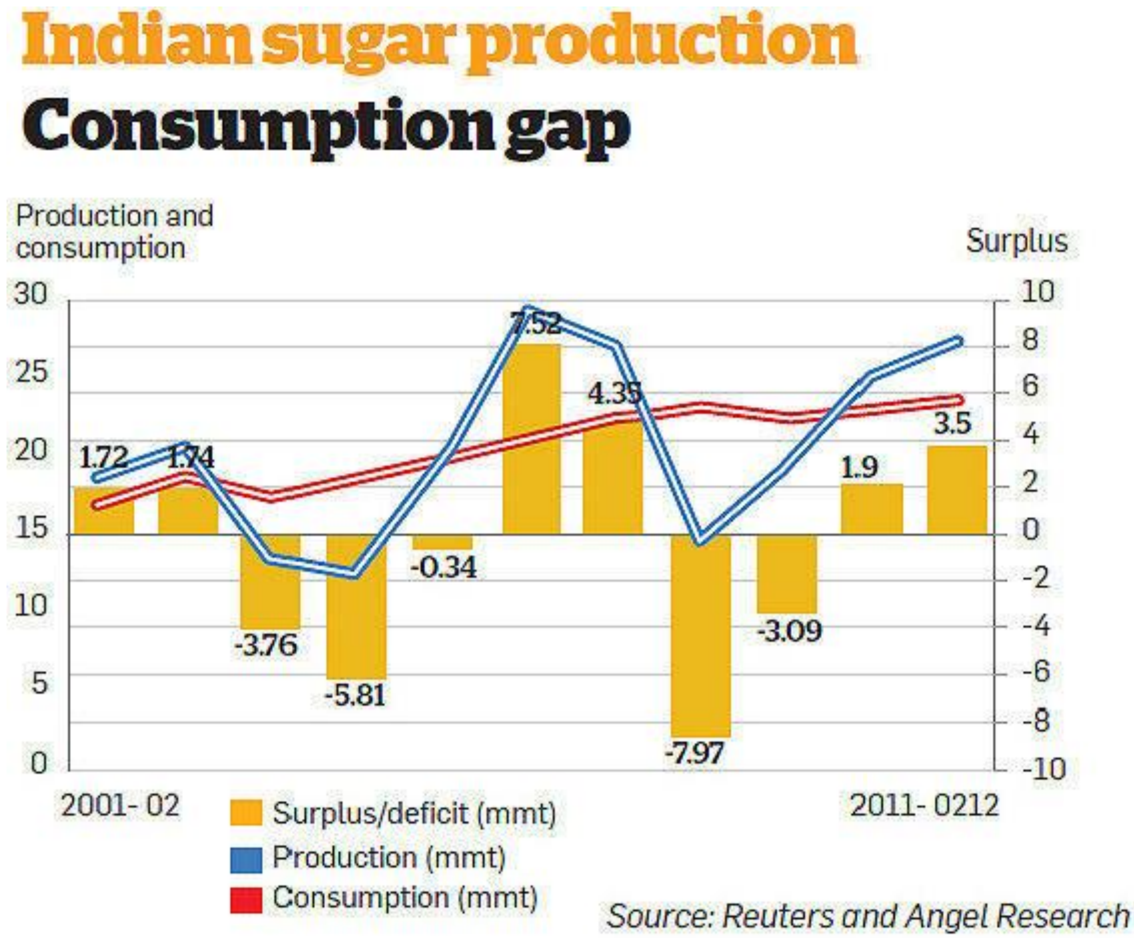
According to the latest estimates released by the International Sugar Organisation (ISO), sugar production has increased by 12.5% to a record 181.7 million tonnes over the past five years.

However, the pace of consumption is comparatively slower, leading to a surplus.



The ISO raised its forecast for global sugar production surplus to a record high of 9.98 million tonnes as output growth of 4.3% outpaced world demand growth, which was up by 2.2% in 2012-13. However, there are reports that demand from Brazil's resurgent biofuels industry will cut burgeoning global sugar surplus.

This will help cushion prices that fell below 17 cents per pound at the ICE for the first time in three years. On the domestic front, sugar was highly regulated until recently when the government partially deregulated the sector. The release mechanism has been abolished and mills are now free to decide on the quantity they want to sell in the markets. Also, the levy quota has been removed and state governments will now have to buy sugar from the mills at market prices, increasing the profitability of the mills.



Wheat prices shoot up in Punjab, Haryana spot market

With wheat arrivals negligible in grain markets, wheat rates in the spot market have risen sharply in the past 10-15 days to Rs 1,550 per quintal in Punjaband Haryana due to expectations of low production.

"Wheat prices have surged in last 10-15 days as the arrivals this year have been lower because of possibility of low production in Punjab and Haryana...prices have reached Rs 1,550 per quintal against Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 1,350 per quintal," traders said today.

Traders further said there was no availability of wheat in the grain markets which had pushed up the prices of the crop.

"Wheat arrivals have almost diminished in Punjab and Haryana, while the demand for crop is still there because of its export allowed by the Centre," Punjab Roller Flour Millers President Naresh Ghai told PTI.

Though traders refused to accept that farmers had hoarded the crop, there had been some reports from Punjab that wheat growers held back their crop in the hope of getting better rates from export.

"There has not been any availability of wheat in the market as bulk has been bought by the procurement agencies," he said.

The Centre had allowed export of 5 million tonnes of wheat from its godowns via private trade in order to evacuate old stock in "overflowing" warehouses.

Against the target of procuring 140 lakh tonnes for central pool for current rabi marketing season, the actual purchase for central pool is likely to remain 109 lakh tonnes in Punjab.

Similarly, in Haryana, the procurement is expected not to cross 59 lakh tonne mark for central pool -- much lower than the target of 87.30 lakh tonne.

Last year, the procurement remained high because of record wheat production attained by Punjab and Haryana at 179.82 lakh tonne and 130.69 lakh tonne respectively.

Wheat crop in Punjab and Haryana were hit at fag-end of the maturity stage in March this year due to untimely rain accompanied by hailstorm, which impacted the crop.

Punjab and Haryana, which contribute almost 80 per cent of wheat to Central pool, have projected wheat output of 161 lakh tonnes and 124 lakh tonnes respectively for 2013-14 season.

"The Centre is not ready to accept the fact that there would be a fall in wheat output this year. Country's wheat output this year will remain 82-83 million tonnes against the target of 93 million tonnes," traders said.

Karnal-based Directorate of Wheat Research had also said wheat production in Punjab and Haryana would be less this year because of inclement weather conditions prevailing during the crop maturity stage.

Cardamom futures up on spot demand

Cardamom prices rose by Rs 3.80 to Rs 761.30 per kg in futures tradetoday largely in tandem with a firming spot markets trend on pick-up in demand amid restricted arrivals.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange,Cardamom for July delivery surged by Rs 3.80, or 0.50 per cent, to Rs 761.30 per kg in a business volume of 65 lots.

The spice for delivery in June gained Rs 3, or 0.41 per cent, to Rs 732 per kg in a business volume of 475 lots.

Traders said pick-up in demand in the spot market against restricted arrivals from producing regions resulted into the rise in cardamom prices in the futures market.

The Indian EXPRESS

Farmers flock to city to find labourers; PAU says don't panic

A farmer talks to a migrant labourer at the railway station in Ludhiana on Sunday. Gurmeet Singh

As the date for paddy sowing — June 10 — is coming near, farmers of Punjab are heading towards migrant and industrial hub Ludhiana but the shortage of labour and inflation have compounded their problems.

In view of the too expensive paddy transplantors costing lakhs and unaffordable for small farmers, they are left with no option but to go for manual paddy sowing and hiring labourers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states.

However, this year even the labour, which was earlier available in abundance, is hard to find. Thus, their rates have too gone up due to shortage.

While a farmer hiring a labourer had to pay Rs 1,800 to Rs 2,000 for getting paddy sowed till last year, it's nothing less than Rs 2,500-3,000 which is going to work this paddy sowing season.

But the option is still viable if compared to a paddy transplantor which costs nothing less than Rs 1.5 lakh and thus completely out of reach for small and medium farmers. This cost is despite the subsidy by the state government. The transplantors are also not easily available to all the farmers.

Without the subsidy, the minimum price of a transplantor is Rs 2.5 lakh while the maximum is Rs 10 lakh, which is completely out of reach for farmers.

But if experts from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) are to be believed, it is still not the time for farmers to get panicky. "No doubt, labour is in short supply and costly this year but nothing to get panicky about. They will arrive but late," says Dr M S Sidhu, senior economist-cum-head, PAU Economics Department.

He says there are many factors which have led to the shortage of labour. "First the MNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) has played a major role as now migrants feel comfortable in living with their families and getting employment too. It's not that they have completely stopped coming here but not in huge numbers as earlier. So, definitely shortage will be there," he said.

hindustantimes

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather		Tomorrow's Forecast	
	Monday, Jun 3		**Tuesday, Jun 4**
Partly Cloudy	Max Min	Partly Cloudy	Max Min
	35o | 27o		36o | 26o
Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:41		
Humidity: 59	Sunset: 06:32		
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1004		

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Jun 5	**Jun 6**	**Jun 7**	**Jun 8**	**Jun 9**
36o | 26o	36o | 25o	36o | 25o	36o | 25o	36o | 25o
Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast

Airport Weather

Chennai	
Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:41
Humidity: 59	Sunset: 06:32
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1004

Scarcity of labourers worrying paddy farmers

With the paddy season round the corner, farmers have started visiting Ludhiana railway station to find labourers for sowing paddy. As per the state government's norms, paddy sowing will start from June 10. Farmers from rural areas of the district can be seen looking-out for labourers at the railway station, which has become a hub for migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar looking for work.

Last year the farmers had faced an acute shortage of workers during the paddy season in rural areas.

One such farmer from Kheri village Balwant Singh was finding workers at the railway station. He said, "I have come here to find labourers, especially migrants from UP and Bihar for my farms."

Balwant adds, "Last year, I faced an acute shortage of labourers. As the paddy season begins from June 10, I have finished all preparations, but still have to find the required work force."

Manu, a farmer from Ladhian village, claims, "There is a scarcity of labourers in the village as compared to last year. Labourers, back in the village are demanding more money due to shortage of work force."

While last year labourers were charging Rs. 1,800-2,000 per acre, this year they are demanding Rs. 2,200-2,500 per acre to sow the crop during paddy season. Besides, adequate work force, work will also depend on the power supply to fields.

Dr Gursahib Singh Manes, a senior research engineer-cum-head of the farm machinery and power engineering department at PAU, says machines are also available at PAU. Manes adds, "While some farmers have their own machines, many borrow them. The charges of sowing the crop depend upon its requirement during paddy season.

He also says that shortage of labour occurs as a majority of labourers come to find work after June 10.

Earlier on May 29, chief engineer of PSPCL (central) KL Sharma had assured promised eight hours, uninterrupted power supply to farmers during paddy season.

THE HINDU Business Line

Mixed trend continues in Kochi tea auction

A mixed trend continued in almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi auction in the last two consecutive weeks.

In sale No: 22, the quantity on offer in the CTC dust grades was 11,75,000 kg.

The prices for teas with good leaf appearance and liquoring properties were dearer by Rs 2-4 and sometimes more. Of this, smaller and powder grades witnessed strong demand.

However, medium and plainer teas were irregular.

The quantity on offer in the orthodox dust category was 11,000 kg.

The market for primary grades was steady, while others were irregular and easier.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs 105-126, RD grades ruled at Rs 108-132, SRD stood at Rs 115-140 and SFD fetched Rs 117-155.

The leaf sale also witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 1,30,000 kg.

The market for select best highgrown brokens and whole leaf fannings was fully firm to sometimes dearer.

Others were irregular and lower.

Medium well made black bolder brokens, tippy grades and whole leaf remained steady to firm.

Corresponding fannings tended to ease.

ctc leaf

Of the quantity of 73,000 kg on offer in CTC leaf category, good liquoring teas were fully firm to dearer. Others were irregular and lower and also witnessed some withdrawals.

In the dust grades, Injipara SFD quoted the best prices of Rs 160, followed by Injipara SRD at Rs 159.

In the leaf category, Chamraj FOP-S Green Tea fetched the best prices of Rs 331 followed by Pascoe's Woodlands Hyson Green tea at Rs 311.

Lukewarm trading pulls tomato down

Tomato prices are likely to rule in a tight range without much fluctuation while the quality of stock is expected to be good in the coming days, said market expert.

Slack trading and easy availability of stocks pulled tomato prices marginally down by Rs 100-200 a quintal on Sunday.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that due to Karnal municipal corporation elections on Sunday, trading in the market remained lukewarm and that was the prime reason behind the marginal fall.

Due to heavy arrivals and steady demand, tomato prices have decreased by Rs 300-600 over the last couple of weeks.

Around 1,000 crates (a crate is 25 kg) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal wholesale vegetable market and were quoted at Rs 700-1,900.

Around 2,100 crates of varieties such as Anoop, Himsona and Trishul were received in the Karnal markets.

Out of total arrivals, about 20 per cent stock was of low quality; around 30 per cent medium quality while about 50 per cent stock of total arrivals was of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality decreased by Rs 100 and quoted at Rs 1,700-1,900.

Medium quality went down by Rs 200 and quoted at 1,100-1,200 while low quality produce was at Rs 700-1,000, Rs 100 down from the previous levels.

According to the market experts, tomato prices may continue to rule around current levels without much fluctuation.

Quality of the stock is likely to remain good and domestic demand is also expected to remain steady in the coming weeks.

India may gain little from Japan, Korea ban on US wheat imports

Though suspension of wheat imports from the US by Japan and South Korea is likely to offer opportunities to other nations exporting the foodgrain, India is unlikely to gain much from the development.

During the weekend, Japan, the second largest wheat importer in Asia after Indonesia, and South Korea suspended wheat purchases from the US after a non-approved genetically modified wheat was found growing on a farm in Oregon.

The US is nowhere nearer to finding how this happened, though the Department of Agriculture officials said that a probe was on to see how the wheat which has a gene altered to make it resistant to herbicides reared its head. The US has allowed cultivation of various genetically-modified crops such as corn, soyabean, cotton and alfa-alfa grass but not wheat.

As an immediate reaction to the finding of the wheat, prices on the Chicago Board of Trade dropped. However, prices in the other origins such as Europe gained.

“Prices of Europe, Australian and even Black Sea region wheat have gained. But this is likely to be a short-term gain. Once the US comes out with the result of its probe, things could change,” said Tejinder Narang, a consultant with a wheat export firm.

“Impact on Indian wheat is likely to be minimal since it is treated more as a feed wheat abroad, where the US wheat is a soft one for milling,” he said.

This also means India, which is trying to export more wheat from its warehouses, may not find a buyer in Japan or South Korea in the short-term.

“It will be hard for India to meet Japan’s specifications. They also need a more clean wheat which goes against the Indian grain.

“Though facilities for cleaning wheat have come up at places such as Adani port, they are yet to be accepted,” said Pramod Kumar, Director of Sunil Agro Mills in Karnataka.

“Maybe, Korea could accept our wheat,” he said.

“Even Korea considers Indian wheat for feed purpose only,” said Narang.

“It is not easy for Indian wheat to gain in markets where the look for high-protein produce which the US will be able to deliver. Japan mills have specifications for their products and we won’t be able to meet them,” said M.K. Dattaraj, former president of the Roller Flour Mills Federation of India.

India is looking to export wheat to cut its warehouse stocks. As on May 1, the Food Corporation of India held 11.7 million tonnes of wheat as stocks.

This is almost thrice the norms fixed by the Centre for buffer stocks that help meet any food emergency in the country.

In April, the Government gave its approval to export three million tonnes of wheat but there have been a few buyers for Indian wheat abroad.

This is because India is looking for a price of $300 a tonne that is much higher than the prevailing prices in the global market.

The Government appeared a bit desperate to export wheat since it has estimated the current year's crop at 93.9 million tonnes.

"Some Indian wheat has been sold at $280 a tonne c&f for delivery in August. This is against $265 quoted for Black Sea region wheat," said Narang.

Indian wheat is finding its way through West Asian and North African markets. Still, prices are considered high.

Though Indian wheat can be cleaned and efforts could be made for its acceptance for milling by mills abroad, the cost is seenprohibitive.

"There will be at least 2-3 per cent wastage when Indian wheat is cleaned.

This could mean a loss of $10 a tonne. Even if $7 a tonne premium is given for clean wheat, it will still be a loss proposition," he said.

"Australia will be able to supply the quality that Japan requires," said Pramod Kumar.

"Canada can also supply quality wheat to Japan. But all these could be short-term developments only," Dattaraj said.

Wheat prices at the New Delhi Lawrence market, a benchmark for the country, increased to Rs 1,590 a quintal on Saturday.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for delivery in July closed at Rs 1,624.

On the Chicago Board of Trade, wheat July contracts quoted at $7.05 a bushel or $259 a tonne.

Uptrend in pepper on buying support

Pepper market last week witnessed an uptrend on good buying support amid limited supply.

Arrivals continued to fall as the growers as the growers are hesitating to sell at lower levels. Besides, the rains in the growing areas are also affecting the supply negatively market sources said.

Domestic demand was picking up as the buyers were seen keen to stock before the onset of the monsoon, they said. Continued good demand especially for high bulk density pepper was there. Sellers were reluctant to sell at lower levels. Growers in the High Ranges said there were buyers at the terminal market prices on a cash and carry basis.

Leading exporters were showing interest to buy at Rs 332-333 a kg from Karnataka while sellers in Battery and Pulpally in Wayanad were offering at Rs 342-343. But buyers were quoting Rs 337-338. High Range pepper was offered at Rs 345 while Rajakumari was at Rs 348. Buyers were quoting Rs 346.

Due to the summer showers in the growing regions, the pepper arriving at present has high moisture content of 13- 13.5 per cent against the permissible 12 per cent, the trade claimed; “this phenomenon is pushing up the parity, they added. June, July and August contracts on the IPSTA moved up by Rs 175, Rs 224 and Rs 365 respectively to Rs 35,400, Rs 35,499 and Rs

35,365 a quintal. Net open position was at 29 tonnes up by six tonnes. Turnover decreased by 63 tonnes at 459 tonnes. Spot prices were up by Rs 100 at Rs 33,700 (ungarbled) and Rs 35,200 (Garbled).

Indian parity in the international market was at $6,500 a tonne for June shipments and $6,600 a tonne (c&f) for July.

Overseas Market was reportedly in a dull mood without a clear direction.

Rains may wallop W. Coast, Central India in fresh monsoon lunge

With the formation of a trough off the coast of Kerala, conditions are ripe for the next big monsoon lunge towards the West Coast and adjoining Central India.

This offshore trough is an elongated area of lower pressure along the West Coast, the presence of which signifies concurrently ‘active’ monsoon conditions.

MOISTURE LOAD

The trough receives the monsoon winds and their heavy loads of moisture, which blast their way into the Western Ghats standing tall on the eastern border of Kerala, Karnataka, Konkan and Goa.

The moisture is made to rise against the Ghats and cool rapidly to set off heavy to very heavy rains all along the West Coast, extending right into Mumbai.

This is exactly what international models are predicting until June 15. On the other side, a couple of low-pressure areas from the Bay of Bengal will do their part, pushing rain into the farming heartland.

So much so, the monsoon would have covered practically the whole of the country, except West Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi, by the middle of June.

‘RAIN SHADOW’

International agencies have pointed to probabilities of very heavy rain from June 9 all along the West Coast, Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Chhattisgarh and Odisha, and Uttarakhand until June 15.

Heavy rain has also been forecast for South Gujarat, Mumbai and parts of Western Maharashtra.

Areas expectedly being left out of monsoon footprint are most of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (except coastal Karnataka); Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. These agencies suspect that North Arabian Sea would the development of a minimal storm, which would crawl towards Oman and the Gulf of Eden.

RAINY JUNE

But residual rain bands from this system, expectedly forming just South of Karachi, are projected to lash parts of Gujarat as well.

Meanwhile, the Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services maintained the view that monsoon would stay hyperactive in June, delivering above normal rain for the country as a whole.

A two-day outlook from India Met Department on Sunday said that conditions were favourable for advance of monsoon into more parts of Karnataka; entire Tamil Nadu; and parts of South Andhra Pradesh.Isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall could break out over Kerala while it would be isolated heavy over Lakshadweep.No significant change in conditions is expected until Thursday, the Thiruvananthapuram Met Office said.

Business Standard

A carrot to improve the lot of farmers

Capitalising on the famous Ooty carrots, LEAF plans to take its fresh vegetable produce brand to more supermarkets

For those driving up the picturesque Nilgiri range to Ooty, eating crunchy and juicy 'Ooty Carrots' on the way is a must.

Ooty and its neighbouring areas are ideal for growing carrots. This region accounts for supplies of about 100 tonne a day to various states and for export. Farmers from Ooty take their harvest to the Mettupalayam mandi, pay the broker a fee and sell the produce at the prevailing rate. However, brokers discount the price for bad produce, sometimes as high as 30 per cent. Thus, many farmers are at the mercy of brokers.

Amid these goings-on, P Vijayaraghavan, a resident of Ooty, was keen to improve the lot of farmers and, at the same time, structure a business around this. After working closely with R Manoharan, an established carrot farmer, Vijayaraghavan came up with a plan to collect harvested carrots from farmers, pay for the produce on the spot, clean and segregate the produce according to size, pack these in clean bags and transport it in refrigerated trucks to retail stores in cities and towns.

And, Lawrencedale Estates & Farms (LEAF) was formed.

Gaining trust

To start with, it was a difficult proposition, says Vijayaraghavan, CEO of LEAF. For the past four years, he has been convincing farmers of the benefits of this mechanism. Now, LEAF works with about 1,000 farmers, mostly those with one to two acres. It shares farming techniques, assists farmers for better yields, increases the harvest per acre and provides the full value for their harvest, without brokerage free. Importantly, it doesn't discount bad produce.

Deepak Vasu, who hails from a traditional farming family in Ooty and who has been providing supplies to LEAF for the past three years, says, "We need more entities such as LEAF to better equip us and encourage us to carry on farming. First, we get a fair price; second, we don't have to pay a commission at the mandi. And, transportation costs have come down drastically for us. The best part is the transparency in arriving at prices."

Now, after about four years of operations, LEAF transports about 10 tonne of carrots a day to various markets in Bangalore, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The company accounts for annual sales of Rs 8 crore. It plans to raise this to 15 tonne a day by the end of this financial year and 50 tonne a day in five years.

Vijayaraghavan has added a corporate touch to the establishment and roped in professionals as co-promoters for business development, finance and related functions. "The key difference we bring to the buyer is he would not be faced with any sort of rejections in the lot he buys from us. We are working with farmers to reduce the bad produce from their harvests. Also, we take the responsibility to segregate bad-shaped produce, which would be used for the processed foods foray we are planning," Vijayaraghavan says.

Attracting funding

It is this concern for farmers and the company's potentially sound business plan that drew the interest of private equity fund Aspada Investment, is backed by Soros Economic Develop-ment Fund. Aspada has committed an investment of $2 million to LEAF. On the rationale behind the investment, Thomas R Hyland, partner, Aspada Investment, says, "Currently, LEAF works with about 1,000 small vegetable farmers belonging to the Badaga tribe in the Nilgiris. Each owns between a tenth of an acre and three acres of land. The company has helped them achieve a rise in net realisations through improved farm productivity, savings in logistics and more consistent pricing for their produce. There is a significant opportunity to increase the scope and breadth of these activities and work not only with more farmers, but also at a greater level by offering additional farm extension services."

He adds LEAF's business had an exceptionally good model and immense strategic value. "Last-mile backward integration is a significant challenge for large retail and food processing players, given the organisational hurdles in managing an extremely fragmented and unorganised farm segment. LEAF's cold chain and processing infrastructure, coupled with the small farmer engagement model, could be a strategic asset for large players," he says.

Dinesh Kumar, managing director of Kovai Pazhamudir Nilayam, a neighbourhood chain of about 40 vegetable and fruit stores in Tamil Nadu, says, "We buy an average of 2.5 tonne of carrots from LEAF on a daily basis for 20 of our stores. We are actively looking to buy for the rest of our stores, too. Customers like these carrots more than those we used to buy from mandis. Despite the cost being at least Rs 10/kg higher, the stocks move out pretty fast. Their anti-fungal wash helps the produce and it doesn't perish fast, as was the case with local carrots."

Expansion plans

On an average, LEAF buys at Rs 15-40/kg from farmers and sells these at a premium of Rs 10-12/kg. While carrots account for as much as 90 per cent of LEAF's volumes, Vijayaraghavan is working on expanding the range of vegetables and fruits to potatoes, cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage, radish, green peas, parsley, turnips, zucchini and celery, which Ooty can produce in good quantity.

LEAF's offerings include as many as 120 stock keeping units and these are being lapped up by large-format supermarkets across cities and towns. The company works with about 40 supermarket chains such as Nilgiris, Aditya Birla MORE, FoodWorld, Auchan, Star Bazaar and Total. However, it does not supply to mom-and-pop stores, at least not yet. "We are planning to go to those stores as we expand and as we have the bandwidth to do the milk run that would enable us to transport in smaller quantities," said R Balakrishnan, LEAF's director and chief financial officer.

Even as tricky logistics to hit the retail shelves are being streamlined, LEAF has embarked on an ambitious foray of branding the vegetables as 'LEAF' and hitting supermarkets, promising a different offering. "Ooty carrots are prized across south India for their taste and quality. This offers a large opportunity for building a fresh vegetable produce brand. And, a significant premium for LEAF produce already exists in the supermarket segment.

However, the concept of buying packaged vegetables is yet to become popular in India. We are at it," says Vijayaraghavan.

Challenges

He adds given the issues of handling a commodity that is easily perishable, LEAF is fine-tuning its back-end infrastructure and securing firm orders, before going to farmers on a daily basis. "We work on a pretty thin schedule of securing orders, sourcing from farmers and processing and shipping the commodity within a day to retail shelves. This calls for a high level of back-end integration and planning at the front-end, which we are constantly working on."

Nature, LEAF's biggest benefactor, is also a foe. "We don't have any control on what the weather would turn out to be and, therefore, on the produce. This is a constant issue," says Balakrishnan.

Isn't the company's model an easily replicable? "Theoretically, it is. But gaining the confidence of farmers is not an overnight process. We have been working with them to enhance the produce, give them the visibility of a regular income cycle and support in the uplift of their livelihoods. We are aggressive in phasing out chemicals in cultivation," Vijayaraghavan says.

EXPERT TAKE Mark Kahn

LEAF's business model is interesting and has the potential to gain scale. I believe there is a distinct space for identity-preserved, farmer-sourced fresh produce. Middle- and upper-class consumers are increasingly worried about chemical exposure, and are generally paying more attention to the quality of the food they eat. Just look at the tremendous response to Aamir Khan's Satyamev Jayate episode on toxic food and pesticides. Fresh produce grown without chemical residues and well presented to consumers (washed & bagged) could definitely get a price premium in an organised retail environment. Moreover, LEAF's direct connection to hundreds of small farmers means the company has full sourcing visibility in its supply chain. Therefore, it can assure consumers about transparency, safety and quality, something modern retailers value.

The risk I see is low barriers to entry for new competitors. Fundamentally, contract farming models can be easily replicated by aggressive competitors. For, there is negligible intellectual property and skilled employees can be poached. If LEAF achieves success, others would emulate its approach. Then, the company would find itself competing on the price front. Also, as the category grows, modern retailers might attempt to build in-house brands. So, LEAF would have to keep innovating and move up the value addition curve to differentiate and stay ahead of the competition.

Mark Kahn, Founder and partner, Omnivore Partners, an early-stage VC fund focused on agricultural technology and improved farm efficiencies

Sugarcane acreage likely to fall 10% this kharif season

Vagaries of monsoon during last season created water shortage in cane-rich states; farmers switched to other crops like cotton, guar and soybean

The sowing area under sugarcane is likely to decline by 10 per cent this season following shortage of water in major producing states including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Vagaries of themonsoon rainfalls during the last season, and their oddly distribution thereafter, created water shortage in these cane-rich states, resulting into shifting of farmers' sowing interest from this high water requirement crop to others such as cotton, guar andsoybean.

Data compiled by the agriculture ministry showed that the sowing area under sugarcane fell to 4.07 million hectare (ha) as on May 17, 2013 compared to 4.57 million ha in the corresponding period last year. Sowing, however, progressed slower than expected thereafter with the overall coverage area under this sensitive cash crop advancing to 4.12 ha towards the end of May. Although the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast normal monsoon rainfalls — a crucial component for the progress of cane sowing — this season, the pace of sowing is expected to remain slow, especially in major pockets of the drought-affected districts of

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Lesser sowing, however, could pull down India's overall cane productivity followed by the proportionate decline in the country'ssugar output. The agriculture ministry, therefore estimates around 12.5 per cent decline in cane output at 70 million tonnes this year compared to 80 million tonnes in the previous year.

A number of districts including Vidarbha, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad and a couple of others in Maharashtra along with almost all districts in Tamil Nadu, in addition to a large number of districts in Karnataka, was in the grip of drought due to failure of the monsoon rainfalls last season. Therefore, farmers shifted to less water-consuming crops including cotton, guar and soybean.

The Centre recently de-controlled the sugar sector by withdrawing 10 per cent mandatory sale at lower price through the public distribution system (PDS) in addition to abolishing the monthly quota release system. The sustained decline in sugar production, therefore, may force the government to liberalise import of raw sugar, which currently is restricted through high import duty.

Sugar import was 'nil' in the last two seasons due to sufficient domestic production. During the current season, however, total import of raw sugar stood at 400,000 tonnes including 14,000 tonnes of white sugar imported from Pakistan. Last year, Maharashtra had received below-average rainfall in most regions due to which the state had to declare drought, causing sugar-cane production to fall. This year, sugar production in the state is expected to fall to 8 million tonne from 9 million tonne in the previous year. Most of the sugar cane is expected to come from cash-rich areas of Sholapur, Pune and Ahmednagar, according to the sugar commissionerate of Maharashtra and Maharashtra State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories.

However, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), the apex industry trade body, is yet to assess the sowing and crop progress in the country. “We have not yet assessed the cane sowing area and the crop’s progress for which we are waiting for the first showers of the monsoon season. We will have some clarity only after rainfall begins,” said ISMA’s spokesperson.

ISMA and sugar mills have also asked the government to increase import duty on sugar to 30 per cent from the current duty of 10 per cent to discourage imports of the commodity as there is enough supply of sugar in the market.

TGB goes slow on buys, to focus on organic growth

Once at the fore of acquisitions, the Rs 7,270-crore Tata Global Beverages (TGB), formerly Tata Tea, has opted to slow down its pace of buys as the focus for the company shifts from inorganic growth to organic. In the decade between 2000 and 2010, TGB spent nearly Rs 7,500 crore to wrap up over 10 buys, including that of UK-based tea maker Tetley in 2000, billed as the largest foreign acquisition at that time, at Rs 1,870 crore. It did cash out of one transaction, the 30 per cent stake it held in US-based Energy Brandsto Coca-Cola in 2007 for Rs 2,100 crore. Besides that, TGB has never put any entity on the block it acquired across the globe including markets such as the US, UK, East Europe, Russia and South Africa.

"The emphasis for us will be on consolidating our presence and looking at product innovations in the markets we operate in," Harish Bhat, managing director of TGB, told Business Standard.

The beverage company, which is the second-largest branded tea maker in the world after Unilever, derives 65 per cent of its turnover from international markets and 35 per cent from the

Indian market. "The plan," said Bhat, "was to take up the contribution from Indian operations to 40 per cent in the next five years, bringing down the contribution from international markets to 60 per cent."

Its joint ventures with PepsiCo and Starbucks in India is likely to help TGB achieve this as the company scouts for more alliances than acquisitions. "We have an investment in a company called Activate in the US along with other partners. That is another venture that we are counting on to grow our presence in the US," said Bhat.

As things stand now, TGB is the leading branded tea player in countries such as India and Canada and is ranked No. 2 in the UK and Australia - all strong tea-drinking markets in the world. In the US, however, the scenario is different, since it remains largely a coffee market. Here, TGB owns and operates the fourth largest coffee brand Eight O' Clock Coffee besides allied products such as Good Earth, a niche tea brand, and Activate, a bottled water maker, where it acquired a minority stake in 2010. According to analysts, the acquisition of the stake signalled its entry back into the enriched or vitamin water space that it had exited following the Energy Brands stake sale to Coca-Cola in 2007. The enriched water market has been growing as Americans spurn carbonated drinks for more healthier options.

In India, too, TGB has been pushing products on the health and wellness platform under its joint venture with PepsiCo called NourishCo. It recently relaunched its fortified water brand - Tata Water Plus - and added a mango variant to the lemon and orange flavours of Tata Gluco Plus, a flavoured water brand. "In the next 24 months, we will take both Tata Water Plus and Tata Gluco Plus to the rest of India from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu where it is currently available," said Bhat.

Tata Water Plus is available in pouches of Rs 2 and one-litre PET bottles of Rs 20. Tata Gluco Plus, on the other hand, is priced at Rs 8 for 200-ml packs.