

New farm-fresh veggie outlets in Chennai's suburbs sell out on day 1



The Hindu Residents said the government should ensure retailers do not buy vegetables in bulk from the outlets and resell them in their shops.

Photo: M. Srinath

The outlets in the city's immediate southern suburbs and one in Porur boast of a huge price difference of locally-available vegetables compared to those in other markets

Residents cutting across the social and economic spectrum flocked to the farm-fresh consumer outlets in the city's suburbs on Thursday, soon after their inauguration earlier in the day.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa launched 31 'Pannai Pasumai Nugarvor Kootturavu Kadai' through video-conferencing from the Secretariat. Four of the outlets, which will sell 31 varieties of vegetables, are in the city's

immediate southern suburbs — Madipakkam, Rajakilpakkam, East Tambaram and Pozhichalur — and one is in Porur in the west.

The huge difference in the prices of locally-available vegetables at the new outlets compared to those in other markets was evident. The prices of onion, tomato and potato are far lower than those quoted in supermarkets run by giant firms, and lower than even those in an Uzhavar Sandhai and other important markets such as Tambaram.

On Thursday, the prices of onions, tomatoes and potatoes per kg at an airconditioned supermarket in Tambaram was Rs. 29, Rs. 49 and Rs. 41 respectively, while the rates for the same vegetables at the consumer outlets were Rs. 20, Rs. 30 and Rs. 20 respectively.

Brinjal and ladies finger costs Rs. 24 and Rs. 30 per kilogram at an Uzhavar Sandhai and Rs. 36 and Rs. 45 at a supermarket, while they are priced at Rs. 20 and Rs. 24 at the new outlets.

“A bunch of coriander that costs between Rs. 8 and Rs. 12 elsewhere is available here for just Rs. 6. The biggest bargains are beans and carrots as their prices are lesser by more than 50 per cent compared to the rates at markets and air-conditioned stores,” said K. Sarojini, a homemaker of Rajakilpakkam.

R. Venkatraman, a pensioner, welcomed the launch of the new outlets, stating it was long overdue. He said the agriculture department was earlier running a similar store attached to the fair price shop of the Kancheepuram district consumer cooperative welfare society, but it had been shut down.

“Middlemen and leading chains seem to be a law unto themselves. They lure customers through offers and once the bond is established, they resort to unjust pricing,” said M.B. Sundaram, another pensioner.

He said the biggest beneficiaries would be people from low-income groups, especially those who do not own refrigerators and hence buy vegetables in small quantities.

Residents, while welcoming the electronic billing method, said the government should ensure retailers do not buy vegetables in bulk from the outlets and resell them. Officials said they had instructed staff at the outlets to be wary of merchants and not sell vegetables in bulk.

They said the department of cooperation, food and consumer protection procured the vegetables directly from farmers in places such as Oddanchathiram and Dharmapuri and brought them to the outlets. Despite the transportation costs involved, they were able to maintain prices lower than those anywhere else due to the elimination of middlemen.

At the end of the day, visitors to the outlets had to go back empty-handed as all the vegetables were sold out. The outlets had sold 13,000 kg of different varieties of vegetables for Rs. 3 lakh, a margin of Rs. 25,000 over the procurement price. Buyers on Thursday got a small piece of ginger (the costliest item in the outlets) free of cost.

Following the huge response, officials have now decided to operate the outlets from 7.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The initiative, aimed at beating the high inflationary trend, would be studied closely in the initial days to plug loopholes, officials said, adding, they anticipated the prices of vegetables would come down in supermarkets.

Canadian prairie town strives for mustard glory

Gravelbourg is not just another prairie town. It wants top place on condiments map of the world. Now it has the chance



READY TO GO
Jars of mustard are displayed on a shelf in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan in Canada. Photo: AFP

With its church and main street, Gravelbourg seems like just another Canadian prairie town. But it has a little known claim to fame – as prime producer of the world's mustard seeds.

And growing beneath its placid exterior is a movement to depose France's Dijon as the globe's condiment king.

A two-hour drive through farm country from the Saskatchewan provincial capital Regina, the town of 1,200 established in 1906 by four brothers from Quebec "is now at the heart of mustard production," boasts its mayor, Real Forest.

Canada produces 35 to 40 percent of the world's mustard seeds, with Gravelbourg at the core of this output.

The mustard seed was only introduced in the Canadian province in the 1940s, five centuries after Dijon in eastern France, which made it famous.

But France's Burgundy region no longer mass-produces the seeds and the last big mustard manufacturing plant in Dijon was shuttered in 2008 after being taken over by Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever.

So Gravelbourg now has the chance to step up and seize mustard glory.

The problem is "we sell the raw materials which go elsewhere... and the benefits also go elsewhere," laments Forest, who is searching for investors to help locals kick-start their dreams.

Brand identity

More and more Canadian resource sectors – such as forestry and diamond mining – are seeking to process raw materials into finished products for export to reap greater economic benefits.

Acknowledging past failures to help farmers turn their crops into value-added products and struggles ahead, Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart is adamant: his government wants "more agriculture products to be processed here with brand names."

"We need to sell not only mustard but also to add value to more of our agriculture products," he said.

Some have already started getting Gravelbourg's name out.

One local family, for example, started Gravelbourg Gourmet Mustard two years ago, offering a line of condiments made from local harvests. "Our objective was to use local resources," says owner Val Michaud, who started the company with her husband.

It is currently the only mustard maker in the province, but its wares are sold in specialty stores throughout Western Canada, and it is soon slated to expand nationwide and beyond.

At present, however, it does not even own its kitchen. Instead, the mustards are prepared at facilities at the local school.

"I'd really like to have our own kitchen next year," said Michaud, offering tastes of her traditional wholegrain mustard, hot (Dijon) mustard, and a unique garlic and berries blend.

"With our company, I hope to put Gravelbourg on the map."AFP

Mustard also has many applications outside of traditional food ingredient uses. Some types offer biological and insecticidal properties and the oil can be used in the manufacture of biodiesel and other industrial products.

Training programme for farm officials

A two-day training programme for agriculture officials organised by ATMA was inaugurated by Joint Director, agriculture, Ravi, here on Thursday. Addressing the meeting he urged the officials to enlighten the farmers on adoption of modern agriculture practices for good yield . –Correspondent

Chittoor tail-end farmers brave all odds



In full swing: Farm workers transplanting paddy seedlings at Isukathageli in Yerpedu mandal of Chittoor district on Thursday.- Photo: K.V.

Poornachandra Kumar

The less-than-average rainfall has not dampened the spirits of the farmers of the tail-end Chittoor district, who launched agricultural operations this kharif, braving many odds.

Farmers are anything but buoyed, with most parts of the district witnessing scanty rainfall this season. The eastern mandals of Srikalahasti, B.N.Kandriga, Satyavedu, Varadaiahpalem and K.V.B. Puram witnessed good rain this season. But, farmers of the central and western parts of the district seldom look to the sky for succour and depend more on bore wells and tube wells. After sowing, the operation on transplantation of the seedlings has begun at several places.

The occasional rains last month helped retain soil moisture during ploughing and sowing, but a couple of medium to heavy showers in the coming days will be of great help to the farmers, with 90 more days to go for harvest. "With rainfall playing hide and seek, our two tube wells, which are meant to be an alternative, have become the main source of water to irrigate our fields," says T.Subramanyam Reddy of Isukathageli village in Yerpedu mandal. The power supply for five hours is hardly enough to water the paddy fields, he says .

The district officials have stocked 10,950 tonnes of urea and 3,820 tonnes of DAP for the kharif , while an additional 5,000 tonnes are expected to arrive by the month-end. However, what worries the farmers is the high price of fertilizer. Even as the prices of DAP, phosphate, urea and potash have come down to some extent, some dealers are found to be selling them at the old price, keeping the farmers in the dark. Not many

moderators or extension officers visit the field to guide the farmers on sustainable practices. For instance, the two-day expo on farm mechanisation held recently was meant to enlighten farmers of Rayalaseema region on emerging agricultural engineering practices, but many farmers and even farm scientists were not informed of the event. On the flip side, the representatives of fertilizer and seed companies are regularly providing counsel to the farmers.

'Lease land acquired for airport to farmers' co-op.'

A society of farmers will soon be formed: samiti

The Chaganur-Siriwar Neeravari Bhoorakshana Horata Samiti, which spearheaded the movement against the acquisition of irrigated land for the new Bellary airport, has suggested a new idea: The nearly 600 acres of land already acquired through the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board can be leased to a cooperative society, to be formed by farmers themselves, for agricultural activities.

“In the wake of the Karnataka High Court’s order cancelling the notification for acquiring land and its directive to reconsider the objections raised by farmers, we have requested the Petition’s Committee of the Legislative Council to recommend to the government to hand over the already acquired land to the cooperative society, which will be formed soon,” Mallikarjun Reddy, convener of the samiti, told *The Hindu* .

“Let the government lease the land to the society and collect nominal rent. It will help farmers, especially agricultural labourers, who do not know any other vocation, live with dignity and become self-reliant,” he said.

The government has acquired about 80 per cent of the 600 acres notified for the airport and has also paid compensation. At present, the farmers who have received compensation are also cultivating their land.

Report

According to Mr. Reddy, the entire stretch of land was irrigated and a minimum of two crops were being raised annually. Drawing the attention of the Petitions Committee to the stand of the government that it would not acquire agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, Mr. Reddy expressed the hope that the committee members would submit a more farmer-friendly report.

ORR may cost farmers their land



Livelihood matters Around 100 acres in Tiruvallur district are to be acquired for a truck yard abutting the Rs. 1,081-crore project —Photo: B. Jothi Ramalingam

As Karunakaracheri, Annambedu, Ramapuram and Thandarai, in Tiruvallur district, are in close proximity to the Outer Ring Road, the farmers in these villages are likely to lose their lush green fields.

Around 100 acres are to be acquired for a truck yard abutting the Rs. 1,081-crore project near Ramapuram as decided in the second master plan for the Chennai metropolitan area.

“Even in this heat our fields have enough water, thanks to the borewells and the well-maintained water courses and channels that are cleaned every year in the 100-day employment scheme of the Central government. The government should choose some other piece of dry land for the project. Already a large tract of land has been lost for the road,” said V. Bakthavatsalam, president of the Karunakaracheri panchayat.

When the tahsildar and revenue department officials went to the villages on Wednesday, the farmers vehemently opposed the project. K. Madhiazhagan, who is from Thandarai but owns lands in Karunakaracheri, said the farmers did not want compensation as they do not want to give up the land. “They are promising us only a few lakhs for the land . For an acre, I will be paid Rs. 7 lakh, which if deposited in the bank will be hardly enough to meet our needs,” he said.

According to R. M. Varadhan, a consumer activist and farmer, at least 1,000 families would be affected by the proposal. “Many of the farmers’ children are educated but inevitably they come back to work on the farms,” he said.

Sources in the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority said the truck terminal had been envisaged in the second master plan and once the road is opened to traffic officially, hundreds of trucks would use the facility. Around 17.05 hectares are to be acquired from Karunakaracheri and 25.41 hectares from Annambedu for the project.

The 30-km long first phase of ORR runs from Vandalur in the south to Nemilicherry in the west. The CMDA is responsible for acquiring land on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Road Development Company, which is implementing the project

CPI demands fresh survey of drought-hit farmers

The Ponnamaravathy taluk unit of the Communist Party of India has urged the State government to sanction adequate relief to all farmers in the taluk who had lost their crop due to failure of monsoon.

A resolution adopted to this effect at its meeting held here on Thursday said that not all firkas in the taluk had been covered in the survey while sanctioning relief to farmers.

It wanted the Revenue Department officials to conduct a survey afresh for ascertaining the damage caused to crops because of the failure of monsoon between November last year and March this year.

The meeting, through another resolution, urged the district administration to check the encroachments at a burial ground at Ganesapuram in Arasamalai panchayat.

A.L. Raju, district deputy secretary of CPI, referred to a series of agitations, including 'padayatra' by the party, demanding action on this menace.

The meeting, through a resolution, pleaded for supply of quality rice at Rs. 20 a kg through fair prices shops in this taluk.

T. Sengodan, district secretary, spoke.

Farmers' grievances meeting

The district administration will conduct the monthly farmers' grievances day meeting at the collectorate hall here at 10.30 a.m. on June 27. An official press release urged the farmers and their representatives to participate in the meeting and get their grievances solved.

Farm-fresh outlets to sell vegetables at less than market rates

Chief Minister launches outlets through video-conferencing from Secretariat

Providing some relief to harried homemakers, the government on Thursday launched farm-fresh consumer outlets that will sell vegetables at lower-than-market rates.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa launched the outlets through video-conferencing from the Secretariat here. These outlets are located in the city and the suburbs and will sell 31 varieties of vegetable starting from Rs. 1.50 for a piece of lemon to Rs.140 for a kg of ginger.

Vegetables such as tomato, onion, potato and beans have become very costly, following a fall in production and arrivals from neighbouring States.

An official release said vegetables would be purchased directly from farmers and cooperative society purchase centres and brought to Chennai. As farmers are paid for the procured vegetables on a daily basis through the respective cooperative societies, the system eliminates middlemen.

The vegetables procured from various markets will be preserved in a cold storage facility at Kamadhenu Cooperative Supermarket at Teynampet here before being sent to consumer outlets.

“We have been buying ginger in smaller quantities as it is priced at Rs.175 a kg in the open market. We stopped buying costly vegetables, fearing that it may eat into our monthly budget. But, today, I was able to buy a sizeable quantity of vegetables for Rs.100 at this outlet,” said K. Kamala of Triplicane.

While households have been postponing their purchases, caterers are left with little choice as cutting down on vegetables would affect their business severely. “We have to buy all types of vegetables, irrespective of the daily market price or we may lose our customers,” said the manager of a fast food outlet in Vadapalani.

The spiralling prices have affected the vegetable vendors’ margin.

“Nowadays, people are buying less to offset the impact of prices. We hope the prices will come down soon after arrivals go up,” said a vendor at the Koyambedu market.

Farmers’ organisations pay tributes

Various farmers' organisations on Wednesday paid floral tributes to three farmers who died in police firing at Perumanallur in 1970. Sources said the farmers died after the police opened fire while they staged an agitation to protest the increase in power tariff. Organic farming spreads its root in State, albeit slowly

Substantial increase of acreage under organic cultivation in some districts



Kasaragod district, where pesticide endosulfan has caused major health problems, has 3,482 hectares (involving more than 6,000 farmers) under organic cultivation.

Amid allegations that a project conceived in 2010 to phase out agriculture driven by synthetic fertilizers and pesticides by 2025 has fallen by the wayside, acreage under organic agriculture is showing promise as more and more farmers are taking up the cause of getting rid of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

Numbers from some of the districts show that there is substantial acreage under organic cultivation (both certified and uncertified).

A senior official of the department of agriculture said Kasaragod district, where pesticide endosulfan has caused major health problems, has 3,482 hectares (involving more than 6,000 farmers) under organic cultivation.

Fifty-two farm clusters and 30 demonstration plots have been established to help farmers understand organic farming.

However, the achievement of Kasaragod appears to be at the cost of other districts in the state, alleges R. Sreedhar of Thanal, a Thiruvananthapuram-based voluntary agency involved in promoting organic agriculture and in training farmers.

There was nothing wrong in focussing on the problems of Kasaragod. But the organic farming thrust should be aimed at the entire

State, he says as he felt that the funds for other districts are now being directed to the Kasaragod programme.

An official at the department of agriculture says the government has allotted Rs. 10 crore for the organic agriculture drive in the district and provided another five crore for setting up eco shops in six blocks of the Kasaragod district.

The other programmes in the district include certification of farms as organic through the Internal Control System, where farmers inspect each others' farms to ensure that the good agricultural practices are followed.

Mr. Sreedhar says that the push to give Kerala agriculture a new direction through the 2010 Kerala Organic Farming Policy appeared to have been

forgotten. The only step that has been taken is the ban on 20 pesticides, which came in 2010, as part of the organic agricultural policy. There has been no follow-up action.

Regardless of government intervention, Wayanad district has seen considerable progress in bringing agriculture under organic practices. Around 5,000 hectares have come under organic agriculture, most of it uncertified, in the district, involving around 10,000 farmers.

An official of the department of agriculture says that Wayanad had 7,569 farmers and 990 hectares certified as organic. In two to three years another 5,338 hectares will be certified.

Wayanad farmers' march into the big league of organic cultivation has been helped by voluntary agencies like Wayanad Social Service Society. John Choorapuzhayil, director of the agency run by the Catholic Church, says the society has been involved in organic cultivation and export of produces since 1999.

He says that the number of farmers, who have registered for organic cultivation with the society, has gone up to 10,000 now, nearly 7,000 of them over the last two to three years. This has been because the society has been engaged in buying organic produces like coffee, ginger and turmeric at a premium.

Minister warns of action against inefficient officials

Agriculture Department told to ensure that there is no scarcity of seeds

Sharanprakash Patil, district in charge Minister, has warned officials of action if they are found to be corrupt or inefficient.

The Minister said at the Karnataka Development Programme review meeting here on Thursday that he would not tolerate indiscipline and negligence. He directed P.C. Jaffer, Deputy Commissioner, and Ujjwal Kumar Ghosh, Chief Executive Officer of Bidar Zilla Panchayat, to initiate disciplinary proceedings against corrupt and inefficient officials and promised that he would not interfere in the matter.

He instructed Agriculture Department officials to ensure that there was no scarcity of seeds. "It seems there is a huge demand for soya seeds. The demand may go up if the monsoon is delayed. The department should anticipate it and make preparations. I don't want to see long queues before seed distribution centres in villages," Mr. Patil said.

"You should see that seeds are stored in the taluk or hobli levels and not just at the district level," he told G.T. Putra, Joint Director of Agriculture. The Minister directed the Deputy Commissioner to seek reports from banks on whether they had met their annual crop loan targets.

Mr. Patil directed officials to send a report on the progress of drinking water projects and seek additional funds from the government if necessary.

"Don't be bogged down by procedural delays in such projects," he said.

Mr. Patil directed Gulbarga Electricity Supply Company (Gescom) officials to ensure that drinking water projects get power supply on priority. The Minister instructed officials to replace faulty transformers connected to drinking water schemes in a day and ensure that each taluk had a buffer stock of transformers.

Ishwar Khandre, MLA, complained that Gescom officials were not sensitive to the problems of farmers and did not report faults to their seniors.

Gurupadappa Nagamarapalli, MLA, complained that the transformer repair centres were underperforming. Mallikarjun Khuba, MLA, said that transfers were burning out sooner than expected as farmers overburdened them by drawing more power than their capacity. Ashok Kheny, MLA, complained that Gescom officials sought bribes for repairing transformers

Organic certificate for farms

Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council (VFPC) will soon launch a programme to obtain certificates of organic farming for small and marginal farmers in the State through Participatory Guarantee System, which relies on farmers inspecting each others' farms and is based on trust and community network.

“A total of 515 farmers under 109 groups have been readied in all the 14 districts of the State for the launch of the programme,” said an official of the agency mandated to augment vegetable and fruit production.

Under the scheme, it will be the farms that will get the organic certification from a recognised agency. The conventional method is to get organic

certification for a single produce at a time, making the process cumbersome. The VFPCK official said that once a farm received the organic certification it implied that all produces from the farm, including poultry and dairy products and fish, would be recognised as organically produced. The Regional Centre for Organic Farming, Bangalore, will be involved in the certification process.

Farmer stirs up halwa to boost jackfruit's reputation



Going places: Agricultural journalist Shree Padre says he distributed Venkatakrishna Sharma's halwa in Vidarbha during a tour and people liked it.— PHOTO: SHREE PADRE

A jackfruit grower of Muliya near Vitla, who has been making jackfruit halwa for the past three years, says the dish is a good value addition to one of the most neglected fruits.

The maker, Venkatakrishna Sharma, sold a sample of two kilograms of halwa commercially for the first time this year to a sweet stall at Vitla. It fetched him Rs. 250 per kg.

Mr. Sharma, who is also the president of Varanashi Jackfruit Growers' Association, Adyanadkka, told *The Hindu* that that making the halwa is simple. All it requires is jackfruit bulbs, sugar and ghee. If marketed commercially, jackfruit halwa can overtake the popular wheat halwa in market as it is not hard like the latter. It is the cheapest value addition to the fruit which is wasted by scorers of farmers, he said.

How to make it

He said that making a kilogram of jackfruit halwa requires a kilogram of jackfruit bulbs, 400 grams of sugar and 75 grams of ghee. First put the clean bulbs to a mixer grinder and make its paste. Later bake the paste by mixing ghee for about half an hour, add sugar and continue to bake it for another half an hour. One can notice that ghee separates from the jackfruit solid. The solid is nothing but halwa.

Mr. Sharma said that there is no need to add cardamom or any other spices to add fragrance to the halwa. No need to mix cashewnut pieces. "That is why I said it is the cheapest method of making halwa," he said. He said that the halwa can be preserved in the open up to a month and in refrigerator up to six months or more.

Vani of the sweet stall at Vitla said her customers liked it. Those who liked it are not the local people as they said they had jackfruit at their homes. The non-growers liked it. It can be marketed well in larger cities like Mangalore, she said.

Mr. Sharma said that another method of value addition to jackfruit bulbs is preserving the bulbs in honey and then eating it in unseasonal times. He said that he has preserved it in honey up to eight months. Probably it can be preserved for longer period, he said adding that his stocks got over by then.

Contact

He can be contacted at 08255-205502 between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. Shree Padre, Executive Editor, Adike Pathrike, a farm monthly, said that he had taken samples of jackfruit halwa made by Mr. Sharma to some places in Vidarbha, Maharashtra sometime ago during a tour. Many people liked it. "It was a big hit there," he said.

Come July 7, jackfruit growers and jackfruit entrepreneurs will meet at Adyanadkka near Vitla for 'halasina habba' (Festival of Jackfruits). The venue is Janata Junior College. As it is Sunday, the organisers are expecting a good crowd of participants and customers. Both the growers and jackfruit entrepreneurs will share their cultivating and marketing experiences and scope for the crop. Scientists from agriculture varsities and institutes will speak. There will be a talk by journalist Shree Padre. There will be an exhibition and cooking competition in making different cuisines of jackfruit. For details, call 08255-270254 or 9448470254.

Milk supply may dry up over fodder scarcity

Perambalur farmers purchasing straw from Nagapattinam

Facing serious shortage of fodder for cattle because of drought, dairy farmers of the parched district of Perambalur have started purchasing paddy straw even from districts such as Nagapattinam.

Each bundle weighing around 20 kg and is sold in the range of Rs. 160 to Rs. 200. This has been going on for the past two months.

For this district, which has hardly any industry worth the name, dairying is one of the most important avocations.

Perambalur district has 172 milk producers' cooperative societies with about 24,000 members. About 1.4 litres of milk is procured daily of which more than one lakh litres is transported to the Tamil Nadu Milk Producers' Co-operative Federation in Chennai. Realising the importance of this industry for the district, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa sanctioned 11 chilling centres costing about Rs. 4 crore last year.

The district received only 608 mm rainfall during 2012 as against the normal 908 mm. During the current year, there has been any rain and the total rainfall up to May this year was only around 40 mm.

District collector Darez Ahamed has declared almost 90 per cent of the lands in the district drought-hit.

R. Rajachidambaram, State general secretary of the Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangam, laments that the dairy farmers were left with no other option but to buy fodder from outside. "There was a time when we used to ignore maize (sola thattai). But now the same is selling like hot cakes," he says.

R. Venkatesan, a dairy farmer of Eriyasamudram with 35 years of experience and who has 25 milch animals, says it is only those farmers who had wells with good yield would be able to survive.

"Such a situation is unprecedented and that is why many of us have started buying fodder from various sources," he adds.

He finds fault with the governments at the Centre and in the State, for offering freebies and thus making the farm labourers lazy.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has made these workers sluggish. "Thus we do not get any labour at all to work in the farms, even if some of us have water in our wells," he alleges.

Although Mr. Rajachidambaram admits that the State government has come out with a number of schemes for improving fodder availability, he wonders how they were going to be effective if there was no water at all.

He is certain that the farmers would have accepted governmental schemes if there is subsidy element. But they are reluctant because of inadequate rainfall. Everything depends upon the monsoon, he adds.

Mr. Venkatesan says shortage of fodder will automatically hit milk production and “time is not far off when milk would have to be sold even for Rs. 50 a litre,” he says

Irregularities in relief disbursal alleged

A number of farmers have alleged irregularities in the disbursal of relief for crop loss owing to monsoon failure last year.

At the grievance redressal meeting presided over by Collector Ashish Kumar here on Thursday, farmers from Deivaseyalpuram and Vallanad expressed their concern over crop loss assessments made by officials. The Collector assured them that a team of experts from the Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam, and the Meteorology Department would visit their villages and determine the crop loss. The team would study the ground realities and submit a report, Mr. Kumar said.

Of the relief package sanctioned for farmers in Tuticorin district, Rs. 91 crore had been credited to the agriculture cooperative societies, of which Rs. 52 crore had been disbursed. Responding to allegations of farmers that the Village Administrative Officers (VAO) were stalling the disbursal of relief, Mr. Kumar said action had been initiated against erring officials. A VAO of Kovilpatti taluk was placed under suspension last week following an enquiry that revealed irregularities. Mr. Kumar said the guilty would not be spared.

The Collector assured the farmers that water from Papanasam dam would be released. Krishnamurthy of Ettayapuram sought the disbursal of crop

insurance benefits to farmers for the period 2011-12. Rajendra Boopathy of Athimarapatti demanded that the defunct veterinary hospital in his village be put to use. K.P. Perumal of Tuticorin said price tags of fertilizer bags were not properly displayed in stores.

Drip irrigation subsidy of Rs. 29,635 was given to M. Kamaraj of Athimarapatti.

Dairying becoming popular among farmers, says VC

'Dairy farming is being chosen as it is more remunerative'

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Horticultural Sciences (UHS), Bagalkot, S.B. Dandin has said that dairy farming and kitchen gardening were gaining importance among farmers as they provided additional income.

Speaking after inaugurating a State-level workshop on dairy farming and maintenance of kitchen garden, organised jointly by the Karnataka Farmers' Resource Centre (KFRC) and the university here on Thursday, he said many farmers were taking to dairy farming as it was more remunerative.

Mr. Dandin said many farmers, mainly women, were showing interest in dairy farming and kitchen gardening as it was easy and cost-effective.

"If people have little space on the roof of their houses or in their backyards, they could set up a small kitchen garden that provides fresh vegetables and fruit, and also adds to their income. Similarly, women from rural areas could start dairy farming to support their family," he added.

B.R. Hiremath, executive director of KFRC, provided information about facilities that banks provided for dairy farming and non-agricultural activities.

He urged farmers to make use of this facility. Farmers from 13 districts of the State participated. They were given information on government schemes, banking facilities and were taken on field visits. The KFRC supplied sample seed packets of vegetables too. A handbook on improvised methods of farming was released.

CPI(M) to conduct 4-day All-India Farmers' Conference at Cuddalore

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) will be conducting a four day All-India Farmers' Conference at Cuddalore from July 24, according to T.K. Rangarajan, MP and Central Committee Member of CPI (M).

Talking to reporters here on Thursday, Mr. Rangarajan said that the conference was being held in the background of the increasing migration of small and marginal farmers from rural to urban areas after selling off their land under the impact of liberalisation.

With agriculture continuing to be affected in the Cauvery delta areas, opening of the Krishna Raja Sagar dam would be greatly beneficial to farmers.

With the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance in power at the Centre, the Karnataka government and the Congress, which is in power in that State, should be made to understand that the welfare of Tamil Nadu is intertwined with the welfare of the country, he said.

The number of educated unemployed youth is on the rise and the Centre does not appear to be bothered about this, Mr. Rangarajan said. The farmers' conference is being organised with the objective of finding a solution to such problems.

Prakash Karat, CPI (M) general secretary, would be participating in the valedictory of the golden jubilee celebrations of '*Theekkadir*,' the party's official organ, to be held in Madurai on June 29, Mr. Rangarajan added.

On the talks of forming a third front to face the Lok Sabha elections next year, Mr. Rangarajan said that the so-called third front had not yet taken shape.

Mere telephonic talks between Trinamool Congress leader and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Janata Dal (United) leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar would not lead to the formation of a third front, he added.

Collector asks bankers to disburse crop loans to tenant farmers

Joint Collector H. Arun Kumar instructed the bankers to ensure that all the eligible tenant farmers were given crop loans during this kharif season.

He said that the administration had issued identity cards to 8,743 eligible tenant farmers for the sanction of crop loans and submitted the list to all the banks. However, the banks have disbursed loans of Rs. 52.40 lakh to only 125 tenant farmers.

'Achieve the target'

At a meeting with the bankers held here on Thursday, the Joint Collector said that the administration had set a target of distributing Rs. 1,329.30 crore as crop loans during the kharif season.

So far, the banks have distributed Rs. 179.45 crore, he said and asked the bankers to achieve the target at the earliest. He said that the State government had released Rs. 15.5 crore as input subsidy to the farmers who lost their crops during Neelam cyclone in the district and added that additional Rs. 19 crore would be released very soon.

Joint Director (Agriculture) Prasad, Lead district manager D.A. Chowdhary, Andhra Bank DGM Lalitha Prasad, SBH AGMs Jaipal Reddy and K.V. Rao, Nabard AGM Uma Maheshwara Rao, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) manager Pulla Rao and others were also present in the meeting.

'The additional Rs. 19 crore input subsidy for farmers who lost their crops during Neelam cyclone will be released soon'

Schedule for three-phase power supply

Consequent to the State government's announcement that three-phase power supply will be provided for 12 hours for agricultural connections to help farmers take up kuruvai cultivation using borewells in the delta, the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) has notified the schedule of the supply hours.

The delta area in the district has been split into two groups according to distribution lines. Three-phase supply will be provided from midnight to noon in the following areas in Group I: Srirangam division – Tollgate, Lalgudi, Manthurai, Valadi, Nochiyam, Kiliyanallur, Amoor, Athani and surrounding areas; Lalgudi Division – Poovalur, Anbil, Kattur, Sirumayankudi, Mettupatti, Natarajapuram, Konnaikudi, Sangamarapuram, Nannimangalam, Abishekapuram, Idaiyattrumangalam, Kookur and Saathamangalam; Musiri Division – Thottiyam, M.Pudur, Arasalur, Natham, Kaduvetti, Kavaraipatti, Michaelnayakanpatti, M.Kalathur, Valvelpudur, Unniyur, Kattupudur, Sriramasamudiram, Pallipalayam, Avoor, Gunaseelam, Ayyampalayam, Vathalai, Neiveli, Mettupatti, Thumbalam, Vellalapatti and surrounding areas.

The following villages in Group II will get the supply from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. and from noon to 6 p.m.: Srirangam division – Ayakudi, Marudur, Devimangalam, Akkaraipatti, Idaiyapatti, Rajampalayam, Sathamangalam, Keezhavangaram, Melavangaram, Sirugambur, No.1 Kariyamanickam, Cholanganallur and surrounding areas; Lalgudi Division – Pudur Uthamanur, Poovalur, Akalanganallur, Vellanur, Peruvalathur, Sangenthi, Irudhayapuram, Pullampadi, Kallakudi, Thirumanur, Alambakkam, Thinnakulam, Pazhanganatham, Muduvathur, Ariyur, Venkatachalapuram, Sengaraiyur, Alangudi Mahajanam, Natham and surrounding areas; Musiri Division – Kamatchipatti, Antharapatti, Ayyathanpatti, Rasipuram, Pudupatti, Thandalaipudur, Manamedu, Srinivasanallur, Mullipadi, Sithambur, Kodunthur, Manapalayam, Thinnakonam, Thalaimalaipatti,

Thaelurpatti, Kamalapuram, Idaiyapatti, Nagainallur, Pidaramangalam, Murungai, Thevarmalai, Kudakudi, Ammankudi and Arangur.

The schedule of power supply had come into effect from June 15 and would be in force till September. The schedule would be rotated every Monday, said R.Thangavel, Superintending Engineer, Tangedco, Tiruchi, in a press release issued here on Thursday.

Further details can be had from the Executive Engineers of the respective divisions at the following numbers: 9445853515 (Srirangam), 9445853556 (Lalgudi), and 9445853594 (Musiri)

Organic farming spreads its root in State, albeit slowly

Substantial increase of acreage under organic cultivation in some districts

Amid allegations that a project conceived in 2010 to phase out agriculture driven by synthetic fertilizers and pesticides by 2025 has fallen by the wayside, acreage under organic agriculture is showing promise as more and more farmers are taking up the cause of getting rid of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

Numbers from some of the districts show that there is substantial acreage under organic cultivation (both certified and uncertified).

A senior official of the department of agriculture said Kasaragod district, where pesticide endosulfan has caused major health problems, has 3,482 hectares (involving more than 6,000 farmers) under organic cultivation.

Fifty-two farm clusters and 30 demonstration plots have been established to help farmers understand organic farming.

However, the achievement of Kasaragod appears to be at the cost of other districts in the state, alleges R. Sreedhar of Thanal, a Thiruvananthapuram-based voluntary agency involved in promoting organic agriculture and in training farmers.

There was nothing wrong in focussing on the problems of Kasaragod. But the organic farming thrust should be aimed at the entire

State, he says as he felt that the funds for other districts are now being directed to the Kasaragod programme.

An official at the department of agriculture says the government has allotted Rs. 10 crore for the organic agriculture drive in the district and provided another five crore for setting up eco shops in six blocks of the Kasaragod district.

The other programmes in the district include certification of farms as organic through the Internal Control System, where farmers inspect each others' farms to ensure that the good agricultural practices are followed.

Mr. Sreedhar says that the push to give Kerala agriculture a new direction through the 2010 Kerala Organic Farming Policy appeared to have been forgotten. The only step that has been taken is the ban on 20 pesticides, which came in 2010, as part of the organic agricultural policy. There has been no follow-up action.

Regardless of government intervention, Wayanad district has seen considerable progress in bringing agriculture under organic practices. Around 5,000 hectares have come under organic agriculture, most of it uncertified, in the district, involving around 10,000 farmers.

An official of the department of agriculture says that Wayanad had 7,569 farmers and 990 hectares certified as organic. In two to three years another 5,338 hectares will be certified.

Wayanad farmers' march into the big league of organic cultivation has been helped by voluntary agencies like Wayanad Social Service Society. John Choorapuzhayil, director of the agency run by the Catholic Church, says the society has been involved in organic cultivation and export of produces since 1999.

He says that the number of farmers, who have registered for organic cultivation with the society, has gone up to 10,000 now, nearly 7,000 of them over the last two to three years. This has been because the society has been engaged in buying organic produces like coffee, ginger and turmeric at a premium.

Madurai's Pulikulam cattle get support from Rome

arry out a series of programmes such as documentation, workshops, training sessions, treatment for Pulikulam cattle and explore value-added products from the cow dung,” said P.Vivekanandan of SEVA.

Some of the key issues to be addressed are protecting biodiversity, livestock keeping, forest rights and ecology.

B.K.Joshi, Director, National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources, Karnal, Haryana, said the FAO support would help conserve the Pulikulam breed.

“Like Pulikulam cattle, there are many other animal breeds which are vanishing for want of support,” he said.

Three other local breeds in the country have also received FAO funding for conservation.

They are Kharai camel in Kutch (Gujarat), Boti sheep in Sadri (Rajasthan) and Attapadi black goat in Kerala.

Dairying becoming popular among farmers, says VC

'Dairy farming is being chosen as it is more remunerative'

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Horticultural Sciences (UHS), Bagalkot, S.B. Dandin has said that dairy farming and kitchen gardening were gaining importance among farmers as they provided additional income.

Speaking after inaugurating a State-level workshop on dairy farming and maintenance of kitchen garden, organised jointly by the Karnataka Farmers' Resource Centre (KFRC) and the university here on Thursday, he said many farmers were taking to dairy farming as it was more remunerative.

Mr. Dandin said many farmers, mainly women, were showing interest in dairy farming and kitchen gardening as it was easy and cost-effective.

"If people have little space on the roof of their houses or in their backyards, they could set up a small kitchen garden that provides fresh vegetables and fruit, and also adds to their income. Similarly, women from rural areas could start dairy farming to support their family," he added.

B.R. Hiremath, executive director of KFRC, provided information about facilities that banks provided for dairy farming and non-agricultural activities.

He urged farmers to make use of this facility. Farmers from 13 districts of the State participated. They were given information on government schemes, banking facilities and were taken on field visits. The KFRC

supplied sample seed packets of vegetables too. A handbook on improvised methods of farming was released.

Rs.53-crore crop loss in floods

The State has suffered a crop loss of Rs.53 crore in heavy rain and floods this year. Of this, Wayanad district alone accounts for Rs.20 crore. This is bound to increase as the floodwaters recede, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said here on Thursday.

Talking to the media after a special meeting of the Cabinet that discussed natural calamities, the Chief Minister said the Cabinet had decided to make an additional State contribution of Rs.50,000 to the solatium being paid to the dead with Central funds, if the dead person (he or she) was an earning member. Families of earning members will get Rs.2 lakh and others Rs.1.5 lakh, granted by the Centre.

The State had earlier increased the compensation for loss of houses to Rs.1 lakh. The definition of fully damaged houses for this purpose had been expanded to include houses rendered unsafe. A compensation of up to Rs.35,000 will be paid for partially damaged houses.

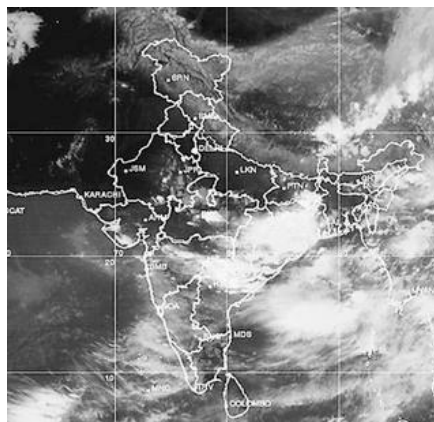
Mr. Chandy said the State would press the Centre again to include sea erosion and death by lightning in the list of calamities eligible for Central assistance. These are calamities over which people have little control. An additional allocation of rice has also been requested from Centre.

The Cabinet decided to grant free rations to fishermen and coir workers in coastal areas and tribes during monsoon. Two weeks' free rations will be provided to those displaced by floods. Besides rations, those in relief camps set up by the government will get food and medicines.

The government has set up 44 camps to where 2,432 families have been moved. As many as 374 villages in the State, including 71 coastal villages, have been affected by heavy rain and floods. Collectors have been authorised to take all relief measures. The Chief Minister, Revenue Minister Adoor Prakash, and Chief Secretary E.K. Bharat Bhushan will hold videoconferences with the Collectors on Friday to review relief measures.

He said that Kerala had received 66 per cent excess rainfall in all districts during this southwest monsoon so far, except in Pathanamthitta district which received only normal rainfall.

Weather



	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	36	27	0	154
New Delhi (Sfd)	35	25	5	114
Chandigarh	34	27	0	185
Hissar	38	25	0	101
Bhuntar	32	18	0	115
Shimla	24	15	0	166
Jammu	38	27	0	28
Srinagar	29	15	0	32
Amritsar	37	23	0	131
Patiala	35	27	0	117
Jaipur	38	27	0	85
Udaipur	35	25	0	84
Allahabad	30	26	9	75
Lucknow	32	23	0	164
Varanasi	29	25	6	53
Dehradun	31	23	0	635
Agartala	36	25	18	109
Ahmedabad	35	26	0	103
Bangalore	29	20	0	123
Bhubaneswar	37	21	73	178
Bhopal	33	24	0	144
Chennai	39	29	0	123
Guwahati	35	25	0	69
Hyderabad	33	25	0	153
Kolkata	33	26	8	152

Mumbai	31	26	4	816
Nagpur	36	27	0	171
Patna	32	26	0	42
Pune	30	22	35	262
Thiruvananthapuram	27	23	35	292
Imphal	34	23	2	31
Shillong	26	18	79	222

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 axis of Monsoon trough on SLC passes through Ferozepur, Rohtak, Lucknow, Patna and thence east wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at a few places over east Uttar Pradesh and at isolated places over Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: HARYANA:

Naraingarh 1, EAST RAJASTHAN: Kota 1, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: (2 cm and above) Salempur 6, Basti 5, Mukhlispur 4, Ayoadhya 3 and Phoolpur, Sultanpur and Gorakhpur 2 each and UTTARAKHAND: Almora, Tharali and Nanital 1 each,

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 22nd June

2013: Rain/thundershowers could occur at one ore two places over Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and east Rajasthan. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

After food, Jaya looks to serve up cheap veggies

Close on the heels of the successful 'Amma' canteens that serve idli at 1 and curd rice at 3 a plate, the AIADMK government on Thursday launched another populist scheme, this time aimed at insulating the common man from the impact of rising prices of vegetables. Chief minister J Jayalalithaa declared open 29 stationary and two mobile 'Farm Fresh Consumer Outlets' to sell vegetables across the city.

Going by the rates displayed, prices at the government-controlled cooperative outlets were cheaper by 25-60% when compared to private retail chains. For example, beans were priced 110 a kg at a popular retail chain, but were available for 50 a kg at the Triplicane Urban Cooperative Society outlet in Teynampet.

Unlike the budget canteens, where the government is subsidizing food items, no subsidy is being given to the vegetable outlets. The government's horticultural department is only assisting them in sourcing vegetables from hubs like Palani, Tindivanam and Krishnagiri and is ensuring they are sold at low margins.

A vegetable vendor at Koyambedu, the city's wholesale market, said, "The rates of carrot and beans at the government outlets are cheaper than even in Koyambedu."

The state had, in the past too, tried to weed out middlemen from the vegetable trade. The 'Uzhavar Sandhais' or farmers' markets, opened by the DMK government in the late 1990s were a hit initially, but ran out of steam as administration slackened.

New ventures that build technology-based solutions to boost agriculture

In turning his back on a coveted consulting job to launch a startup that brings technology to India's farm sector, Shashank Kumar was choosing the road less travelled.

But the 27-year-old graduate of Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, was convinced that bigger rewards lie in harnessing the potential in the country's agriculture sector. Two years ago, he set up Farms and Farmers, a company which develops processes and technologies to help farmers evaluate soil quality and climatic conditions as well as choose crops and marketing for the produce.

"I travelled the world in search of what I needed and returned home to find it," said Kumar, who worked at Beacon Advisory Services in Gurgaon. He teamed up with Manish Kumar, an IIT Kharagpur alumnus, to launch the new venture in his home state of Bihar. Pooling insavings of Rs 4 lakh to begin operations in Vaishali district, they now work with thousands of small farmers across nine districts.

GROWING TRIBE

A number of professionals like Kumar are turning to careers in agriculture,

enticed by growing consumer demand and a shortage of quality produce. India is one of the world's major food producers but accounts for less than 1.5% of international food trade.

This has thrown up huge opportunities for entrepreneurs in areas such as food security and distribution, according to N Viswanadham, a professor at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore who collaborates closely with the food industry.

"There is a 30% loss from farm to fork," he said. While first-time entrepreneurs like Kumar, with no background in agriculture, are drawn by the opportunity, those already in the sector are also innovating.

FUNDS FLOW

Mark Kahn, cofounder of Omnivore Partners—an early stage fund that backs agriculture companies—believes the sector is attracting three kinds of entrepreneurs. "Some have worked at big agricultural firms while some are young technologists; there are also existing players who are bringing in new innovations."

Omnivore has invested in a number of such ventures, including FrontalRain Technologies, founded by three software engineers, and Khedut Agro Engineering, a 15-year-old company that recently launched automated agricultural equipment. More investors are now flocking to the sector.

Last year, the amount of venture capital and private equity capital invested in agricultural ventures tripled to Rs 2,000 crore, according to research firm Venture Intelligence.

Seeking viability, UP sugar industry roots for new sugarcane varieties

Sugar industry in UP has suggested introduction of new varieties of sugarcane to make its business more sustainable and also economically viable.

Sugar sector alone accounts for the largest organized agro-based industry in UP providing employment to million of farmers and their families. Other related industries like molasses, bagasse, power (cogeneration), etc which are supported by sugarcane account for an annualeconomy worth Rs 30,000 crore.

In spite of large opportunities, state's sugar industry is bearing the cost-burden of cane arrears which is above Rs 5000 crore for the year 2012-13 crushing season due to higher cane prices and low market prices of retailed sugar.

UP is the country's largest and second-largest sugarcane and sugar-producing state, respectively. During last financial year, the cane acreage and production were estimated at 24.24 lakh hectares and 1,430 lakh tonnes, respectively, in the state.

Sugar Technologists' Association of India (STAI) said that the sugar recovery percentage is very low in UP compared to Maharashtra and Karnataka, which affects the overall profitability of mills. He added that the current cane variety in western UP was introduced more than 20 years

back and over time the recovery percentage had dipped due to many reasons, including diseases and pests.

In the recent crushing season, the farmers had supplied sugarcane worth Rs 22,444 crore to mills vis-a-vis Rs 18,200 crore during 2011-12.

"The problem is that while the sugarcane price is fixed in UP, the sugar retail prices vary from market to market. Unless, the sugar recovery percentage improves in the state, the industry would continue to suffer the differences of markets", said STAI.

The association has also launched one year Executive Development Programme (EDP) in 'Sugar and Allied Industry Management'. The EDP would be run by academicians, consultants and industry professionals, wherein trainees would be exposed to in-plant working besides exposure to futures and international markets.

50% sowing completed in Mysore for kharif crop

Despite district being deficit in receiving the rain sowing of kharif crops in the district is in full swing with farmers completing sowing in almost 50% of the land targeted for kharif cultivation. Agriculture department had a target to bring 4 20 195 hectares of land under kharif cultivation this year and already farmers have completed sowing crops on 2 08 753 hectares. Of this 2 08 753 hectares 98 % of the land(205106 hectares) is under rain fed area and the remaining 3747 hectares is an irrigated land.

Of the 2.08 lakh hectares , the farmers have sown millets in 33365

hectares, pulses on 42 115 hectares and oil seeds on 7928 hectares of land. Even farmers have completed planting of sugarcane on 394 hectares. Taluk wise , Heggadadevankote tops the list with completion of sowing in 74 % (51158 hectares) of the land and this is followed by Periyapattan with farmers completing sowing in 64 %(33592 hectares) of the land earmarked for kharif cultivation.

Lowest area of sowing is in T Narsipur taluk where farmers have completed sowing in only 9% (3798 hectares) of the targeted area. According to joint director of agriculture the low percentage of sowing in T Narsipur is due to lack of rain. " T Narsipur and Nanjangud have failed to receive normal rain in these initial monsoon days" said joint director of agriculture Krishnaiah , remaining optimistic on achieving the kharif season target and district receiving good rain in the coming days. Krishnaiah said meanwhile farmers who are yet to take up sowing are readying their lands for sowing and full busy with harrowing and tilling activities.

District which has an average rain fall of 766.7 mm has received 225.3 mm rain against an average rain of 250.3 mm in this period of a year and this amounts to 90 % of the average rain. During the corresponding period last year the district recorded a rain of 140.3 mm against an average rain of 250.3 mm which was about 60 % of the average rainfall.

Even in receiving rain Heggadadevankote stands first in the district with it recording 326.7 mm rain against 271.5 mm average rainfall and Mysore taluk stand low in the list of seven taluks with only 151.8 mm rain fall

against an average of 248.7 mm rainfall. Krishnaiah said district has enough stock of chemical fertilizers and seeds needed for this kharif season.

National food security mission projects in state

The National Food Security Mission is set to be implemented in six districts of the state including Pune to increase rice production. The six districts - Nashik, Pune, Bhandara, Gondia, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli are selected for the mission, where cumulative investment coming from the union and state governments would be Rs 26 crore, said the state agriculture officials.

The mission will cover 13,500 hectare in the state. The farmers will get seed, fertilisers, pesticides, training about advanced agriculture practice and tips to enhance the productivity, as part of the mission. The government has announced 100% subsidy for all the inputs, the officials said.

The farmers will get Rs 7,500 per hectare in the form of subsidy. The government has decided to distribute 576 quintal hybrid seeds and 10,000 quintal improved seeds for the rice enhancement project.

The officials said that the target to cover 13,500 hectare area in this mission would be achieved through 423 projects. There will be 99 such projects in Gondia district and Rs 6.11 crore will be invested in the mission. Bhandara district will get Rs six crore while Gadchiroli would get Rs 5.17 crore in the form of subsidy.

There will be 34 projects in Pune district where Rs 2.19 crore will be spent, said the officials.

Govt research body sees record wheat of 96 mn tons in 2012-13

Ruling out any production fall in wheat as estimated by the USDA for 2012-13, a government research outfit DWR today said the country's overall output is expected to be at record 96 million tonnes as yield losses in Punjab and Haryana will be compensated by other states.

In its third advance estimate for 2012-13 crop year (July-June), the government has pegged wheat output at 93.62 million tonnes for 2012-13 crop year (July-June) and crop is being harvested from April onwards.

However, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) had recently said that India's wheat output is projected to decline to 87 million tonnes in 2012-13 due to yield losses in Punjab and Haryana due to untimely rains.

Asked about the USDA's forecast, Karnal-based Directorate of Wheat Research (DWR) Project Director Indu Sharma said: "The latest field trial experiments shows that the overall production of wheat could be slightly higher than last year at around 96 million tonnes."

India's wheat production stood at 94.88 million tonnes in 2011-12 crop year.

"Earlier, we anticipated some loss in Punjab and Haryana. But the field trial

experiments shows that yield loss in these two states are not significant," she said.

Also, the yield losses in these two states will be compensated by Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, parts of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, she added.

The change in production figures will be reflected in the government's final crop estimate that is due for release by the Agriculture Ministry.

Sharma was here for the launch of a software called 'nutrient expert decision support tools for maize and wheat'.

The software, developed jointly by International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), will suggest farmers on use of fertilisers especially to wheat and maize crops.

A mango tree could cost lakhs

Three weeks ago, a giant mango tree on the premises of Murukkumpuzha Kozhimada temple in the district was auctioned for Rs 30,000. The tree was uprooted in heavy rain after that and its cost now seems to run into lakhs.

It had fallen on railway tracks on June 9 around 3 am, leading to disruption of train services for hours. The railway, which had sent numerous notices to the Travancore Devaswom Board to cut the tree for the past three years,

has registered a case (crime number 1680/13) against the board under section 154 of the Railway Act for endangering the safety of passengers by negligent act or omission.

"The overhead power cable in around 600 metres of the stretch was destroyed. Railway had to deploy over 50 employees from Kayamkulam, Kollam and Kazhakoottam units to repair it. The engineering department has calculated a loss of Rs 7 lakh," a senior railway engineer said.

Sources from the commercial department said they were estimating the losses. "The services of 12 express trains were seriously affected; many trains had to be regulated, terminated or run on other tracks. It is estimated that there were around 400 job aspirants traveling in various trains to appear for a staff selection commission examination in Thiruvananthapuram on the day and many of them have now approached us for compensation. The commercial loss will be anywhere between Rs 10 and Rs 15 lakh," a senior officer said.

Railway divisional manager Rajesh Agrawal said they would definitely take action against the guilty. "There is a severe laxity in honouring our rules from the part of public. Had the tree fallen on a moving train, it would have been a major disaster. Our directives are aimed at the benefit of public. Instead, the railway has been made a soft target," he said.

A senior divisional officer said local issues had prevented them from

cutting the tree. "Our PWD engineering wing had calculated the value of tree at Rs 27,000 and it was auctioned 10 days before it fell down for Rs 30,500. However, residents led by a politician blocked the procedures and complained to the devaswom commissioner that the tree could be auctioned for a higher price," he said, adding that a re-auction was scheduled on June 17.

Mahuva farmer stuns all with mangoes weighing 3 kg

With the thumping start of monsoon, mangoes have started gradually disappearing from the market. But towards the fag end of the season, a farmer of Mahuvataluka in Surat has come up with a mango as big as a watermelon. A tribal farmer Champak Patel is the proud owner of a mango tree which has produced 15 mangoes weighing more than 3kg.

The biggest mango is 3.7kg in weight, 12-inch-long and 7-inch-thick. It has become the centre of attraction for villagers in Mahuva taluka. Patel has surprised many in the region by developing the huge mango as the normal mangoes weigh just 250 gram to 300 gram.

Patel, a resident of Bilakhadi village, owns a farm of 40 mango trees. "I thought of carrying out an experiment in mango farming and planted kanariyo species on a tree of desi mango. It developed gradually and these are the first fruits on the tree," he said.

Just one mango is enough to satiate the hunger of his entire family. However, horticulture experts have advised not to develop trees with big fruit since they have no commercial value.

"It is indeed a huge fruit that can be used for personal consumption, but it has no value in the market. Growing such a huge mango is not common. However, there are a few south Indian varieties in which mangoes weigh up to 2kg," president of Gujarat Bagayat Vikas Parishad in Anand and former head of department of horticulture at Anand Agricultural University K P Kikani said.

"The commercial value of big fruits is not much. Out of a 10kg consignment if one fruit is rotten, it is a major loss for both the farmer and the trader," Kikani added.

"It is a unique thing and I went all the way to Bilkhadi to witness the mango. It is a huge fruit and I have never seen such a big mango," a resident of Mahuva Tushar Chaudhary said.

Land of milk and plenty

Milk is the what sustains farmers in the rain-fed hills of Namhol in Himachal Pradesh. An initiative of six or seven families taken in 2001, when they pooled 37 litres every day for supply to 15-odd consumers, has spread across 26 panchayats today.

Their milk producers' cooperative society, Kamdhenu Krishak Avam Upbhokta Hitkari Manch, collects 8,150 litres daily from 141 villages. More than 1,500 farmers are directly involved in milk production. Most of them own very little land, there is no irrigation, and monkeys would destroy whatever crop they tried to grow.

"Milk has become my family's bread and butter," says Sita Rani, whose two cows supply 10 litres a day for Kamdhenu Manch. "I earn Rs 8,000 to Rs 9,000 a month. Earlier, it was tough to sustain the family of five with our small, rain-fed land yielding nothing. Now I can even save a little after meeting our needs. Twelve or 13 families in my village followed my initiative to switch to milk."

Milk collection is done twice, in the morning and evening, almost house to house. Depending on quality, families are paid Rs 20.50 to Rs 29 a litre, the payments made on the seventh of the month. Some 5,000 consumers get 'Kamdhenu' milk at its outlets in towns like Bilaspur, Barmana, Ghumerwin, Sundernagar and Daralaghat, besides Shimla.

The cooperative has invested Rs 12 lakh in setting up a 1,000-litre milk cooling system and packing line, besides a milk testing lab and cold storage. "Surplus milk is used to make paneer and ghee," says Jeet Ram Kaundal, secretary of Kamdhenu Manch.

Historically, too, Namhol has been a milk producing area of Bilaspur, a mid-hills district where small holdings and lack of irrigation made agriculture unviable, unlike districts such as Shimla, Kullu and Solan that are known for apple and off-season vegetables. Recently, however, Namhol has seen some innovative farmers switching over to cash crops and vegetables in polyhouses.

Beet rather than cane

A sweet change is gradually entering the farms of Bathinda. Farmers are commercially testing a crop they have hitherto known as not-a-very-popular ingredient at their dinner table, the sugar beet.

It is being raised by about 40 farmers, particularly in Jodhpur Romana in Bathinda district, for supply to a factory in Tarn Taran that extracts sugar from the sugar beet and not sugarcane.

The farmers say transportation cost of sugar beet is less than that of sugarcane. They say sugarcane is more prone to disease. The returns they get from sugar beet, Rs 145 a quintal, is almost as much they would get for sugarcane. The latest FRP for sugarcane was Rs 170 a quintal. They can have possibly two beet crops a year and double their income, because

sugar beet is ready for harvest in six months as compared to the 10 months sugarcane would take.

The yield of sugar per quintal is also higher for sugar beet. Agriculture development officer Dr Baljit Singh said, "A quintal of sugar beet yields about 40 per cent sugar as compared to 15-17 per cent from sugarcane. Abroad, sugar beet is used for making sugar. In Punjab the first factory was set up only last year."

Harwinder Singh, a farmer in Jodhpur Romana, has set aside an acre for sugar beet. He has a tie-up with the Tarn taran factory. Darshan Singh of Rampura village and Gurmeet Singh of Maiserkhana too have started raising sugar beet on their farms.

Harwinder Singh said, "Sowing is done in mid-October or early November and harvesting is done in April-end, on the same pattern as wheat. The sugar mill gives us Rs 145 a quintal. If it works well, we will bring a larger area under sugar beet next season."

Dr Baljit Singh said, "In sandy areas of Bathinda, sugar beet farming succeeds because it needs less water. It is a good option to come out of the paddy-wheat cycle. All farmers have been given pick-up facilities by the mill, so they don't have to bother about transport. We got this farm diversification done on trial after supplying seeds, and are hopeful that in the coming year, the area under sugar beet will increase."

WEATHER

Today's Weather



Sunny

Friday, Jun 21

Max Min

36° | 29°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:43

Humidity: 52

Sunset: 06:37

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Saturday, Jun 22

Max Min

37° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Jun 23

Jun 24

Jun 25

Jun 26

Jun 27



37° | 27°

36° | 28°

36° | 28°

36° | 27°

36° | 27°

Cloudy

Overcast

Overcast

Overcast

Overcast

Airport Weather

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:23

Humidity: 47

Sunset: 07:21

Wind: normal

Barometer: 999

Cargill to dabble in olive oil, margarine

Cargill India is eyeing new categories such as margarine and olive oil to get better margins in its consumer business which currently stands at Rs 2,000 crore. Having re-launched its indigenous brand Nature Fresh, it has now extended it into olive oil with intentions of entering the margarine category as the next line extension.

Siraj A. Chaudhry, Chairman, Cargill India, said, “We have an advantage in olive oils as worldwide we have a joint venture with Hojiblanca, a co-operative of olive growers in Spain. Through this association we would also be in a position to bring down prices for our olive oil brand in India.”

In fact, Nature Fresh Olive oil is already at a 20 per cent discount (at Rs 199 for a litre) compared to existing olive oil brands, which vary in price points between Rs 225 and Rs 320 a litre.

V.N. Dalmia, President, Indian Olive Association said, “Being an international giant, Cargill will succeed in olive oil, but it has to build a separate organisation around it which should be separate from the rest of its commodity oils.”

Slipping margins

However, despite commodity prices going down, Cargill has not been in a position to drop prices due to the rupee depreciating against the dollar. Considering that the bulk of edible oils are imported, going forward it would

be difficult for most edible oil players including Cargill to keep a tight rein on prices.

As Chaudhry says, “Despite commodity prices coming down, we have not been able to reduce prices. An increase would depend on what our competitors are doing but if the Indian currency continues to depreciate we would be raising prices by less than 5 per cent.”

With margins shrinking in the edible oil category, Cargill is also eyeing new categories such as margarine, emulating the strategy of competitors like Ruchi Soya, which has also recently entered the category.

Margarine category

“Edible oil has always been a low margin business and not always leading to profitability. We are now looking at the margarine segment and this could be under our premium Sweekar brand of edible oil or even Nature Fresh,” said Chaudhry.

For Cargill, entering the margarine category would be a forward integration of its existing fats and vanaspati products, as these are the ingredients used to make margarine.

At the same time, Cargill is not letting go of its low margin staples business where it believes it has an edge due to its extensive distribution network. It has already re-entered the *atta* category under Nature Fresh and is now adding pulses to its portfolio.

“Nature Fresh has strong distribution in the north and east, reaching out to more than 2 lakh outlets. Atta can ride on the same edible oil distribution business and so we brought it back, having exited the category in the past. However, we are not getting back into categories such as salt and rice. Instead, pulses such as soya are likely to be the new categories,” added Chaudhry.

Cargill is already supplying staples to private labels of retail chains such as Big Bazaar and Easy Day. But it may take a while for Cargill to become a full-fledged national player in its existing categories such as edible oil, where building brands has never been easy.

“With regional brands dominating, our biggest challenge is to emerge as a national player and give the right price and value for our brands,” added Chaudhry.

Soaring prices



Restricted supply: Tomatoes are getting costlier as growing regions near Bangalore such as Srinivasapura and Chintamani have reported a decline

in supply due to fungal attack. Kolar APMC has been receiving only 50 truck loads a day compared to peak arrivals of around 200 truck loads. Due to short supply of tomatoes, prices are at a 16-year high. A 15-kg box costs Rs 450-550 and prices are likely to touch Rs 1,000 by month-end. —
G.R.N. Somashekar

Maize prices may ease from August on rise in global supply'

Maize prices in the country are likely to ease from August onwards as global supply increases, making exports unviable due to higher export prices.

The prices are also likely to be pressurised by expectations of higher kharif production on normal monsoon forecast by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), an expert said here on Thursday.

Despite bad monsoon, Indian crop output in the 2012-13 marketing year, ending August 2013, stood at 218.2 lakh tonnes (lt), according to the Agriculture Ministry's third advance estimate, against 217.6 lt a year earlier, said Raju Choksi, Vice-President (Agro-Commodities), Anil Nutrients Ltd.

"Global supply of maize is likely to rise following record crop in Argentina and Brazil, who compete with India for exports to Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. Exports from Argentina and Brazil has already started replacing Indian crop due to higher prices," he said.

With monsoon rains already covering entire country much ahead of schedule and forecast of normal monsoon, acreage and output in kharif

2013 is also expected to be higher, which would further put pressure on the prices going forward.

“By August, enough data would be available to know the progress of sowing of maize. If monsoon progresses as per current schedule, the output is likely to be higher by at least 5-7 per cent, which would impact the prices in subsequent months,” Choksi said.

Spot rubber rules flat

Spot rubber continued to remain unchanged on Thursday despite another weak closing on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

The domestic stock and commodity markets were trading in red but the local prices managed to sustain at the prevailing levels on supply concerns.

Sheet rubber closed steady at Rs 175.50 a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. Meanwhile, latex expanded the gains riding on weak supplies and sustained demand. The trend was partially mixed.

July futures weakened to Rs 172.45 (Rs 172.98), August to Rs 168.36 (Rs 169.40), September to Rs 165.50 (Rs 166.47), and October to Rs 162.62 (Rs 165.58) on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) inched up to Rs. 164.95 (Rs 164.87) at Bangkok. June futures dropped to ¥ 231 (Rs 141.25) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates RS/kg : RSS-4: 175.50 (175.50); RSS-5: 170.50 (170.50); Ungraded: 160.50 (160.50); ISNR 20: 162 (162) and Latex 60 per cent: 120 (119).

Monsoon rain turns pepper hot

Pepper turned hot on Thursday on good demand amid tight supply and on reports of firmer Vietnam market.

Incessant rains in Kerala's growing areas have led to a sharp fall in arrivals.

According to farmers, the current rains are favourable for the next crop. However, an idea about the next crop would emerge only after a month. But, they said, if the incessant downpour continued for long that would have a negative impact on the crop.

Domestic demand has picked up due to the change in weather conditions in north India, market sources said.

Tight supply coupled with domestic demand have aided sharp rise in pepper prices on the IPSTA platform and on the spot, they said.

All the active contracts July, August and September increased by Rs 500 a quintal each at Rs 36,935, Rs 36,873 and Rs 36,874 respectively.

Total open interest remained unchanged at 32 tonnes. Total turnover went up by 32 tonnes to 34 tonnes. Spot prices moved up by Rs 300 at Rs 34,900 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,400 (garbled) on strong demand.

Coirfed bags yarn export order from Dubai

Kerala's traditional hand made coir yarn is set to make inroads into the Gulf markets as a substitute to synthetic yarn used in dates farm sector.

The Kerala State Coir Cooperative Marketing Federation popularly known as Coirfed has bagged an export order for coir yarn to Dubai as part of its efforts to explore the Gulf markets.

It is for the first time that Coirfed is exporting yarn for agriculture purpose to protect dates from falling off the palm.

The first consignment worth Rs 10 lakh has been despatched to Dubai recently.

K.M. Muhammed Anil, Managing Director, Coirfed, told *Business Line* that the company is expecting another export order worth Rs 1.5 crore from Oman to be followed by Egypt and Libya.

In the event of these orders materialising, it would open immense export potential for Kerala's hand made coir yarn to the overseas markets.

It is after a decade's gap that Coirfed was exporting coir yarn since the last export order from Italy in 2000, he added.

Overseas market

The company obtained the present order following its participation in the Domotex Middle East held in Istanbul last year where a team of buyers

from West Asia had visited the Coirfed pavilion and held discussions with the Kerala Government officials.

Accordingly, an understanding was reached to export a special variety of coir yarn made in the Kozhikode region, he said.

Sales turnover

Coirfed, he said, had performed well in all spheres of business activity including in production, procurement, sales and in the last fiscal.

Its yarn procurement of around 70,000 quintals from various districts was the highest during the decade. Sale of coir yarn had also reached an all time high of Rs 30 crore while production of rubberised coir products rose by 30 per cent as compared to the previous year, he said.

K.M. Raju, Convener, Administrative Committee said that Coirfed had opened 68 new showrooms during the last fiscal, raising its total to 133 showrooms. The first overseas showroom was opened in UAE recently and the company is all set to open the second outlet in Oman to cater to Gulf markets, he said.

The sales turnover had touched Rs 50 crore in the last fiscal and the company has set a target of Rs 75 crore in 2013-14.

Coirfed is also seeking new avenues of diversification like use of coir pith as soil-less medium for precision farming, he added.

Monsoon relents over North, heavy rain belt moving East

Monsoon is now entering a lull phase with heavy rains getting confined to East India and along the West Coast.

Fresh rains may strike flood-ravaged Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh early next week, an India Met Department outlook said.

RAINS FOR EAST

A warning valid for next two days said that heavy rain may lash West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep.

Rain may lash many places over East India and spread to adjoining central India from during the same period, it added.

Predictions by US agencies suggested that two waves of rain emerging from Bay of Bengal would head north into the foothills of Himalayas and spare plains of North-West India during next two weeks.

After Uttarakhand, eastern foothills of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar could likely turn soft targets for heavy to very heavy precipitation.

The week beginning Thursday would see rains continue to batter parts of West Coast. Heavy rains are also forecast for Chhattisgarh and adjoining east Madhya Pradesh.

INTERIOR PENINSULA Some rains are forecast for rest of central India. West Maharashtra (except coast), Telengana, Rayalaseema, coastal Andhra Pradesh; Karnataka (except coast) and Tamil Nadu may be left out.

West Coast may get some respite during the following week from June 27 to July 3. Himalayan foothills in east Uttar Pradesh and Bihar along with Nepal uphill are likely to get battered. Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and adjoining Gangetic West Bengal could witness heavy rain.

North-East India would have to make do with indifferent rain. Uttarakhand and adjoining plains around Delhi too may get a couple of heavy spells.

DRY CONDITIONS

The Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services said that dry conditions are likely to expand over India during the week from June 26 to July 2.

It reiterated that the monsoon would begin to weaken from now and remain so until the first week of July up to which forecasts were available.

There is an increased risk of tropical cyclone formation in the North-West Pacific, which has implications for Indian monsoon.

Cyclones moving away in a north-northeast direction here (towards Chinese coast, Taiwan or Korea) may hasten monsoon flows over the Peninsula but rob monsoon of its share of moisture.

Volumes subdued due to cautious mood in edible oils

Weak domestic currency pushed up imported palmolein and soyabean refined oil by Rs 6 and Rs 10 each on Thursday. Cotton refined oil rose by

Rs 8. Sunflower expeller/refined oil increased by Rs 5-20 and rapeseed oil by Rs 3 for 10 kg.

Firm trend witnessed as local refineries have increased their rates for palmolein, soyabean and sunflower oils by Rs10-15 considering higher import cost after the rupee touched Rs 60 against the dollar.

Groundnut oil declined by Rs 5 tracking good progress of sowing and hopes of higher output. Volumes remained subdued due to cautious mood.

Exports of Malaysian palm oil products for June 1-20 climbed 16.2 per cent to 9,28,810 tonnes from 7,99,405 tonnes during the same period last month, cargo surveyor Intertek Testing Services said on Thursday.

Weak demand and rise in selling pressure continued to drag groundnut oil prices. About 200-250 tonnes of palmolein were resale traded at Rs 535-540. Soyabean arrivals were about one lakh bags including 50,000-55,000 bags from Madhya Pradesh at Rs 3,900-3,925 ex-mandi and Rs 4,000-4,025 for plant delivery.

At the end of the day, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 560, super palmolein Rs 595 and super deluxe Rs 615. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 560, soyabean refined oil Rs 690 for June-July and Rs 693 for August; sunflower refined oil at Rs 810. Gokul's rates for palmolein were Rs 545 for July 15.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil was steady at Rs 1,480 (Rs 1,480) for *telia* tin and Rs 950 (Rs 950) for loose 10 kg.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil July futures were higher by Rs 3.25 to Rs 704.25 (Rs 701.00), August was up by Rs 4.20 to Rs 698.80 (Rs 694.60) and September increased by Rs 6.15 to Rs 690.25 (Rs 684.10).

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil July contracts closed at MYR 2,459 (MYR 2,466), August ended at MYR 2,476 (MYR 2,481) and September closed at MYR 2,465 (MYR 2,472) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: Groundnut oil 975 (980); soya refined oil 685 (675); sunflower exp. ref. 740 (735); sunflower ref. 810 (790); rapeseed ref. oil 698 (695); rapeseed expeller ref. 668 (665); cottonseed ref. oil 675 (667) and palmolein 538 (532).

Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai, has quoted for Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 590 ex-Chennai for delivery in 15 days.

Strong local, foreign demand pulls up jeera price

Strong domestic and increasing overseas inquiries moved up jeera price on Thursday.

Though, higher-than-expected supplies and rains capped the gains.

According to market sources, jeera prices are rising because of export demand.

In the absence of supplies from Syria and Turkey, overseas buyers are coming to India.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera July contract increased by Rs 45 to Rs 13,365 a quintal with an open interest of 15,492 lots. NCDEX August jeera moved up by Rs 55 to Rs 13,672.50 with an open interest of 8,034 lots.

Jeera arrival was reported around 9,000-10,000 bags, while 13,000-14,000 bags (a bag of 55 kg) were traded in Unjha mandi of Gujarat.

Spot jeera gained by Rs 12-15 and the best quality was traded at Rs 2,340-2,440 for 20 kg while medium jeera stood at Rs 2,115-2,215.

Traders said buying support from retailers and exporters mainly pushed up the jeera prices.

Rise in domestic demand ahead of the festive season and improved export queries are supporting the prices, they said.

Mustard gains on weak arrivals, improved demand

Uptrend continued in mustard on weak arrivals and rise in demand from consumers, retailers and wholesalers.

On Thursday, mustard oil in Indore mandis rose to Rs 652 for 10 kg (Rs 650), while it gained Rs 3 in Neemuch at Rs 645 and Rs 5 up in Moorena

at Rs 650. Compared to last week, mustard oil was up Rs 6 in Indore, Rs 5 up in Neemuch, while it is ruling Rs 8 higher in Moorena.

In Rajasthan also, mustard oil witnessed an uptrend with demand outstripping supply. Mustard oil gained Rs 2 each in Kota and Ganga Nagar at Rs 650 and Rs 652 respectively, while it was up Rs 5 in Jaipur at Rs 665.

Mustard oil, however, ruled stable in Gujarat at Rs 640.

Given further rise in demand in the coming monsoon season, mustard oil prices in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat are expected to rule higher in the coming days.

Mustard seeds also ruled higher at Rs 4,200-4,350 a quintal (up Rs 50) on decline in arrival and improved demand, while raida ruled at Rs 3,100.

Plant deliveries in mustard also gained marginally to Rs 3,525-3,530.

Mustard seeds futures also gained marginally on improved buying support with its June and July contracts closing at Rs 3,498 (up Re 1) and Rs 3,532 (up Rs 8). With decline in arrival and improved buying support in the coming days, future of mustard seeds appears to be bullish in the coming days.

Fear over fall in rice prices keeps away bulk buyers

A range-bound to steady movement is likely to be witnessed in the coming days in rice market, said trade sources.

Lack of buying at all levels pulled aromatic and non-basmati rice prices down by Rs 20-100 a quintal on Thursday.

Amit Kumar, proprietor of Ginni Rice, told *Business Line* that, the absence of bulk buying is putting pressure on the market.

Market had witnessed some recovery earlier this week but failed to retain those levels.

Restricted availability of stocks is limiting the fall at present but the availability of stock will improve in July and then prices may come further down, he added.

Fear of drop in prices in the near future is a prime reason behind the absence of bulk buyers, said Amit Kumar.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) eased by Rs 100 and sold at Rs 7,700-7,730, while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 7,150, Rs 50 down from the previous level.

Pure basmati (raw) dropped by Rs 50 and quoted at Rs 8,800-8,820.

Duplicate basmati (steam) went down by Rs 80 at Rs 6,780.

For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Dubar quoted at Rs 3,900, Tibar sold at Rs 4,400 while Mongra was at Rs 3,050.

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati (Steam) moved down by Rs 30 at Rs 4,850-4,870 while Sharbati (Sela) quoted at Rs 4,450, Rs 50 down from the previous levels.

PR varieties dropped by Rs 20-40. Permal (raw) was sold at Rs 2,230 while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,310. PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 3,100-3,120 while PR-11 (raw) quoted at Rs 2,750. PR14 (steam) sold at Rs 3,320.

According to the market sources, it is unlikely to see any major alteration and market may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuation in the coming days.

Ample stocks, bearish futures weigh on sugar sentiment

Sugar prices in the Vashi wholesale market ruled steady on Thursday on slack physical demand.

Ample and continued supply from mills and bearish domestic futures market (June futures dropped further by Rs 41 to Rs 3,025 till noon) weighed on overall sentiment.

Prices were unchanged at *naka* and mill. It remained the same since last 15 days. Moral was weak due to the need based local demand in middle month, said sources.

Since January, physical sugar prices in the Vashi market declined by Rs 200-220 for S-grade and by Rs 160-170 for M-grade a quintal.

As festival seasons start from next month with Ramadan, sentiment will remain positive.

Second, talk of lower production next year will also support the sentiment. As of now, sugar stocks are sufficient to meet the local demand. The Vashi market currently carries more than 110-120 truckloads of inventories, sources said.

Arrivals in the Vashi market were 62-63 truck loads (each of 100 bags) and local despatches were about 60-61 loads. On Wednesday, merely 7-8 mills offered tenders and sold about 18,000-20,000 bags at Rs 2,950-3,010 (Rs 2,950-3,010) for S-grade and Rs 3,020-3,120 (Rs 3,020-3,120) for M-grade.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, sugar July futures was down by Re 1 to Rs 3,057 (Rs 3,058), August was lower at Rs 3,107 (Rs 3,111) and September dropped by Rs 5 to Rs 3,157 (Rs 3,162) till noon.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 3,064-3,141 (Rs 3,080-3,141) and M-grade Rs 3,186-3,341 (Rs 3,191-3,341).

Naka delivery rates were: S-grade Rs 3,020-3,080 (Rs 3,020-3,080) and M-grade Rs 3,140-3,220 (Rs 3,140-3,220).

Turmeric traders yet to get upcountry orders

The arrival of turmeric bags for sale to the Regulated Market Committee (RMC) has increased on Thursday.

“Though the three turmeric markets, the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, Erode and Gobichettipalayam cooperative marketing societies did not conduct the daily auction, the RMC conducted the sale for the third day in succession.

The arrival has increased, but the sale has not improved, said traders.

They said medium variety arrived for sale.

One or two exporters have purchased totally 75 bags out of the 277 bags that arrived.

The prices of the finger and the root varieties decreased by Rs 300 a quintal on quality.

Traders said still they have not yet received any upcountry orders.

Based on the quality of the stocks the traders will quote high prices.

They said they were expecting that they will get fresh orders only by the first week of July.

At the RMC, the finger variety fetched Rs 6,199-7,099, the root variety Rs 4,899-5,705.

Of 277 bags that arrived, only 75 were sold.