

5,700 farmers get financial aid

About 5,700 farmers have been extended welfare assistance to the tune of Rs.2.71 crore under the Farmers Protection Scheme in Tiruchi district so far this year, said T.P. Poonachi, Minister for Khadi and Village Industries, here on Saturday. In 2012-13, welfare assistance estimated at Rs. 8.94 crore had been disbursed to 17,982 farmers in the district under the scheme. About 20,350 beneficiaries were getting monthly pension under the scheme in the district, he said speaking at a function to disburse educational and marriage assistance and pension sanction orders under the scheme to 328 beneficiaries. P. Kumar, MP, R. Manoharan, Government Chief Whip, N.R. Sivapathi, and M. Paranjothi, were present.

TANFED commences copra procurement from farmers

The Tamil Nadu Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (TANFED) has commenced the procurement of copra from the farmers on the Avalpoondurai regulated marketing committee premises, near here, on Friday.

The government will offer a minimum support price of Rs. 52.50 a kg for copra. The price was announced following the sharp fall in the copra prices in the open market. The price went down to Rs. 45 a kg following poor demand, a few months ago, and it went up a little after the government came up with the minimum support price.

Co-operative officials here said that TANFED had procured over 840 tonnes of copra from the farmers in the district during the previous financial year. The federation had already registered more than 400 copra producers.

Soyabean brings cheer to farmers

Cost factor and profits prompt Medak farmers to go for cultivation of the crop

Farmers in Medak district are shifting from cultivation of green gram and black gram to Soyabean as the cost involved and harvesting period are less compared to crops like cotton and maize.

While farmers have to invest Rs. 25,000 per acre for cotton, the cost for maize stands between Rs. 12,000 and Rs. 16,000. However, in the case of soyabean, the cost per acre stands at Rs. 8,000. The gestation period of the crop is 90 days, considerably less comparing with other crops and it can be sowed as inter-crop as well.

Farmers from both Narayanakhed and Zaheerabad areas prefer to cultivate this crop and the demand for soya bean seed has increased beyond the assessments of the agriculture officials. Though officials have prepared estimation for 9,000 hectares comparing with the 7,000 hectares cultivated in the last season, the demand from farmers is more. However, officials are not sure to which extent cultivation area would extend as the sowing has not yet been completed in all areas. The crop is suitable in black soil areas.

Soya bean seed production is taken up only at Madhya Pradesh and naturally it is taking longer time to transport the seed. One more reason for the seed crisis was that loss of germination percentage in a very short period comparing to other crops and hence it cannot be imported in large quantities. The seed for the current season cannot be used for next season.

“The soya bean crop will have thorn which will naturally protect it from wild boars. They are also getting good returns of Rs. 5,000 per quintal. These are the main

reason for farmers opting of soya bean crop,” said U. Umamaheswaramma, Joint Director, Agriculture.

Farmer electrocuted

A farmer was reportedly electrocuted lat Saturday night at his field at Marpadaga village in Kondapaka mandal of Medak district. According to sources P Swami went to farm on Saturday evening and had not returned. Family members searched for him and found his body. Police registered a case and are investigating. -Staff Reporter

No respite for share-croppers this kharif season too

Despite the promise made by the State Revenue Minister one-and-half years ago, the share-croppers in Odisha are yet to get legal or administrative recognition.

Kharif season, which is the major cultivation season in Odisha, has commenced. Share-croppers have begun the cultivation process on lands of landlords without any proper documented lease deed.

As per peasant leaders, the share-croppers are again a neglected lot. Peasant organisations claim that most of the debt-ridden farmers who commit suicide in Odisha are share-croppers.

As per a study of the Odisha unit of the All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS), share-croppers are a majority among peasants in the State. As per our assessment, over 60 per cent of the cultivators in Odisha are share-croppers and 70 per cent of the cultivable land in the State is under use of the share croppers,” says national committee member of the AIKMS Bhala Chandra Sadangi.

According to him, it is an irony that the Odisha government is yet to provide due recognition to share-croppers.

As per the Odisha Krushak Sabha (OKS) leader Kailash Sadangi, during the past few years, share-croppers have suffered heavy loss due to untimely rain or drought-like situation.

“There was some succour when State Revenue Minister Surya Narayan Patra had made a promise in January 2011 to recognise share- croppers in the State. But the promise has not yet been fulfilled,” he adds.

Mr. Patra had said that share-croppers would get legal recognition on the lines of their counterparts in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. He had said that registration of share-croppers through legal agreement with land owners in the presence of revenue officials would be made mandatory.

But, till date, the government has not come up with any notification or survey for documentation of share-croppers, alleges Brundaban Khatai, leader of the Ganjam district of Kisan Khet Mazdoor Congress (KKMC).

The peasant leaders say that without any legal recognition, share-croppers have to bear all risks of cultivation and yet are not eligible for low interest agricultural loans from nationalised banks or cooperative bodies. They are compelled to rely on private loans at hefty interest rates from moneylenders or exploitive microfinance organisations. In the absence of legal document for land lease, the share-croppers find it hard to get their crop insured. Land owners do not make any investment in cultivation and also they do not share the losses. Without any legal recognition, the share-croppers do not get any relief, insurance cover, or compensation for crop loss. But land owners get these benefits as compensation for crop loss is handed over to the land owners.

Land Reforms Act

The Orissa Land Reforms Act of 1960, which has undergone amendments, has till date failed to protect the rights of the share-croppers. As per the Act, land owners are not entitled to take more than one-fourth of the produce from a land tilled by a share-cropper. But, in reality, land owners take up to 50 per cent of the harvest, the peasant leaders allege.

According to them, the State government should declare the ratio of yield sharing between share-croppers and land owners, and make it mandatory throughout the State.

Coconut biofuel trials begin

IIT Madras has begun experimental trial of using coconut oil-based biofuel for running automobile engines. The trials will explore the possibility of using a mixture of biofuel derived from coconut oil and diesel. The results will be available after a three-month trial, according to officials of Coconut Development Board, who are associated with the project. Preliminary tests by a Kochi-based institution have indicated the prospects of utilising biofuel derived from coconut oil as a fuel for automotives. The advantages of using coconut biofuel were more mileage and less pollution, said Sreekumar Poduval, Processing Engineer at the laboratory of Coconut Development Board in Ernakulam.

Biodiesel is produced through trans-esterification in which coconut oil is made to react with alcohol, forming coconut biodiesel, Mr. Poduval said.

Monsoon storms endanger lives; affect Char Dham pilgrims

Raging rains lead to rising reports of falling trees, caving walls in Mumbai; and landslips in Uttarakhand

The unrelenting monsoon showers are proving a danger for Mumbaikars with collapsing trees and walls.

Following Saturday's heavy showers, Sunday's afternoon high tide only worsened the situation.

The Met department recorded 232.2 mm of rain between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. and warned of heavy showers over the next two days.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's disaster control room recorded as many as 51 cases of trees or branches falling and 12 cases of walls collapsing or getting damaged during the day.

A car was damaged after a tree came crashing on it at Churchgate. "The vehicle was parked below the tree, which got uprooted due to the rains. Fortunately, there were no occupants in the car at the time of the incident," a fire officer said.

Suburban rail traffic virtually crawled all day and got back on track only in the evening. "Water-logging severely affected Masjid, Sandhurst Road, Byculla, Wadala. The main line suburban services were not running between the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus and Dadar from 10.35 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. and harbour line services were not running between CST and Kurla from 10.35 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.," said Chief PRO of Central Railway Atul Rane. Around 400 services of CR were cancelled till 5 p.m.

"The situation started getting under control by evening and by 6 p.m. the services started running normally," said the official.

On Western Railway (WR), trains were running with a delay of about 30 minutes till about 5 p.m. "Trains were running slow as the motormen had problems seeing the signals clearly. There were no major cancellations," said an official.

With the IMD predicting heavy rainfall on Monday, Municipal Commissioner Sitaram Kunte on Sunday issued an advisory asking people to take precautions before moving out of their homes on Monday.

Three crushed in house

PTI reports from Dehradun:

Three persons were killed in a house collapse in Dehradun on Sunday while thousands of Char Dham pilgrims were stranded on the Gangotri and Yamunotri routes as incessant overnight showers across Uttarakhand caused landslips in Uttarkashi district and swelled rivers.

A house caved in at Prem Nagar, a senior police official said, adding that a 30-year-old man, his 26-year-old wife and 10-year-old child died on way to a hospital after they sustained grievous injuries.

Stranded along routes

Thousands of pilgrims headed for the Himalayan shrines of Gangotri and Yamunotri got stranded as the routes were closed due to landslips at various points, including Piapalmandi, Baraki and Nalupani.

Hotels and dharamshalas in Uttarkashi district were brimming with people as Char Dham Yatris occupied lounges due to non-availability of rooms.

A house was swept away at Kharadi after the Yamuna's waters submerged the route leading to Yamunotri at Fedi, Chami and Yamuna bridge.

Ganeshpur Road and Digla Pul near Sangam Chatti on Gangotri route were also swept away by the flash-flood in Assi Ganga.

Crisis looms large in agriculture sector

The new banking protocol prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India for the cooperative sector is feared to bring agriculture lending to a complete halt and render the 1,602 primary cooperative banks in the State redundant from July 1. Banking sector sources told *The Hindu* that the regulator bank had not yet given a specific direction that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) should stop refinancing cooperative banks which refused to comply with the new protocol but the onus had squarely been placed on the latter to ensure strict compliance from July 1.

No serious discussions had been held so far for finding an alternative to the crisis set to loom large over the agriculture sector.

The cooperative banks had been told to abide by the regulations, starting with four per cent capital adequacy by June 30 and raising it to nine per cent by 2015.

The banks would then have to maintain a capital of Rs.4 for every Rs.100 lent. In due course, the banks would also have to be part of the special business process for retail payments set up by the National Payments Corporation of India and Real Time Gross Settlement system by September 30. These were meant to set the ground for introducing direct cash transfer to beneficiaries and ensuring that farm loans were given only to those having Kisan Credit cards.

A joint study by the RBI and the Centre for Socio-Economic and Environmental Studies, Kochi, on 'How the poor manage their finances' had revealed that the cooperative banks continued to hold sway over commercial banks in rural areas.

The commercial banks seemed to suffer from a perception problem. They were not considered as a friendly neighbourhood institution on which the rural poor could rely for their financial requirements.

The cooperative societies had done much better possibly because of the borrowers' familiarity with the functionaries of the society living in the same village.

Overlooking the significance of the cooperative sector, if a decision was made for routing all payments, including loans, through the commercial banks which continued to be an unfamiliar terrain for the small and marginal farmers, the farmers may not be able to continue their banking operations at ease. The proposed regime is feared to keep off marginal farmers who have not yet familiarised themselves with the new system and thus upset the entire farm sector.

Agriculture diploma

The C. Subramaniam Institute of Agriculture (CSIA) is the first Institute to offer diplomas under Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) banner. It came into being in August 2004. The institute has been providing quality education in agriculture to the children of the farmers of Villupuram, Cuddalore, Thiruvannamalai and Kancheepuram Districts. So far 368 students have completed the diploma course here.

The objective of the CSIA is to train students in agriculture and its allied industries, to ensure the self-employment and promote the spirit of entrepreneurship. The courses offered also helps increase the productivity of agricultural and horticultural crops in the region.

The two-year diploma course consists of four semesters and 29 courses in different disciplines such as agriculture, horticulture, agricultural engineering, animal husbandry, food science and nutrition.

The students get hands-on training on crop cultivation and are also exposed to latest technologies.

Those who had completed their course here have been placed in various companies such as the ones dealing with, seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, landscaping, drip irrigation, ATMA schemes and bio-products, sugar mills. A few of them have become entrepreneurs.

Some of the students have started their own commercial nurseries.

The students have to pass the Class XII exam with biology or botany or zoology with physics and chemistry. Students of the vocational agricultural group is also eligible to apply the diploma course.

The candidate should have completed 21 years age on June 1, 2013. Age relaxation is only for SC/ST students. The selection is based on counselling in single window system by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Coimbatore.

Applications are available at all the diploma institutes of the TNAU and the application costs Rs. 100/- for SC/ST students and for others it is Rs. 200/-. The last date to receive the application is on June 24. It should reach Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. For further details contact: The Principal, CSIA, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Tindivanam 604 002. Phone : 04147 250293.

Where cattle heads feel at home



The Cattle Care Centre in Koduvalli near Red Hills here is a hostel of sorts for over 60 milch buffaloes belonging to farmers from three nearby villages.

The Centre has been launched on an experimental basis to provide round-the-clock veterinary care, nutritious feed and a hygienic milking environment, all under one roof.

Though the centre of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), which is functioning on campus of the College of Food and Dairy Technology in Koduvalli, was proposed two years ago, it was only last year the TANUVAS completed a hygienic shed for milking the animals.

R. Prabakaran, Vice-Chancellor, TANUVAS, says the centre was launched to provide space for farmers to engage in hygienic milk production. “It is an eco-friendly place, where all the waste is completely recycled and reused.”

Cattle owners leave their cattle at the centre. They are released to graze during the day.

One of the major advantages at the Centre is the availability of medical attention for cattle round-the-clock. This helps in early diagnosis of any disease. The Centre has a five-acre plot exclusively for raising fodder for the cattle.

The fodder is raised organically in the plot, using the urine and the dung of the cattle. The remaining quantity of the dung is used for producing bio-gas, which is used in the hostel kitchen. The centre has also taken up vermicomposting, Dr Prabakaran says.

The collected milk is bought by the college for its dairy plant and the farmers are paid Rs. 30 per litre for the milk. Every day, nearly 125 litres of milk is procured at the Centre, the Vice-Chancellor adds.

V. Parthiban, a cattle owner who left 60 of his cattle at the Centre, says: “The centre is very useful to us, where the animals get free medical attention as well as fodder. Moreover, the milking is done in a hygienic atmosphere. It will be difficult to get all these facilities under one roof.”

According to Dr. Prabakaran, the Centre caters to three villages in and around Koduvalli. Apart from helping in hygienic milk production, the veterinarians at the centre identify the contagious disease in the cattle and attend to it before it spreads to other animals. It is a model centre, which can be replicated without any problem. The university is planning to send a proposal to the government to start similar centres in other parts of the State, he adds.

Seed shortage to hit pokkali cultivation



A shortage of seeds and exclusion of normal agricultural activities such as land preparation and sowing from the purview of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is likely to shrink pokkali cultivation during this season by nearly 50 per cent against last year's levels.

A total of 770 hectares came under pokkali cultivation in Ernakulam district during the last season despite adverse weather conditions. More than 40 per cent of the sown area did not yield at the normal levels.

However, the ensuing season holds great promise because of the early onset of monsoon. Farmers have shown enthusiasm in sowing their fields in places such as Kumbalangi, Chellanam, Kuzhuppilly, Kumbalam, Edavanakakkad, Pallipuram.

Most of the fields are being drained after the first spell of rain, which brings down salinity levels to the desired levels. In some of the areas land preparations are yet to begin and a possible shortage of labour is likely to hit farming operations during the new season.

Exclusion of agricultural activities like sowing and harvesting from the purview of MGNREGA under the guidelines for 2013 has made pokkali farmers reluctant to hire labourers at the normal market rate of Rs.400 a day.

TALKS UNSUCCESSFUL

Officials from the agriculture department have held three rounds of talks with farmers in different panchayats to persuade them to take up sowing during the new season. The talks have not met with much success.

Meanwhile, officials in the department of agriculture have said there was a serious shortage of pokkali seeds this season with only about 4,000 kg of the Vyttila-6 variety available.

The Kerala State Seed Development Authority has not produced any seed for the new pokkali season apparently because it had no intimation from the agricultural department.

Rogue wheat was 'isolated' incident

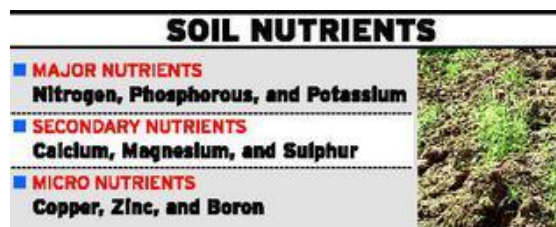
U.S. agriculture officials said Friday the discovery of genetically engineered wheat in an Oregon field appears to be an isolated incident.

The plants, modified to be resistant to Monsanto herbicide, were discovered last month and led some Asian importers to halt or suspend trade with U.S. wheat growers while an investigation was launched.

Some crops of corn and soybeans are genetically engineered to be resistant to herbicides on the global market, but such modifications to wheat have never been approved anywhere in the world.

“As of today, USDA has not found nor been informed of anything that would indicate that this incident amounts to more than a single isolated incident in a single field on a single farm,” said a statement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.AFP

Soil survey reveals boron deficiency in State



A critical deficiency of boron, exceedingly high levels of phosphorous, and high acidity are eroding soil fertility in farms, a State- wide survey coordinated by the Kerala State Planning Board has revealed.

The analysis of 1,17,251 soil samples collected from panchayats across the State showed the serious nature of soil acidity. The interim result of the study revealed that 59 per cent of the samples were deficient in boron, while 76 per cent were low in magnesium, and 40 per cent low in calcium. Boron deficiency can lead to stunted growth and deformities in plants while low magnesium levels result in yellow leaves and fruit rot. Calcium deficiency is responsible for impaired root growth and fruit rot.

Fifty per cent of the soil samples were found to be high in phosphorous and 18 per cent high in potassium while 23 per cent of the samples were low in nitrogen, 26 per cent low in sulphur, and 12 per cent deficient in zinc.

Phosphorous run-off from farms is a major source of contamination of water bodies.

It promotes excessive growth of algae and weeds in streams and lakes, affecting fish and other aquatic organisms. Washed out to sea, the primary nutrient also pollutes the marine environment, often triggering harmful algal blooms.

Boron was found to be deficient in 211 of the 270 panchayats from where soil samples were collected and zinc deficient in 59 panchayats, while phosphorous content was in excess in 141 panchayats.

The study report recommends the application of borax and zinc sulphate through soil or foliar spray to alleviate the deficiency of boron and zinc. It also advocates a 50 per cent reduction in application of phosphatic fertilizers to address the

excess of phosphorous in soil. Another major recommendation is regular liming practice to combat acidity and alleviate calcium deficiency.

The project involving 14 institutions and 27 laboratories in Kerala, is aimed at developing soil- based plant nutrient management plans for the 999 panchayats in Kerala.

Over 2 lakh soil samples will be analysed for micro, macro, and secondary nutrients. Plant nutrient management plans have been formulated for 350 panchayats and soil health cards distributed to farmers.

The Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management Kerala (IIITM-K) has developed a software for soil data analysis and launched a dedicated portal named 'keralasoilfertility.net.' The National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP), Bangalore, is coordinating the scientific activities.

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estimation for 9,000 hectares comparing with the 7,000 hectares cultivated in the last season, the demand from farmers is more. However, officials are not sure to which extent cultivation area would extend as the sowing has not yet been completed in all areas. The crop is suitable in black soil areas.

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“The soya bean crop will have thorn which will naturally protect it from wild boars. They are also getting good returns of Rs. 5,000 per quintal. These are the main reason for farmers opting of soya bean crop,” said U. Umamaheswaramma, Joint Director, Agriculture.

Students try their hand at SRI transplantation

Ten final year girl students of Anbil Dharmalingam Agriculture College and Research Institute, Tiruchi, visited Soil and Water Management Research Institute (SWMRI) here as part of their rural agricultural work experience (RAWE) programme recently. The students learnt about Integrated Farming System (IFS) for marginal and small farmers of garden land, alternative cropping system, and various methods of rice cultivation.

They actively participated in the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) transplantation along with agricultural workers.

Training

They also underwent training on coconut tree climbing using Kerala coconut climber under the supervision of T.Senguttuvan, head and professor of SWMRI.

The students observed the agriculture department activities under the supervision of K.Nendunchezhiyan, assistant director of agriculture, during their 10-day stay at SWMRI. “We learnt about the administrative set-up, department activities, State and Central schemes, and extension activities,” they said.

“We also visited uzhar sandhai in Thanjavur and Arignar Anna Sugar Mills at Kurunkulam, and learnt about a new method of cultivation of sugarcane called “sustainable system initiatives”,” they said.

Ramadoss, Joint Director of Agriculture, and Srinivasan, Deputy Director of Agriculture, guided them.

Inflow into dams increasing

The water level in all the dams including Pechipparai, Perunchani, Chittar I, Chittar II, Mukkadal, Mambazathuraiyaru and Poigai dams is rapidly increasing following heavy rain which lashed the district for the second day on Sunday.

The heavy rain accompanied by strong wind lashed Nagercoil, Boothapandi, Surulode, Kottaram, Myladi and the catchment areas of the district. Though the farming community had every reason to cheer about the rain, it no doubt has been brought hardship to the people living in low lying areas. As the inflow had been increasing, the farmers have requested the district administration to release water at the earliest to enable them continue agriculture operations.

The rainfall recorded in various parts of the district is as follows: 65 mm in Pechipparai, 36.6 mm in Perunchani, 43.6 mm in Chittar I, 35.4 mm in Chittar II, 14.4 mm in Poigai, 25 mm in Mambazhathuraiyaru, 26.3 mm in Nagercoil, 25.9 mm in Boothapandi, 68 mm in Surulode, 28.3 mm in Kannimar, 14.4 mm in Aralvoimozhi, 57.7 mm in Balamore, 21.8 mm in Myladi, 36.2 mm in Kottaram, 14.2 mm in Eraniel, 28 mm in Anaikidangu, 13.4 mm in Colachel, 35.2 mm in Kurunthencode, 42 mm in Adayamadai, 28.2 mm in Kozhiporvilai, 98 mm in Thiruvattar, 17 mm in Mullankinavilai and 37 mm in Puthen dam. The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 20.70 feet, 41.70 feet in Perunchani, 5.18 feet in Chittar 1 and 5.28 feet in Chittar 11. The level in Poigai dam was 2.50 feet and 6.89 feet in Mambazhathuraiyaru dam and a total of 3,000 cusecs is flowing into all the dams.

Plan to popularise micro-irrigation

The district administration has launched 'meet-the-farmers' programme to popularise micro-irrigation and bring all the areas of cultivation of sugarcane, banana, coconut, mango and vegetables under drip and sprinkler irrigation.

Collector V.Rajaraman launched the programme at a special camp in Namanur recently and urged the small and marginal farmers to take up micro-irrigation by availing 100 per cent subsidy given for installing drip and sprinkler irrigation system in their fields.

The government had extended the 100 per cent subsidy from one acre to five acres in case of small farmers and to 2.5 acres in case of marginal farmers.

For others, 75 per cent subsidy was given, the Collector said and urged the farmers to make use of the benefit and enhance their production.

He said special camps would be conducted in all the villages by involving the officials of Agriculture and Horticulture Departments and Agri-tech Management (ATMA) staff to popularise among farmers the advantages of micro-irrigation.

He said sugarcane, banana, coconut, mango, groundnut and vegetables were cultivated in 35,000 acres of land in the district and so far only 10,000 acres had been brought under micro-irrigation.

Efforts were being taken to bring the remaining fields also under micro-irrigation, he added.

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Exclusion of agricultural activities like sowing and harvesting from the purview of MGNREGA under the guidelines for 2013 has made pokkali farmers reluctant to hire labourers at the normal market rate of Rs.400 a day.

Officials from the agriculture department have held three rounds of talks with farmers in different panchayats to persuade them to take up sowing during the new season without much success. Last season saw the deployment of a large number of workers under the national employment guarantee scheme in pokkali fields for land preparation.

The intervention made cultivation much cheaper with farm owners pitching in with their share to make up for the normal wage rates, said a department official.

Meanwhile, officials in the department of agriculture have said there was a serious shortage of pokkali seeds this season with only about 4,000 kg of the Vyttila-6 variety available.

Seeds for the other major variety, Chettivirippu, used mostly by farmers in areas like Chellanam, were being sourced from farmers.

The Kerala State Seed Development Authority has not produced any seed for the new pokkali season apparently because it had no intimation from the agricultural department.

Humble millets making a comeback

New eateries are springing up all over the city all the time. Fast food chains are slowly making their presence felt in conservative Madurai. Ready-to-eat foods are launched by the day.

Yet there is a small but knowledgeable crowd that has veered towards health food — the humble millets have begun to find a place in the plates of the health-conscious city folk. Some of the millets that are becoming popular are *kuthirai vaali*, (barnyard millet), *varagu* (kodo millet), *thinai* (foxtail millet) and *saamai* (little millet).

“Millets were the main crops cultivated by farmers before paddy took over the agriculture fields. Villagers used to prefer food made of millets,” says Shankar Narayanan, Assistant General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).” As the consumption of millets decreased among people, health problems started to increase,” he adds.

With the growing awareness of the health aspects of everyday food among people in both rural and urban areas, traditional foods are making a comeback of sorts. From the ‘rural man’s diet,’ as they are dubbed, they are making inroads into urban areas. Full of fibre, proteins, enzymes and minerals, millets offer a platter of health benefits.

Cultivation

“NABARD has been encouraging small and marginal farmers to cultivate millets since the demand is rising,” Mr. Narayanan says. Millets do not require as much of water or attention as in the case of paddy, thereby making it an effective crop to be grown in rain-shadow regions.

The demand for millets has significantly increased over the last five years, giving an impetus to cultivation of the same. Farmers in places such as T. Kallupatti, Tirumangalam, Usilampatti and Peraiyur in Madurai district have started cultivating millets thanks to demand for millet-based products in urban areas.

Value-addition

On realising the demand for health food in urban areas, self-help groups and individuals have started cashing in on it through value addition. One such initiative is the Uzhavan Unavagam, started under the auspices of former Collector U. Sagayam, On New Natham Road at Aathikulam. “We make dosas,

idlis, vegetable biriyani, soups, snacks such as murukku, sev and biscuits made of ragi, jowar and maize,” says K. Arumugam, an agriculture officer, who is the brain behind this initiative.

‘Uzhavan Unavagam’ also caters to birthday parties and small events with a menu that has dishes exclusively prepared with millets.

“Millets were traditionally used to prepare ‘koozh’ and ‘kanji’. We’ve given millets a modern twist by making snacks out of them to attract young urbanites,” he adds. The snacks cost between Rs. 10 to Rs. 40.

Rural Development and Self Employment Training (RUDSET) institute, a Madurai-based organisation, has been training people in processing of millets.

“We conduct training classes and teach people how to make health mix, snacks as well as dosas and idlis from millets. People who come to learn are usually representatives from the self-help groups and those who want to start business,” says V. Bharathi, director of the institute.

V. Anuradha, who got trained at the institute, is one of the directors of the Green Future Power Foundation which makes and sells foods made from millets.

She says their distribution channels are limited to stalls at exhibitions and demonstrations at schools, colleges and banks. “Most departmental stores do not stock snacks made of millets as demand hasn’t reached that level yet,” she says.

Awareness

There is a general need for greater awareness among the people of the benefits of these healthy grains even though the demand has been slowly increasing. ‘

'People just consider rice and wheat as an absolute necessity and ignore other cereals,' says V. Suganya, Senior Dietician at the Apollo Speciality Hospitals. She conducts talks in schools and colleges to create an awareness of the benefits of healthy foods.

"Those who know about the benefits that minor millets have often tend to ignore them citing that they do not have time for elaborate cooking," she says and adds that simple health mixes could be prepared which can be added to the food cooked at home.

Last month, Collector Anshul Mishra addressed a workshop on minor millets production and value-addition organised by the NABARD. He said that through the Pudhu Vaazhvu Project (PVP) and the Magalir Thittam, at least 1,000 self-help group members would be trained in processing of millets.

More such initiatives are needed to promote the humble grains, health-conscious people say.

Sugarcane growers seek direction to sugar unit on pending arrears

The Karnataka Sugarcane Farmers' Association has urged the district administration to direct the management of the Bannariamman Sugar Factory at Nanjangud in the district to pay arrears of Rs. 500 for every tonne of sugarcane supplied by growers to the factory during 2011-12.

The members, who met under the chairmanship of president of the association Kurubur Shantakumar here on Saturday, decided to intensify their agitation if they were not paid arrears by June 30. A memorandum to this effect was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner after the meeting.

However, the sugar factory management, sometime ago, denied that it owed the farmers any arrears. The farmers alleged that in spite of the Deputy Commissioner instructing the management to settle the issue, the latter had ignored it.

The State government must initiate steps to impress upon banks to lend more loans to sugarcane growers on the lines of banks in Tamil Nadu, in view of the increased cost of cultivation, the members noted. Loans should be disbursed through cooperative societies and district central cooperative banks through cheques to avoid inconvenience to farmers.

Nationalised banks should stop forcible recovery of dues from farmers for the time being in the wake of the drought. And, the compensation for loss of crop should be determined in a scientific manner, they demanded.

The farmers wanted the Department of Agriculture to supply seeds and fertilizer in time in view of the monsoon to hasten sowing for the kharif season.

Tanks downstream the canals of the Krishnaraja Sagar and Kabini reservoir should be supplied water for irrigation, they demanded. The members also spoke against the recovery of 10 per cent commission from farmers at the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees in the district. Attahalli Devaraj, Rajanna, K. Shankar, B. Narayana and P. Somashekar were present.

Organic produce on sale at Sirsi's Malnad Mela

We should encourage farmers to grow organic fruits and vegetables free of pesticides, said Sucheta Bhat Madguni of Yellapur, inaugurating the Malnad Mela held at Lingadakona Kalyana Mantapa here on Saturday, organised by Vanastree, Sirsi. She lauded the efforts of Vanastree in promoting pesticide-free cultivation.

Writer Shailaja Gornmane presided over the programme.

Rajeshwari Joshi of Jagriti Samaste, Dharwad, was the chief guest. Several varieties of vegetables, fruits and flowers were on sale.

Competition

Competitions in laddu preparation and rangoli were held and more than 25 women's organisations under Vanastree participated in the programme.

No respite for share-croppers this kharif season too

Despite the promise made by the State Revenue Minister one-and-half years ago, the share-croppers in Odisha are yet to get legal or administrative recognition.

Kharif season, which is the major cultivation season in Odisha, has commenced. Share-croppers have begun the cultivation process on lands of landlords without any proper documented lease deed.

As per peasant leaders, the share-croppers are again a neglected lot. Peasant organisations claim that most of the debt-ridden farmers who commit suicide in Odisha are share-croppers.

As per a study of the Odisha unit of the All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS), share-croppers are a majority among peasants in the State. As per our assessment, over 60 per cent of the cultivators in Odisha are share-croppers and 70 per cent of the cultivable land in the State is under use of the share croppers," says national committee member of the AIKMS Bhala Chandra Sadangi.

According to him, it is an irony that the Odisha government is yet to provide due recognition to share-croppers.

As per the Odisha Krushak Sabha (OKS) leader Kailash Sadangi, during the past few years, share-croppers have suffered heavy loss due to untimely rain or drought-like situation.

“There was some succour when State Revenue Minister Surya Narayan Patra had made a promise in January 2011 to recognise share- croppers in the State. But the promise has not yet been fulfilled,” he adds.

Mr. Patra had said that share-croppers would get legal recognition on the lines of their counterparts in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. He had said that registration of share-croppers through legal agreement with land owners in the presence of revenue officials would be made mandatory.

But, till date, the government has not come up with any notification or survey for documentation of share-croppers, alleges Brundaban Khatai, leader of the Ganjam district of Kisan Khet Mazdoor Congress (KKMC).

The peasant leaders say that without any legal recognition, share-croppers have to bear all risks of cultivation and yet are not eligible for low interest agricultural loans from nationalised banks or cooperative bodies. They are compelled to rely on private loans at hefty interest rates from moneylenders or exploitive microfinance organisations. In the absence of legal document for land lease, the share-croppers find it hard to get their crop insured. Land owners do not make any investment in cultivation and also they do not share the losses. Without any legal recognition, the share-croppers do not get any relief, insurance cover, or compensation for crop loss. But land owners get these benefits as compensation for crop loss is handed over to the land owners.

Land Reforms Act

The Orissa Land Reforms Act of 1960, which has undergone amendments, has till date failed to protect the rights of the share-croppers. As per the Act, land owners are not entitled to take more than one-fourth of the produce from a land tilled by a share-cropper. But, in reality, land owners take up to 50 per cent of the harvest, the peasant leaders allege.

According to them, the State government should declare the ratio of yield sharing between share-croppers and land owners, and make it mandatory throughout the State.

5,700 farmers get financial aid

About 5,700 farmers have been extended welfare assistance to the tune of Rs.2.71 crore under the Farmers Protection Scheme in Tiruchi district so far this year, said T.P. Poonachi, Minister for Khadi and Village Industries, here on Saturday. In 2012-13, welfare assistance estimated at Rs. 8.94 crore had been disbursed to 17,982 farmers in the district under the scheme. About 20,350 beneficiaries were getting monthly pension under the scheme in the district, he said speaking at a function to disburse educational and marriage assistance and pension sanction orders under the scheme to 328 beneficiaries. P. Kumar, MP, R. Manoharan, Government Chief Whip, N.R. Sivapathi, and M. Paranjothi, were present.

Ryots pin hopes on rains to kick-start kharif operations

In an interval in the Southwest monsoon showers, blistering heat wave conditions were recorded in many towns in Krishna District on Sunday, which forced the public to remain homebound.

Despite the mercury level did not crossing the average of 35 Degree Celsius in Mahcilipatnam and 38.8 Deg. Cel. In Vijayawada and in other parts of the District, the feeling was as though the heat was above 40 degree Celsius due to humid conditions.

Roads wore deserted look till the evening as temperatures came down by 5 p.m. Sunday being the first week-end holiday after schools and educational institutions reopened, children and youths thronged to Manginapudi beach to get respite from the heat wave. Parents accompanied by their children spent a lot of their time on the beach sand. 'Respite from the extreme heat wave was felt with repeated showers this week. Hopes of vigorous and active Southwest monsoon are bright going by the predictions of the weathermen, which might provide some relief from summer,' said P. Chandra Sekhar, a student.

On the other hand recent spells of rain across Krishna District resulted in speeding up of the land preparation works for the kharif-2013 season.

The stretch of agricultural land in Diviseema and other Southern Parts of Krishna District has already been readied to grow paddy nurseries. Agriculture officials estimate that about 2.6 lakh hectares of land would be brought under paddy cultivation in kharif alone. Farmers from Nagayalanka and Avanigadda said that they were eagerly waiting for further rains to kick-start of kharif operations .

Cotton prices increase

Price of the widely-used Shankar-6 variety of Indian cotton crossed Rs. 40,000 a candy (356 kg) on Friday. Cotton prices remained stable so far this season, which started in October 2012, hovering between Rs. 34,000 and Rs. 38,000 a candy. According to K.N. Viswanathan, vice-president of Indian Cotton Federation, the price of Shankar-6 variety of cotton on Friday was Rs. 40,300 a

candy. The international prices have gone up during the last couple of days as the crop is expected to be less in the U.S. Further, weak rupee is discouraging imports. These have resulted in domestic prices increasing.

The cotton that arrived so far this season (October 2012 to September 2013) is estimated to be 318 lakh bales (approximate). Even now, 30,000 to 40,000 bales are coming to the market. The trade and industry do not expect any shortage in cotton availability this season.

Rains have been good so far and this encouraged cotton farmers. The prices may go up slightly in the coming weeks but will not shoot up to abnormal levels. The textile mills, which are the main consumers of cotton, are continuing to buy cotton though in limited quantities, he says.

A textile mill representative here says though the cotton prices have crossed Rs. 40,000 a candy, the mills are not complaining. The prices have remained at less than Rs. 40,000 a candy so far. It may stabilise at this price or decline slightly. Movement of cotton yarn was dull a few days ago. It is picking up now and is expected to increase further next week.

Weakening of the Indian rupee against the dollar is the main reason for the cotton prices going up as this has reduced imports, the representative says.

Self-sufficiency in milk production promised

Kerala will achieve self-sufficiency in milk production by the end of 12th Five Year Plan term, Rural Development and Dairy Development Minister K.C. Joseph has said.

The State used to purchase around six lakh litres of milk from other States in the previous year. This had come down to one lakh this year, despite there being a

steep increase in consumption rate, the Minister said. Malabar region registered a surplus production of 2.5 lakh litres, he added.

Mr. Joseph was speaking at a function after inaugurating the renovated building of the milk cooperative society and information centre of dairy farmers, funded by the Dairy Development Department to mark the second anniversary of the UDF government in the hilly hamlet of Vellarikundu in the district on Saturday.

He said the government was actively considering setting up dairy development offices in Parappa and Karadukka block panchayats.

District panchayat president P.P. Shyamala Devi presided. Milma Chairman P.T. Gopala Kurup disbursed the grant to the cooperative society while District Collector P.S. Mohammed Sagir distributed the welfare board fund to the dairy farmers.

The function was attended by Parapapa block panchayat president Meenakshi Thampan and Balal grama panchayat president Raju Kattakkayam, among others.

State notifies implementation of three crop insurance schemes

To provide the much needed cushion to farmers during adverse climatic conditions, the State government notified implementation of three crop insurance schemes — National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS), Modified NAIS, and weather-based insurance — to ensure coverage of crops in all districts during the kharif season.

While NAIS would cover 25 crops in 26 districts, the Modified NAIS would cover 27 crops in the districts of Gulbarga, Shimoga, Tumkur and Uttara Kannada.

The weather-based scheme would cover 19 crops, mainly horticultural, in Bangalore Rural, Bagalkot, Belgaum, Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Chickballapur, Davangere, Dharwad, Gadag, Hassan, Haveri, Kolar, Koppal, Raichur, Ramanagaram, and Yadgir districts, officials in the Agriculture Department told *The Hindu*.

KHARIF TARGET

The State has set a target of 74.2 lakh hectares for the kharif season.

NAIS envisages coverage of all food crops (cereals and pulses), oilseeds, horticultural and commercial crops. It covers all farmers, both loanees and non-loanees.

NAIS would cover major crops, including paddy, maize, jowar, ragi, toor dal, sunflower, green gram, and groundnut (both rainfed and irrigated).

LAST DATE

The last date for submission of applications for the scheme is August 31.

The premium ranges from 2.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent of the sum insured depending on crops planted.

Farmers have to pay the insurance premium in banks along with the certified copy of area sown issued by village accountant.

CROP DAMAGE

In the event of crop damage on account of adverse weather conditions such as deficient and excessive rainfall, frost, drought and relative humidity, farmers have to inform to the bank concerned where they paid premium within 48 hours of the damage or to the Agricultural Insurance Company (AIC) of India Ltd., Bangalore.

A total of 4.2 lakh farmers enrolled under NAIS in 2012 kharif season.

MANDATORY

The Modified NAIS has been made mandatory for all loanee farmers.

The premium ranges from 2.4 per cent to 6 per cent of the sum insured depending on crops planted. The last date for participation in the scheme is June 30. AIC would implement the scheme in four districts, officials said.

MNAIS would cover 27 crops, including paddy, maize, toor dal, ragi, sunflower, cotton, groundnut, chillies and onion.

Under the scheme, insurance amount of Rs. 30.59 crore was paid to 60,371 farmers for crop loss during 2010–11 (rabi), 2011 (kharif) and 2011–12 (rabi) seasons.

WEATHER-BASED SCHEME

The weather-based scheme would cover several major crops, including jowar, ragi, bengal gram, potato, chillies, grapes and banana.

Farmers who have availed themselves of crop loans must insure their crops under the scheme.

The last date for submission of applications for the scheme is July 31.

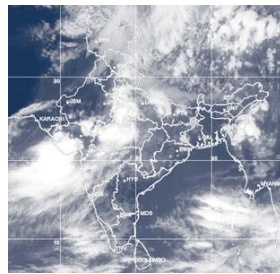
SIX FIRMS

Six insurance firms — AIC, HDFC Ergo General Insurance Company, Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Company, Iffco Tokio General Insurance Company Ltd., Tata AIG General Insurance Company, and ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company — are implementing the scheme.

A total of 1.22 lakh farmers received insurance amount of 10.02 crore under the scheme for crop loss in 2011–12 kharif and rabi seasons.

The premium ranges from 2.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent of the sum insured for crops. Farmers can get details of the scheme from a network of 745 raitha samparka kendras.

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	39	24	6	7
New Delhi (Sfd)	37	24	6	33
Chandigarh	24	21	20	144
Hissar	35	23	60	101
Bhuntar	-	-	-	-
Shimla	18	13	18	142
Jammu	28	22	1	27
Srinagar	22	12	7	27
Amritsar	28	20	16	121
Patiala	29	22	47	114
Jaipur	36	27	0	61
Udaipur	37	26	0	39
Allahabad	35	26	23	46
Lucknow	34	25	4	60
Varanasi	35	26	3	16
Dehradun	26	18	220	248

Agartala	34 27 0	91
Ahmedabad	35 27 0	42
Bangalore	29 21 1	123
Bhubaneshwar	32 25 4	105
Bhopal	31 25 22	101
Chennai	37 27 0	123
Guwahati	37 26 0	69
Hyderabad	31 24 0	153
Kolkata	32 26 3	135
Mumbai	29 25 142	541
Nagpur	27 - 56	164
Patna	35 27 9	39
Pune	27 22 73	175
Thiruvananthapuram	31 22 5	214
Imphal	34 23 0	29
Shillong	24 17 2	125

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

HEAT WAVE

The Southwest monsoon has further advanced into remaining parts of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Punjab. Thus it covered the entire country today.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, at many places over Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and east Uttar Pradesh and at few places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (5 cm and above)

HARYANA: Hissar 6 and Ambala 5 **HIMACHAL PRADESH:** Una 7, Nahan and

Kalpa 6 each, Sundernagar 5, PUNJAB: Patiala 5, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Nazibabad 5 and UTTARAKHAND: Dehradun 22, Tehri 12 and Mukteshwar 8.

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES: The maximum temperatures fell largely in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, fell markedly in Uttarakhand, fell appreciably in Uttar Pradesh, fell in Haryana and changed little elsewhere. They were largely below normal in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, markedly below normal in Haryana and Uttarakhand, appreciably below normal in west Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and below normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 41.6°C recorded at Barmer and Jaisalmer (Rajasthan).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 18th June 2013:

Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh Himachal Pradesh and east Rajasthan.

Rain/thundershowers would occur at few places over east Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab and isolated over west Rajasthan.

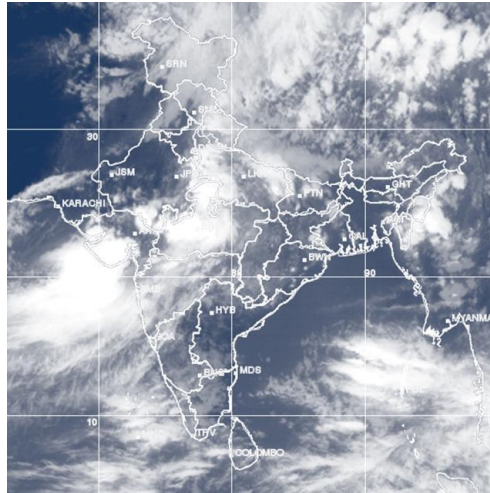
WARNING: Heavy to very Heavy may occur over Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh during next 48 hours. Heavy rainfall may also occur at one or two places over Punjab and Haryana during next 48 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE

MORNING OF 18th June 2013: Generally cloudy sky. Rain/thundershower would occur in some areas, may be heavy in one or two places..

THE HINDU Business Line

Monsoon covers entire country but may begin to weaken



The South-West monsoon has covered the entire country at least a fortnight ahead of schedule in what has been a spectacular and punishing opening spell.

Progress of monsoon so far has been good but it may start weakening from July, a former Director-General of the India Met Department told *Business Line*.

ABOVE NORMAL

June was expected to turn in above normal rainfall at the end of one of the best productive phases following an onset, he said.

Meanwhile, Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services suspected that monsoon activity might start to weaken from next week. Rains may relapse to below 'climatological mean' (historical normal for a given period) towards end-June and into July.

DRY WINDS

Paresh Nerurkar, a senior commander with Air India, told *Business Line* from Kolkata on Sunday that he could detect dry westerlies penetrating the North-West as they blew in from across the border.

On Sunday, the IMD too detected a western disturbance with a strong band of westerly winds parked just outside of Rajasthan-Gujarat. US National Centres of Environmental Prediction too showed skies clearing up over Northwest India (especially western parts) later during this week.

A low-pressure area was bringing heavy rains over Central India but could weaken under the onslaught of the dry westerly winds.

MONSOON LULL?

Drawing from experience, he said conditions reminded him of an impending lull in monsoon. 'Break-monsoon' is an inevitable recess after a rain pulse runs its course.

Depending on the extent to which it sustains, break-monsoon can decide fate of the early sown crops, especially during the humongous run in the onset phase of monsoon this year.

The former top official of Met Department cited model predictions to indicate that monsoon could hold good over North India until at least June 20 (Thursday).

It might weaken slightly in the first week of July. As of now, one of the regions where it had been weak was Bihar, he added.

Jute Prices

Arrivals in tonnes; prices in Rs/quintal in domestic market.

	Arrivals			Price		
	Current	% change	Season cumulative	Modal	Prev. Modal	Prev.Yr %change
Jute						
Jangipur(WB)	110.00	29.41	2769.00	2110	2090	6.03
Dhing(ASM)	18.00	NC	2873.50	2200	2200	-
Kalna(WB)	10.00	11.11	1972.00	2400	2400	4.35
Samsi(WB)	10.00	100	620.00	2400	2400	-
Raiganj(WB)	7.50	NC	1120.00	2450	2450	11.36

Chilli, jeera prices rise on fall in supply



Red chilli and jeera prices rose up to Rs 200 per quintal in the national capital on Saturday on fresh buying by retailers and stockists. Fall in supplies from producing belts also supported the upside in prices.

Red chilli prices rose by Rs 200 to settle at Rs 6,000-11,500 per quintal. Jeera common and jeera best quality also increased by Rs 100 each to conclude at Rs 12,600-13,200 and Rs 16,600-17,200 per quintal, respectively.

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

The following are today's quotations per quintal: Ajwain 10,500-17,000, black pepper (per kg) 360-480, betelnut (kg) 180-200, cardamom brown-Jhundiwali (kg) 970-990 and cardamom brown-Kanchicut (kg) 1,020-1,150.

Cardamom small (kg): Chitridar 620-720, cardamom (colour robin) 570-670, cardamom bold 620-670, cardamom extra (bold) 770-870 and cloves (kg) 650-770.

Red chillies Rs 6,000-11,500, Jeera common Rs 12,600-13,200 Jeera best Rs 16,600-17,200.

Select edible oils recover on fresh buying

Select edible oil prices recovered up to Rs 100 per quintal on the wholesale oils and oilseeds market on Saturday on increased buying by vanaspati millers.

However, non-edible oils remained steady in scattered deals from consuming industries. Traders said fresh buying by vanaspati millers mainly led to recovery in select edible oil prices.

In the national capital, soyabean refined mill delivery (Indore) and soyabean degum (Kandla) oil prices recovered by Rs 50 each to Rs 7,450 and Rs 7,050 per quintal, respectively.

Palmolein (rbd) and palmolein (Kandla) oils also gained Rs 100 each to Rs 5,700 and Rs 5,300 per quintal, respectively.

The following were today's quotations per quintal: Oilseeds: Mustardseed 2,950-3,050 and Groundnut Seed 2,150-2,900. Vanaspati Ghee (15-litre tin) 1,100-1,250.

Edible oils: Groundnut Mill Delivery (Gujarat) 9,900, Groundnut Solvent Refined (per tin) 1,990-2,040, Mustard expeller (Dadri) 6,600, Mustard Pakki Ghani (per tin) 1,270-1,350, Mustard Kachi Ghani (per tin) 1,355-1,455, Sunflower 6,300, Sesame Mill Delivery 11,600, Soybean Refined Mill Delivery (Indore) 7,450, Soyabean Degum (Kandla) 7,050, Crude Palm Oil (Ex-Kandla) 4,850, Cottonseed Mill Delivery (Haryana) 6,200, Palmolein (RBD) Rs 5,700, Palmolein (Kandla) 5,300, Rice Bran (phy) 3,800 and Coconut (per tin) 1,300-1,350.

Non-edible oils: Linseed 6,400, Mahuwa 4,000, Castor 9,000-9,100, Neem 5,100-5,200, Rice Bran 3,200-3,300 and Palm Fatty 3,225-3,300.

Oilcakes: Groundnut Dehusk 800-850, Sesame 950-1,150, Mustard (New) 1,000-1,025, Mustard 1,200-1,210 and Cottonseed 1,075-1,175.

Palm oil could test resistance

Malaysian palm oil futures on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives Exchange ended higher on Friday, spurred by bargain hunting after recent declines and short-covering ahead of the weekend. A weaker ringgit cushioned prices of the edible oil by making it cheaper for overseas buyers and refiners who are restocking ahead of the Muslim festival of Ramzan.

A drop in palm oil stocks in Malaysia, the world's No.2 producer of the edible oil, to their lowest in nearly a year, at 1.82 million tonnes by the end of May, also

boosted the sentiment. The latest US Department of Agriculture report pegged its global soyabean stockpile estimate for the 2013-14 season at 265 million bushels, within market expectations.

Crude palm oil active month futures are moving perfectly in line with our expectations. As mentioned in the earlier update dips could now find support near 2,423-25 ringgit (MYR) a tonne followed by 2,395 MYR/t levels and while these supports hold attempts to dip we expect prices to eventually test 2,505 MYR/t or even higher to 2,555 MYR/t being an equality target. Prices are set to move higher and test above-mentioned levels in the coming week. Price structures are turning friendly once again and we expect further strength in CPO futures. Only a daily close below 2,355-60 MYR/t could turn the picture weak again which we do not favour presently. Initial support is at 2,425 MYR/t followed by 2,400-05 MYR/t.

The wave counts still remains mixed and prefer for the time being to go with possibility of an end of wave "C" at 2,220 MYR/t now. A decline below 2,300 MYR/t has dashed all bullish hopes. Ideally, prices could come down towards 2,000 MYR/t or even lower in the bigger picture as an extension of wave "C". There is also a possibility that 2,220 MYR/ton has ended with an intermediate bottom. This means a new impulse could end somewhere near 2,500-2,555 MYR/t and the impulse could continue higher while 2,270 MYR/t remains undisturbed. RSI is in the neutral zone indicating that it is neither overbought nor oversold. The averages in MACD have gone above the zero line of the indicator hinting at a bullish reversal. Only a crossover below the zero line again could indicate a bearish trend.

Therefore, look for palm oil futures to test the resistances levels.

Supports are at MYR 2425, 2395 and 2360. Resistances are at MYR 2475, 2505 and 2555.

(The author is the Director of Commtrendz Research and also in the advisory panel of Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd (MCX). The views expressed in this column are his own and not that of MCX. This analysis is based on the historical price movements and there is risk of loss in trading. He can be reached at gnanasekar.t@gmail.com.)

'Monsoon covers India a month ahead'

The southwest [monsoon](#), the lifeline of millions of farmers, today covered the entire country almost a month ahead of schedule, the India Meteorological Department ([IMD](#)) said.

It also reached the National Capital Region of [Delhi](#) almost a fortnight before its usual arrival date.

The [rains](#) entered the Indian mainland on June 1, through the Kerala coast and then made a strong surge inland. In most places, it reached at least a week to 10 days ahead of its scheduled arrival date, likely to give a strong boost to the sowing of kharif crops.

In the first two weeks, rainfall across the country was almost 30 per cent above normal, IMD said. "In just 15 days, the southwest monsoon has covered the entire country, which is remarkable," a senior IMD official said.

The met office, in its updated forecast for the 2013 southwest monsoon season released last week, had said total cumulative rainfall across India this year is expected to be normal at 98 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA).

Rains in July are expected to be normal at 101 per cent of the LPA, while in

August, they are expected to be 96 per cent of LPA. Both predictions have a model error of +/- nine per cent. LPA is the average rainfall in the country in the last 50 years.

IMD classifies rainfall between 90 and 96 per cent of the LPA as below-normal; rainfall between 96 and 104 per cent of the LPA is classified as normal. Rains below 90 per cent of the LPA are considered deficient, while rains above 104 per cent are above-normal.

IMD said during the four-month southwest monsoon this year, rainfall in northwest India was expected at 94 per cent of the LPA. Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh form part of this region.

In the south comprising Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, rainfall is expected at 103 per cent of the LPA. In the drought-hit central and western parts of the country, rainfall was expected at 98 per cent of LPA, IMD said.

According to IMD's classification, this region accounts for Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. For the northeastern states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Tripura, etc, IMD said rainfall is expected at 98 per cent of the LPA.

Paddy sowing sees a spurt across the country



As the southwest monsoon makes stupendous progress across large parts of the country, reaching most areas a week to 10 days ahead of schedule, the sowing of paddy, the most important foodgrain grown during the kharif season, has started on a brisk note.

According to the latest data by the department of agriculture, paddy had been sown in 0.79 million hectares till

June 13, just 1.25 per cent less than last year. According to experts, the pace of sowing will pick up as the monsoon advances over the remaining parts of the country. Till June 14, almost two-thirds of the country had been covered by the monsoon and the rest is expected to be covered by the end of June. July is the most important month for sowing of kharif crops and according to the latest prediction of the India Meteorological Department, rains in July are expected to be normal.

“Though these are very early days and the major thrust in sowing will come around July, the initial signs are very encouraging,” a senior official from the department of agriculture said.

The Secretary of the Consortium of Indian Farmers Associations (Cifa), P Chengal Reddy said there was every possibility India might harvest 100 million

tonnes of rice in 2013-14, if the monsoon remained on course. India produced 93 million tonnes of rice in the previous year.

“The use of hybrid seeds has increased manifold across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Jharkhand, which will lead to higher productivity. Plus, the rains have been really good so far,” Reddy said.

He said the big problem will arise in marketing and procurement of this bumper harvest and the government should immediately start taking measures so farmers are not distressed when the actual crop starts hitting the market. Among the major paddy producing states, sowing is more in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka, compared to the same period last year.

Paddy is sown in about 39 million hectares during the entire kharif season.

In its latest weekly update for the monsoon, the met department said overall rain was 28 percent above normal till June 13. Almost all regions, barring Haryana and Chandigarh, received above the normal rain during the same period.

Going forward, the met office said rain over the eastern and southern parts of the country, which produce 80 per cent of the country's total annual paddy, are expected to be normal in 2013. Eastern India is expected to get rains equivalent to 98 per cent of Long Period Average, the well within the normal range.

Data from the department of agriculture show oilseeds were sown in 157,000 hectares till June 13, marginally more than last year's corresponding period. Cotton has been planted in 1.58 million hectares, 0.6 per cent more than last year's.

SOWING TRENDS (in million hectares)

Crops	2012-13	2013-14	% change
Rice	0.80	0.79	-1.25
Oilseeds	0.15	0.15	Flat
Sugarcane	4.67	4.20	-10.06
Cotton	1.57	1.58	+0.63
Jute & mesta	0.80	0.81	+1.25
Total	8.01	7.55	-5.74

Source: Department of Agriculture

The only laggard has been sugarcane planted in 4.20 million hectares till Thursday, 10.06 per cent less than during the corresponding period last year.

“The drop in sugarcane estimate is mainly due to large-scale drought in parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka this year,” another official said.

Officials said sugar [production](#) in 2013-14 is estimated to fall 10 per cent to 22 million tonnes because of lower sowing.

In total, crops have been sown in eight million hectares till June 13 out of 75 million hectares of land on which kharif crops are sown.

Farmers pray for no rain, literally

Dhansai Singh, a small farmer in Pithora block of Mahasamund district, is praying that there should not be more [rain](#) at least for a week. For, heavy rain that lashed a few parts of [Chhattisgarh](#) with the onset of monsoon a week ago had now baffled the [farmers](#). It would severely affect the sowing work.

“When it rained, we were happy that it would be another good monsoon,” said Singh. But when it rain continued unabated, it started creating tension for them.

“Now, we are praying that there should not be further rain in the region as it will

badly affected the sowing work due to water in the field," he added. According to weather experts, farmers in Chhattisgarh were not ready for the agriculture work and had not prepared the field for sowing. The monsoon rain that normally struck Chhattisgarh after June 10 had reached three days earlier. The rain continued contrary to the normal practice of a break.

The average rainfall for the month according to 1971-2000 normals is 196.4 mm and the number of rainy days is 9.5. The figure had been achieved well with the onset of the monsoon. As of now, Chhattisgarh had received more than 200 mm of rain. "After the initial rain, there is normally a break that provides farmers to prepare the field and accelerate the agriculture work," Sanket Thakur, an agriculture scientist, said. The fields had been filled with water that would create problem for farmers and delay sowing work, he added.

The situation would take another twist if the climatic condition in the state remained the same for another few days. "If dry spell failed to come in another 4-5 days, it would not be a good sign for the farmers," Virendra Pandey, farmer's leader, said. However, it would be too early at this juncture to comment on the final yield on the kharif production, he added. The state government had set a target to take kharif crops in 4.82 million hectare of area-about 56,000 hectare more than the targeted kharif acreage of last year. Of it, paddy would be sowed in 3.97 million hectare of area with the government setting a target to produce 7.5 million tonnes of paddy. The paddy production target was earlier set at 7 million tonnes. Since the buoyant rains last year resulted in bumper paddy production with state surpassing the target of 6.5 million tonnes by 500,000 tonnes, the authorities were forced to revise the target for 2013 and set it at 7 million tonnes.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Cocoa intercropping picks up in coconut plantations as crop yield improves

MADURAI: For those coconut farmers who complain about poor returns, a few like V Suresh and V Subash from S Puliankulam, near Silaiman, should be role models. While most farmers have been cultivating plantain as intercrop in [coconut plantations](#), the brothers tried cocoa. Around 50 such coconut farmers who decided on intercropping of cocoa in Madurai district four years ago now feel they are on the right path. The coconut yield from lands with cocoa intercrop is more than what they could expect from the widely popular intercrop, banana.

Suresh came to know about cocoa and government's support for the crop from the horticulture department which has been intensively promoting its cultivation, along with Cadbury India, for the last four years. Farmers are encouraged to take up cocoa farming with supply of free cocoa saplings, fertiliser and pesticide worth Rs 20,000 per acre for three years from the government. Farms in Alanganallur, Kottampatti and Sholavandhan started producing cocoa beans from last year after saplings were planted four years back. However, considerable amount of production was achieved this year only.

K Vijayan, father of Suresh and Subash, who look after their eight-acre coconut farm, insists cocoa-coconut intercropping makes sense. "The decision to cultivate cocoa was made by my sons. We are satisfied with the return when compared to banana cultivation. We could earn only up to Rs 15,000 per acre from banana as

intercrop, whereas cocoa cultivation provides double the money. We will have a good harvest only from the fifth year. We expect it in another couple of years," Vijayan said.

There are other advantages of opting for cocoa intercrop. Cocoa needs the least manpower for maintenance and harvest. Since the beans are produced round the year, the revenue will be consistent, Suresh said. "There is no need to search for buyers as Cadbury India, which provides us with technical expertise, also procures the produce the farm. The current price of cocoa is Rs 130 per kg. Anyone whose coconut farms are less than seven year old and has good water supply can cultivate it," he said.

Talking about the demand A Marimuthu, Cadbury India's senior technical executive for cocoa operation, said there is tremendous scope for cocoa cultivation. "There is a rising demand for cocoa in India since it is the basic ingredient in chocolate production. An estimated 30,000 tonnes of cocoa is needed in India annually and the demand is rising 20% every year. But our production is only less 15,000 tons, leading us to import the rest. Kerala, the top producer, has an annual output of 6,000 tonnes. It is followed by [Andhra Pradesh](#) with 5,000 tonnes. [Tamil Nadu](#) and Karnataka are distant competitors, producing only 1,500 tonnes together," he said.

In Tamil Nadu, cocoa cultivation is found in Coimbatore, Theni, Thanjavur, Kanyakumari, Dindigul, Salem, Tirunelveli and Madurai districts. In Theni, many farmers have started cultivating coconut as an intercrop to cocoa, he said.

Healthy monsoon brightens hope of bumper kharif crop

VISAKHAPATNAM: The district administration is aiming to make the most of what seems likely to be a healthy monsoon by beefing up its target for [kharif](#) this year.

The administration is sparing no effort to increase food grain production this season. It is also planning to increase the extent of land that would be brought under kharif by increasing the extent of cultivable land by 7% this year. The average extent of land under kharif cultivation in the district is roughly 2,14,000 hectares, out of which 98,000 hectares is paddy alone. This season, the extent of paddy would go up to 1,05,000 hectares, according to officials, who plan to bring an extra 10,700 hectares overall under kharif crop cultivation.

An outlay of Rs 600 crore has been made for the kharif this year to procure 25,000 quintals of seeds, including paddy, bajra, pulses and raagi. Paddy seeds alone would amount to 23,000 quintals, against the 19,000 quintals last year. Sources in the [agriculture department](#) noted that a healthy monsoon would help increase paddy cultivation even in areas that are entirely dependent on rainfall.

On the fertiliser front, joint director agriculture D Kurma Rao observed, "Our main focus is to ensure better supply of fertilisers and control pilfering of stock and supply of spurious material. For this we have decided to bring more cooperatives and PSUs into fertiliser distribution. Though we have 98 cooperative societies (agriculture) in the district only 56 are involved in fertiliser distribution. This year

we plan to increase the number to 76."

Sources in the department said that 70% of the distribution is done through private traders providing great scope for pilferage and black-marketeering. To avoid this, the district administration has taken it upon itself to mark a change in the distribution ratio. "We wish to ensure a fair distribution system so that the farmers do not suffer," noted the district collector V Seshadri. On the stock available for distribution in the first month (June to July), Rao noted that an allotment of 2,300 [metric](#) tonnes has been made for the first month. More importantly, a buffer stock is also being piled up.

"We are building a buffer stock of 3,000 metric tonnes to ensure that there are no [clogs](#) in the supply chain. The demand for this kharif has been put at 70,000 metric tonnes against last year's 45,000 metric tonnes," said Rao.

The farmers of the district would also receive an additional Rs 34 crore as input subsidy for damages suffered because of cyclone Nilam. Soil samples are also being taken and analysed to ensure a healthy crop.

The administration is focused on helping farmers who do not fall under the loan-eligibility bracket. "The administration has plans to ensure that more than 5,000 such farmers benefit through the Loan Eligibility Card scheme," noted the collector.

The district administration has also urged the government to deploy the full

contingent of seeds by or before July 10 to ensure that material is disbursed by the end of July.

Seed treatment drive to boost production in Gumla

GUMLA: The [agriculture department](#) has launched a seed treatment campaign for the kharif season. Seed treatment protects plants from keep fungal, bacterial and viral diseases during kharif season, according to Mohit Singh, deputy project director ([DPD](#)) with Agriculture Technology Management Agency ([ATMA](#)) in Gumla.

"All kinds of kharif crops, like paddy, maize, pulses and oil seeds, could be treated with plant protection medicines before sowing. Farmers can apply both dry and wet methods of seed treatment to get healthy and mature plants till they are harvested," Singh added.

An authorized agro firm has launched awareness campaigns and is providing chemicals at subsidized rate. With monsoon having already arrived, farmers are getting to learn about a new technique that will benefit them.

Seeds continue to shine

NAGPUR: Young guns from Maharashtra failed to make an impact and found themselves in the bottom half of the group, even as top seed, IM [Vikramaditya Kulkarni](#) and seed No. 2 IM Anup Deshmukh, scored convincing wins to surge ahead with 21 others on Day 2 of the GH Rasoni Maharashtra State Open FIDE Rating Chess tournament, currently in progress at the multipurpose hall of

Saraswati Vidyalaya on Saturday.

In the third round of the five-day tourney 23 players of the 222 participants scored full three points with victories in contrasting fashion.

On the top board, Vikramaditya Kulkarni — the Railway man from Mumbai — made light work of RN Hariramani. Playing with the black bits, Kulkarni took just 23 moves to emerge victorious.

Similarly, Orange city's first International Master [Anup Deshmukh](#) made good use of his opening advantage with the white to outplay TM Kawadkar after a 26-move battle.

On the third board, seed No. 3 Satchidanand Soman, however, played out a marathon battle to tackle the challenge that city youngster [Vaishnavi Akhade](#) gave to her experienced opponent. Playing with the regular Kings Pawn opening move Vaishani starting with the whites played out some tactical moves but came under time pressure to go down fighting after an exciting 57-move battle as Soman heaved a sigh of relief with full points.

Seed no. 4 Sauravh Khherdekar had no worries on the fourth board against Prasad Khedkar.

Results (round 3): RN Hariramani (2) lost to Vikramaditya Kulkarni (3), Anup Deshmukh (3) bt TM Kawadkar (2), Akhade Vaishnavi (2) lost to Soman

Satchidanand (3), Sauravh Khherdekar (3) bt Khedkar Prasad (2), Sharang [Sanjeev Kapoor](#) (2) lost to [Akash Thakur](#) (3), Dilip Pagay (3) bt Harshit D Borkar (2), Naresh Kantode (2) lost to Pendalwar Pankaj (3), Shweta Gole (3) bt Raut Vaibhav (2), Om Vinay Vitalkar (2) lost to Shubham Lakudkar (3), Aurangabadkar Prasad (3) bt Kapil Ghatwai (2).

Rainwater goes down the drain

The city where groundwater level is depleting at an alarming rate fails to make use of about 7,000 cusecs of rain water that goes down the Nazafgarh drain every rainy season.

The startling revelation has been made by a research team of Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia, working on rain water harvesting (RWH) projects in Gurgaon.

According to the researchers, this is a serious concern and cannot be ignored. "This water can be saved and used to recharge the water table. The Haryana Urban Development Authority (Huda) does not have any master plan for recharging of water table and the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) is too slow to enforce the master plan related to RWH it made three years ago," said Kulsum Fatima, associate professor at Jamia Millia Islamia.

In Gurgaon, groundwater depletes at an alarming rate of seven feet per year. Rain water harvesting is mandatory for any new building plan approval in MCG and Huda areas but the two bodies have failed to enforce the law and challan the defaulters. They are working over 500 RWH sites for over two years and managed to complete only 150 sites.

The Jamia research team is likely to submit the report to Gurgaon deputy commissioner PC Meena in a day or two. "We alarmed the administration earlier when the water table in central Gurgaon areas like Sikandarpur and Nathupur

was 175 feet deep. The Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) has notified the city but still groundwater extraction is underway. We will meet the authority shortly,” said Gauhar Mehmud, another researcher.

According to experts, Gurgaon on average receives rainfall of 595 mm that is good enough to recharge its water table.

“Natural drains like Nathupur, Ghata, Sohna, etc have been encroached upon and water bodies like Ghata lake, Nazafgarh lake and Sukhrali pond too have dried up. The fast depletion of water table is a big threat to the green cover,”said Ruby, a research scholar.

Meena had last year made 20 teams to crack whip on misuse of RWH structures by individuals and developers after getting rap from the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the depleting water table.

“In some areas of central Gurgaon, the water table depleted as deep as four metre between June and October 2012,”said a senior official in the hydrology department.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Jun 17

Max: 36° | Min: 28°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 49
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:42
Sunset: 06:36
Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Jun 18

Max: 37° | Min: 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jun 19	Thursday Jun 20	Friday Jun 21	Saturday Jun 22	Sunday Jun 23
38° 28° Cloudy	38° 29° Overcast	37° 28° Overcast	39° 28° Overcast	39° 28° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 19 Sunrise: 05:23
Humidity: 98 Sunset: 07:20
Wind: normal Barometer: 996



UK delegation to study South Indian flavours



A delegation from the International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades Limited, London, which is on a visit to South India primarily to explore and exchange information about flavour and fragrance ingredients, will arrive in Kochi on Sunday.

The delegation, which began its journey from Madurai, has visited floral extraction units in Coimbatore, Ootty, Mysore and Bangalore. George Paul, the local organiser of the tour in Kochi, told Deccan Chronicle that the task of the team in Kochi would be to visit the spice oleoresin industries in the state.

The IFEAT study tours that take place annually are aimed at offering more in-depth study of floral extracts, oleoresins and essential oils of a particular region and their production. The aim of the present tour is to gain an intimate knowledge of the field, production and processing facilities of these flavour and fragrance ingredients in the flower belt and spice extraction farms of South India.

The delegation visited facilities producing jasmine, mimosa, tuberose, champaca, rose, palmarosa, eucalyptus, geranium, rosemary, marigold, sandalwood, oleoresins and essential oils. The first leg of the tour between Madurai and

Mysore concentrated on the flower production of southern India, while the ongoing second leg between Mysore and Kochi was concentrating on spice oleoresins and essential oils.

June was selected for the tour as it is the harvesting seasons for flowers.

INNOVATIVE AGRI TECHS HELP FARMER'S PRODUCTS GO FROM FARM TO FORK MINUS FDI IN RETAIL



Even as various political parties are opposing Foreign Direct Investment in retail, Maharashtra farmers have already pioneered the art of retailing and reduced the Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMC) trade from Rs 43,000 crore to Rs 37,000 crore in year 2012-13.

This is one of the Government's efforts to dismantle and discourage middlemen system in marketing the agriculture produce. The government is encouraging farmers to sign pacts with societies in nearby towns and selling produce directly to the inhabitants and this has resulted in reduction in APMC trade last year.

The Agriculture Ministry in Maharashtra organises guided foreign tours for framers to learn innovative agricultural techniques that they can adopt to boost productivity. This has changed lives of many farmers in villages near Pune. The farmers, say, the foreign tours have helped them bring attitudinal change towards agriculture and although all the techniques adopted foreign may not be adopted here, some techniques have done wonders for them.

On visit, farmers in nearby Pune villages, showed how polyhouse agriculture has helped them to increase their produce of vegetables and some of them even have been able to bring back the youth in their families back to agriculture. Farmers here make a group and help each other sharing technology and diversify their produce. Every group has a leader – village leader- who helps them to aggregate their produce and transport and sell it directly to consumers in Pune societies. This has helped the farmers bypass the middlemen chain and earn more money.

The Ministry gives subsidy to farmers for polyhouse, mulching, micro-irrigation, and water reservoirs. The quantum of subsidy varies from scheme to scheme, but farmers are happy to put in their share as the techniques have helped them multiply their produce many fold from the same set of land.

In April the ministry had taken 47 farmers to Europe. Farmers have to pay only 50% of the cost and the rest is borne by the government. The Ministry plans to send 1,000 farmers annually on such study tours to Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand.

The Agriculture Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil said, “Most of the time, farmers are cheated by traders. Hence, we are now encouraging farmers to do contract farming and sell directly to consumers. We are now focusing on how the state farmers can sell their agricultural goods in various parts of the country. As part of this, we are planning to open information offices in five major cities.”

Patil said his state is now in the process of integrating agriculture and marketing departments of the State Government for effective implementation of the government schemes so that farmers can get maximum benefit. Sometimes, farmers are unaware of the facilities being provided at the different facility centres of the Government.