



Implement barrage scheme across Marudhayar, demand farmers

The Rs. 10-crore project will irrigate 50,000 acres of land, provide drinking water to 50 villages

Farmers of Ariyalur district made a fervent appeal to the State government to implement a barrage scheme across the Marudhayar river for the benefit of farmers in the district.

Raising the issue at the agriculturists' grievances day here on Friday, P. Viswanathan, State president, Tamilaga Eri Matrum Aatrupasana Vivasayigal Sangham, R. Ulaganathan, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangham, and P. Pichai Pillai of All India Farmers' Association, said the project has been hanging fire for almost 25 years.

“ The District Collector showed us the sketch of the project recently and assured us the project was very much in the offing. It should not be given up at any cost,” they pleaded.

The Rs. 10-crore project would irrigate at least 40,000 to 50,000 acres of land and provide drinking water to 40 to 50 villages. The objective was to store flood water to help replenish aquifers and improve groundwater level.

Mr. Viswanathan pleaded that all those waiting for years for power connection for their pump sets should be given at the earliest. Though Sukaran Eri has been irrigating villages such as Kamarasavalli, Nangur, Oriyur, Silupanur, Maathur, Thoothur, and Chettikuzhi in Ariyalur taluk to an extent of 2,000 hectares, there's confusion among farmers whether the region formed part of the "delta". The farmers had not received any drought relief so far. "Apart from clearing the confusion, the Collector should immediately initiate steps to get them drought relief," he said.

Although farmers appreciated Collector M. Ravikumar for getting substantial funds for drought relief from the State government, almost every speaker at the meeting expressed concern over the failure of the administration to ensure payment of relief to all farmers who had suffered huge crop loss.

K. Nagarathinam of T. Pazhur wondered how a number of farmers including himself could be left out while those in the nearby villages could get the relief.

In order to avoid irregularities in the disbursement of relief, M. Viswanathan of the Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham urged the Collector to put up the list of beneficiaries at the offices of the respective village administrative officers. "This would help us identify bogus beneficiaries and ensure that genuinely hit farmers got the relief."

S.Mani of Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Growers' Association alleged that one of his neighbours who owned five acres was given a compensation of just Rs. 1,000 an acre. "What sort of an assessment is this and what is the rationale behind sanctioning such a small amount as compensation," he wondered.

N. Jayachandran of Aandimadam appealed to the government to provide compensation to cashew farmers hit hard by drought. "We have not been able to get even 20 per cent yield," he said.

Chhattisgarh rice may be the most-favoured

Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies Dinesh Gundu Rao told reporters in Bangalore that the State would call for tenders from suppliers to support the Re. 1 rice scheme from August. If their prices do not match those offered by the Chhattisgarh government, the State will continue to buy from the latter.

The government was also considering options such as procuring directly from farmers and strictly enforcing the levy system of collecting rice from the rice mill owners. Though the rice mill owners were supposed to provide 4 to 5 lakh tonnes of rice a year to the government under the levy scheme, at present only about 50,000 tonnes was being collected.

To eliminate bogus cards, he said his department had given till July-end for BPL card holders to enter into the biometric system. At least 10 lakh cards are likely to be eliminated through this process.

Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao denied the argument that ending distribution of subsidised rice for the Above Poverty Line card holders in a bid to divert the foodgrain for the Re. 1-a-kg rice scheme would trigger a price rise in the open market. "The statistics and the reviews have shown that there was no consistent supply of rice for the APL card holders. Besides, most of the quantum of rice sanctioned for distribution to the APL card holders was actually being diverted to the open market illegally as there were no takers," he said.

'Sugar mill expansion work does not have clearance

Groups representing farmers have alleged that a sugar manufacturing company has started expanding its co-generation power plant in KR Pete without mandatory government clearances.

The sugar mill is said to be an associate company of India Cements.

In a press conference here, members of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) said that Coromandel Sugars has not made proper provisions for dealing with effluents.

The plant, which has a 14 megawatt co-generation unit, is upgrading it to 30 MW, they said.

It is mandatory that companies get clearance for expansion from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board.

The organisation pointed out that the power plant was using coal.

The associations, which have staged several protests, have complained to the National Green Tribunal.

“When Karnataka State Pollution Control Board was sought an explanation why it had not taken action against the company, it (KSPCB) said that as the matter is now with the National Green Tribunal, it could not act on the issue,” said M.V. Raje Gowda, a member of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha.

KSPCB stand

Responding to queries, KSPCB Chairman Vaman Acharya confirmed that the company never applied for permission.

He added that the company has permission to use a back-up of 15 per cent coal to produce power according to national standards.

On the coal issue, he said that the company cannot afford to rely on coconut-based raw material for generating energy as it is not profitable.

Madurai farmers want PWD to remove encroachments on channels



In the wake of widespread rain in the Vaigai catchment area, farmers are preparing to start agricultural operations and have urged the Public Works Department engineers to ensure that 40 sluices in all the channels in the district are in proper condition and the waterways free from encroachments.

At the farmers' grievance day meeting held at the Collectorate here on Friday, they said if the channels were free from encroachments, the water in reservoirs could be better utilised. A farmer, Buthisigamani, said that if maintenance work was carried out on a war footing, the channels would facilitate free flow of water.

Ravi, another farmer, wanted the Collector to instruct public sector banks to reduce interest rates on agricultural loans, taking into account the fact that the farmers had suffered losses in the last farming season owing to severe drought.

Since the southwest monsoon had started, officials should be directed to keep adequate stock of seeds and fertilizers, said a progressive farmer, Rajamanickam.

Tamil Nadu Sugar Cane Farmers' Association president Palanichamy demanded adequate compensation to the farmers whose lands were taken by force by granite mine owners for stocking their finished product. He also complained that a large amount of seized granite stones were missing. The Collector directed the Assistant Director (Mines) to look into the matter and submit a report.

Seetharaman, a farmer, wanted relief for coconut growers in Sholavandan, Vadipatti and other places to offset their losses.

Grow cocoa instead, say researchers

Areca farmers are worried on two counts: decreased yield because of plant diseases and possible decline in demand as more States ban gutka.

A potential way out of this situation, says the Kasaragod-based Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) is switching to cocoa, coconut and banana.

George V. Thomas, Director of the CPCRI, which functions under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), told *The Hindu* that cocoa beans produced locally met only 40 per cent of the domestic requirement. The remaining was being imported.

Demand

Mr. Thomas said that farmers who grow cocoa as an inter-crop in arecanut plantations could opt for large-scale cultivation in view of the demand.

A cocoa plant yields from the third year of planting.

He said that arecanut growers could switch over to coconut cultivation as well. Mr. Thomas said that the CPCRI has developed a technology to extract virgin coconut oil from fresh coconut kernels.

It has a high value product and has export potential. If this latest technology is used, broken coconut need not be dried to make copra.

New technology

Additionally, the CPCRI has developed technology for making crispy chips from coconut.

He said that 'kole roga' (fruit rot disease) and 'haladi roga' (yellow leaf disease) were the two main diseases affecting arecanut plantations.

The former could be cured. But there was no cure for yellow leaf disease now.

But the CPCRI is now conducting an experiment to find out if tissue-cultured arecanut palms could withstand the yellow leaf disease.

He said that the government had been cautioning farmers against expanding area under arecanut both in traditional and non-traditional areas.

The CPCRI was firm in this recommendation even now.

Gutka ban has little impact on areca cultivation



The Hindu ASSURED YIELDS: Farmers believe that the returns from areca will still be more attractive than from other crops. File photo: R. Easwarra
Undeterred farmers continue to plant areca saplings in Shimoga district

The ban on gutka and the fears that it would eventually lead to fall in areca prices have clearly not stopped farmers in Shimoga district from planting areca saplings. This is because they believe that the returns would still be more attractive compared to paddy, sugarcane and maize, the other important crops in the region.

After gutka was banned, Yogeshwarappa K.S. from Kommanal village has planted arecanut saplings in his 1.5 acres of land. He does not think that the ban on gutka will immediately hit the price of arecanut.

Mr. Yogeshwarappa's family owns six acres of arecanut plantation. They used to grow food crops in the 1.5 acres of land. "As profit from cultivation of arecanut was much more compared to maize and paddy, we decided to plant it in the remaining 1.5 acres of land," he said.

Says Rohith Kumar A.O., a farmer from Antaragange village near Bhadravathi, "After deducting the expense towards inputs and labour, the arecanut grower will profit Rs. 70,000 to Rs. 80,000 per acre. The profit from cultivating paddy in an acre of land will not be more than Rs. 20,000," he said.

The problem of shortage of labour was another reason farmers in Malnad have opted for arecanut. Mr. Rohith says that the work of providing fertilizer, de-weeding and harvesting that require labour should be undertaken at a proper time for paddy, maize and sugarcane. Those who cultivate arecanut can postpone this work for at least 15 days if workers are not available, he said.

The last decade saw a sudden surge in the prices of areca owing largely to the impact of gutka. The price per acre of arecanut that was around Rs. 1,800 per quintal in 1988 surged to Rs. 20,000 a quintal in 1996. Though there was a small decline in the price for the next few years, it again crossed the Rs. 20,000 mark in the year 2000.

According to the information provided by the Department of Horticulture, the area under cultivation of arecanut was 26,628 hectares of land in 2000 and it went up to 45,171 hectares of land by 2012. Even in the command area of the Bhadra reservoir, farmers switched over from cultivation of paddy and sugarcane to arecanut by violating the cropping pattern designed by the Command Area Development Authority (CADA) given the relative profitability of areca

CCEA clears open market sale of 105 lakh tonnes of food grains from FCI stocks

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Friday approved a Food Ministry's proposal to offload 105 lakh tonnes of food grains from Food Corporation of India stocks in the open market to contain retail prices.

This is the first offloading this fiscal under the Open Market Sale Scheme.

Wheat will be sold ex-Punjab and Haryana godowns to bulk consumers and traders at Rs. 1,500 per quintal plus freight. And 5,00,000 tonnes of rice will be given to States for retail consumers at Rs. 1875 per quintal plus freight.

Food Minister K.V. Thomas told journalists after the meeting that of the 100 lakh tonnes of wheat, 85 lakh tonnes would be sold to bulk consumers, 10 lakh tonnes would be offered from FCI godowns to small traders, 4 lakh tonnes would be allocated to States and one lakh tonnes would be offered to cooperatives at the same rate.

The CCEA did not take up another proposal of the Food Ministry for export of two million tonnes of wheat through public sector undertakings.

The decision to offload food grains in the open market is influenced as much from the necessity to clear the stocks as it is to contain retail wheat prices in the wake of private trade buying directly from farmers at higher than the minimum support price.

State agencies have procured about 250 lakh tonnes of wheat this season which is lower than the target of about 440 lakh tonnes, leading to the apprehension that wheat prices are set to rise in the open market.

The FCI has a stock of 490 lakh tonnes of wheat. With the offloading of 100 lakh tonnes, it will be left with 390 lakh tonnes which will be sufficient to meet the annual requirement under the Public Distribution System and buffer norms.

The total food grains stock is around 770 lakh tonnes.

Last year, 450 lakh tonnes of wheat was exported on government account. This is apart from export by private trade

Watershed management programme made flagship scheme

Following the government's decision to condense the Centrally-sponsored schemes, the Cabinet on Thursday approved Integrated Watershed Management Programme as a flagship programme of the government.

The former area development programmes of the Department of Land Resources, including the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), the Desert Development Programme (DDP) and the Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP) have been integrated into a single modified programme called Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and launched in 2009-10.

Additionally, an amount of Rs. 29,296 crore was allocated for IWMP in 12th Plan. Since the IWMP being an area development programme, all the people living in the area shall be benefitted by the program.

Nearly 60 per cent of cultivated area across India is rain-fed. Further, these areas are also plagued by poverty, water scarcity, low productivity, malnutrition and prone to severe land degradation. The watershed development programme has been adopted as a tool to address problems of the rain-fed or degraded areas in the country.

The cost of the project shall be shared in the ratio of 90:10 between Central Government and State Government.

While 9 per cent of the project cost is earmarked for development of livelihoods for asset-less people, 10 per cent of the project cost is for productivity enhancement and development of microenterprises for small & marginal farmers.

The cost norm under the IWMP has been enhanced to Rs. 15,000 per ha in difficult and hilly areas, up to Rs. 15,000 per ha. in the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) districts and Rs. 12,000 per hectare in other areas.

More specifically, an average size of project under the IWMP is about 5,000 ha which is cluster of micro-watersheds. A component of institution & capacity building (5 per cent of the total project cost) has been provided to establish institutional mechanism at State, District, Project and Village levels and to build capacities of stakeholders.

The scheme also entails involvement of primary stakeholders in the form of grassroots community organisations.

The benefits that are expected to accrue under the IWMP include increase in availability of surface water & groundwater, changes in cropping pattern from one to two crops annually, increase in fodder availability and increase in milk yield, increase in agriculture productivity and increase in employment opportunities and household income.

Ikkeri: cooperative societies should sell fertilizers

Officials told to cancel licence of those who refuse to do so



Deputy Commissioner V.P. Ikkeri speaking at a meeting of the Cooperative Department in Chitradurgaon Friday.

Deputy Commissioner V.P. Ikkeri has instructed officials to cancel the licence of cooperative societies that refuse to sell fertilizers during the kharif season.

Speaking at a meeting of the Cooperative Department here on Friday to review the progress of sowing in the district, Mr. Ikkeri said that only 107 of the 148 cooperative societies in the district were prepared to distribute fertilizers and others were reluctant owing to financial constraints.

Steps had been taken to provide loans ranging from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 10 lakh to such societies through the District Cooperative Bank to enable them to start selling fertilizers. "The licence of societies that refuse to sell fertilizers even after financial assistance is provided will be cancelled," he said.

Advice

Mr. Ikkeri advised cooperative societies not to restrict themselves to advancing loans to farmers. They should provide seeds, fertilizers and other essential agricultural inputs.

"The societies should strictly adhere to government norms and help farmers to the maximum extent possible," he said. There was a stock of 21,000 tonnes of fertilizers in the district for the kharif season.

Arrangements had been made to provide sowing equipment to farmers on rent through 33 primary agricultural cooperative societies, he said.

R. Krishnamurthy, Joint Director of Agriculture, and secretaries of all cooperative societies were present.

Samiti wants agricultural college set up at Hagari

The district unit of the Hyderabad Karnataka Horata Samiti has urged the government to set up a college of agriculture on the premises of the century-old Agricultural Research Station at Hagari, about 20 km from here.

In a memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister here on Friday, conveners of the samiti S. Pannaraj and T.G. Vittal have pointed out that the Dr. Bisalaiah Committee had recommended setting up of eight colleges of agriculture in as many districts, including Bellary. But the college was yet to come up in Bellary, they said in the memorandum.

The research station at Hagari, set up in 1906 by the British, has been helping farmers of the Hyderabad Karnataka region through research and extension programmes, and by developing crop varieties suitable for cultivation in drought-prone and rain-fed areas, and also the Tungabhadra command area, they said.

Mr. Pannaraj has urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to sanction the college in view of the special status granted to the Hyderabad Karnataka region under Article 371 (J), besides sanctioning Rs. 10 crore in the current year's budget for the purpose.

Sangankal Hemanthraj and president of the district Krishik Samaj Lakshmikant Reddy were present on the occasion.

Farmers grievances day meet

The monthly farmers' grievance meeting is scheduled to be conducted here at the Collectorate on June 28. The meeting will be presided over by Collector T. Munusamy at 11 a.m. and farmers have been requested to participate in the proceedings, an administration release said.

Sugarcane dues to be settled in phases

Farmers to receive arrears with 15 per cent interest

District Collector K. Baskaran has said that Thiru Arooran Sugars Ltd. has agreed to pay arrears to farmers who supplied sugarcane to two of its factories with 15 per cent interest.

The Collector, speaking at the monthly farmers' grievances day meeting here on Friday, said that farmers demanded in the monthly meeting held in May that the arrears should be paid with interest. The district administration took up the matter with the company and with Sugar Commissioner and the management of the company had agreed to pay 15 per cent interest.

Accordingly, the amount would be paid as per the following schedule: Thiru Arooran Sugars Ltd at Thirumangankudi near Kumbakonam: outstanding: Rs. 42 crore; Rs. 22 crore to be paid before June 30 and Rs. 20 crore before July 31; Ambika Sugars Ltd., Kottur: outstanding Rs. 50.6 crore, Rs. 23 crore before June 30, Rs. 15 crore before July end, and Rs. 12.6 crore before August end. The arrears will be paid with 15 per cent interest.

The Collector said the work of removing silt from riverbeds, canals, and irrigation channels would be taken up by Public Works Department. The department would take up 210 schemes at a cost of Rs. 10.16 crore.

The Collector said that kuruvai transplantation had been completed so far on 4,150 hectares of land irrigated by pump sets. There was a stock of 160 tonnes of ADT-43, ADT-36 and ADT-45 paddy seeds in the district. There was also a stock of 30 tonnes of ADT-5 black gram seeds. Mr. Baskaran said that there was adequate stock of fertilizers in the district.

Earlier, a section of farmers staged a walkout protesting against proposed extraction of methane from Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts. They said the project, when implemented, would pollute the groundwater and affect the cultivable land.

Build Marudhayar barrage, demand Ariyalur farmers

The project will irrigate 50,000 acres of land, provide drinking water to 50 villages



Point, counterpoint: A farmer raising an issue at the grievances meet in Ariyalur on Friday.— PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM

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"The District Collector showed us the sketch of the project recently and assured us the project was very much in the offing. It should not be given up at any cost," they pleaded.

The Rs. 10-crore project would irrigate 50,000 acres of land and provide drinking water to 50 villages. The objective of the project was to store flood water.

Mr. Viswanathan pleaded that all those waiting for years for power connection for their pump sets should be given at the earliest. Though Sukaran Eri has been irrigating villages such as Kamarasavalli, Nangur, Oriyur, Silupanur, Maathur, Thoothur, and Chettikuzhi in Ariyalur taluk to an extent of 2,000 hectares, there's confusion among farmers whether the region formed part of the "delta". The farmers had not received any drought relief so far. Although farmers appreciated Collector M. Ravikumar for getting substantial funds for drought relief from the State government, almost every speaker at the meeting expressed concern over the failure of the administration to ensure payment of relief to all farmers who had suffered huge crop loss.

In order to avoid irregularities in the disbursement of relief, M. Viswanathan of the Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham urged the Collector to put up the list of beneficiaries at the offices of the respective village administrative officers. S.Mani of Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Growers' Association alleged that one of his neighbour who owned five acres was given a compensation of just Rs. 1,000 an acre. "What sort of an assessment is this and what is the rationale behind sanctioning such a small amount as compensation," he wondered.

N. Jayachandran of Aandimadam appealed to the government to provide compensation to cashew farmers.

Use of biofertilizer to withstand drought stressed

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) has advocated the use of Methylobacterium biofertilizer, popularly called Pink Pigmented Facultative Methylootrophs (PPFMs), to protect crops from heat and drought conditions.

"Methylobacterium" developed by the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) and available in liquid and powder forms could be a boon to farmers in this drought-prone district, who mostly cultivate paddy in rain-fed areas, said R. Durai Singam, Professor and Head, KVK, TNAU.

Explaining the benefits of Methylobacterium at the Agricultural grievance day meeting at the Collectorate here on Friday, he said spraying of the biofertilizer once in 15 days from the vegetation stage could help protect the crops from solar radiation and enhance growth and yield by 8 per cent.

PPFMs, naturally occurring beneficial bacteria in plants, soil, dust and various fresh water supplies, live by utilising the methanol evolved from leaves as the source of carbon and energy and in response, secrete essential nutrients such as cytokinin, auxins and nitrogen, vital for plants, Mr Singam said. "This can benefit the crops in many ways as it improves the chlorophyll intensity and increases the leaf area," he said adding that increase in leaf area improved the yield. It also helps to considerably reduce flower drops, especially in chillies and pulses, he said.

Similarly, the seed germination and root dipping would help in early growth and to improve the vigour of the seedlings, he said.

The spraying of the biofertilizer had been successfully tried for the first time in the Cauvery delta region last year, when paddy crops on vast areas, faced the danger of withering for want of water. The TNAU sprayed the symbiotic organisms and saved the crop on hundreds of acres in the region, he said.

Farmers could buy the liquid at Rs. 300 per litre and use 200 ml mixed with water per acre, Mr Singam said.

Farmers could contact KVK for farm trial and demonstrations.

The KVK proposed to conduct demonstrations in all the blocks in the district on various agriculture innovations and new technologies.

It has also proposed to get funds from the National Agriculture Development Project, specifically for this district, for mitigating the drought due to high solar radiation, he added.

In a related development, a farmer couple from Dindigul, V.A Maruthamuthu and M Vasuki shared their success story in the cultivation of tuberose on 60 cents of land at Thavasimadai, about 13 km from Dindigul.

Maruthamuthu, a software engineer, resigned his job in Chennai to take up agriculture full time with his wife, a B. Ed graduate.

They wanted to raise a crop, which would provide sustained income on a daily basis and chose to cultivate "Prajwal," a hybrid tuberose variety.

As the flower vendors were used to local varieties, there were no takers for the new variety in the market, initially. However, the market picked up by word of mouth, they said.

By purely resorting to organic farming, they had cultivated 81,000 kg of tuberose last year from January to December and sold them for Rs 5.23 lakh. They had spent about Rs. 2.18 lakh for the cultivation and earned a profit of Rs. 3.04 lakh, Mr Maruthamuthu said.

"On an average, we cultivated 22.18 kg of flower and earned a daily income of Rs. 1428," Ms. Vasuki said and offered to share the details with other farmers.

Proposal sent for farm ponds

5,113 ponds to cost Rs. 25 crore

A proposal for digging 5113 farm ponds in the district at an estimated cost of Rs. 25 crore has been sent to the government, Collector K. Nanthakumar has said.

Addressing the farmers at the grievance day meeting here on Friday, he said the government was expected to allocate funds either by this month end or early next month, after a meeting with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) officials.

He said under the water shed management scheme, 1200 farm ponds were being created and the district administration was willing to create more farm ponds if the farmers expressed interest. The farmers could dig ponds to suit their needs and permission would be given to transport the removed soil to other areas for agriculture purposes, he added.

Reacting to repeated complaints from the farmers about alleged irregularities in the distribution of drought relief, the Collector said the farmers could not make sweeping charges and assured them of action on specific complaints.

On farmers' grievance that more affected farmers have been left out in the enumeration for providing drought relief, the Collector said the department would collect details of those farmers after completing the ongoing drought relief distribution process.

The district was sanctioned a relief of Rs. 131 crore, of which about Rs. 130 crore has so far been deposited into the accounts of the farmers. An amount of Rs. 99.6 crore has so far been distributed to the farmers, he said. The Collector also assured the farmers that he would talk to the authorities and get early disbursement of crop insurance.

In Sivaganga District, Collector V Rajaraman said 3,000 farm ponds were being created in the district, involving workers of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The farm ponds would help the farmers save water during rainy season and use the same to tide over the crisis during summer, he said. He wanted more farmers to dig ponds in their fields.

Pointing out to the practice of leaving lands fallow after the single crop of paddy, the Collector called upon the farmers to cultivate plantation crops such as cotton, pulses, groundnut and banana after harvesting paddy, using less water.

This would not only help them to earn additional income, but also help improve the fertility of the soil, he said.

For farmers sugarcane is no more sweet



Low prices and yield are adversely affecting sugarcane farmers in the district. Thousands of acres irrigated by River Cauvery in Mohanur are under sugarcane cultivation.

For the second consecutive year, the farmers are facing heavy losses because of unavailability of water for irrigation.

The government considers sugarcane as a profit yielding crop and it has not considered us for drought relief in the first phase, says K.

Chandrasekaran (42), a farmer.

Because of shortage of water in the river and in canals, water level in the wells and borewells that are close to the river too have gone down by several hundred feet.

R. Kathirvel (68), a cane grower for more than five decades at Manapalli near Mohanur, termed the water shortage in Cauvery now being experienced as the worst he has seen.

Located about half a kilometre from the river, his borewell that was about 250 deep could not draw water for his five acres of cane cultivation.

“I deepened it by another 100 feet spending Rs. 38,000. But could draw water to irrigate just 1.5 acres. The crop in rest of the land dried about two months ago.

The remaining crops too would dry if water is not released from Mettur Dam, he added.

Farmers say that they used harvest about 50 tonnes to 60 tonnes of sugarcane an acre.

“The usual plantation period is between September and March and is harvested after 12 months. This year we had no option but to sell cane that is only five to six months old because of non availability of water,” they say.

“We hardly harvested 10 tonnes to 15 tonnes of cane an acre for which we get a mere Rs. 20,000, while investment for cultivating an acre of cane is around Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000. Earlier, we used to get a profit of Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000 an acre but we are now incurring an equal amount as loss,” says K. Kaliammal (56), Director in the Salem Cooperative Sugar Mill in Mohanur.

State Technical Secretary of the Consortium of Indian Farmers Association G. Ajeethan and a leading sugarcane farmer told *The Hindu* the average realisation price an acre has come down by 40 per cent to 50 per cent in 2013 compared to the drought hit 2012.

“Cultivation of cash crops such as sugarcane will be possible in the years to come only if the government waives interest for loans obtained by farmers and gives additional credit,” he added

Minimum floor price for native aromatic rice varieties mooted

Production of traditional aromatic rice varieties will be enhanced and optimum returns to farmers ensured, Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan has said.

He was accepting recommendations made at a workshop held at the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) here on Friday.

A proposal to procure native aromatic rice varieties at a guaranteed minimum floor price of Rs.40 was put forward at the workshop.

A.K. Gupta, director, Basmati Exporters' Development Foundation, said strong ties between roller millers-cum-exporters and farmers were important to ensure sustainability of aromatic rice cultivation.

“There should be a healthy, transparent and trustworthy bond between key players for common gain and sustainable farming,” he said.

Even though Basmati had a wider patronage it was yet to get Geographical Indication (GI) tag. However, scented rice varieties such as Gandhakasala and Jeerakasala had been GI tagged.

He said at least 20 per cent of the market price should be guaranteed to the producer. In Delhi 1kg Jeerakasala rice cost more than Rs.100, but the money did not reach the producer.

Farmers could get their due only if links with millers and traders were established and support mechanisms put in place, he said.

Conservation and popularisation of aromatic rice cultivation through farmer participation in farm conservation and seed distribution was suggested.

Speakers at the workshop called for adequate processing facilities with rubberised hullers/roller millers, the Department of Agriculture's support for

supplying seeds with higher productivity, promotion of traditional hand-milled organic scented rice varieties as special premium brands and exploiting their potential in the global market for the benefit of farmers through the support of APEDA (Agricultural & Processed food Products Export Development Authority)

Heavy rain, floods destroy paddy cultivation in Kuttanad

Heavy rain and floods have completely destroyed the second round of paddy cultivation in Kuttanad in the district. Principal Agricultural Officer C.K. Sajitha said out of the 2,985 hectares, cultivation in 995 hectares had been completely destroyed. Cultivation in other areas including Thakazhi and Thalavady has not been affected. However, the threat of bund breach still looms large over these areas.

Positive factor

According to S. Leenakumari, director, Rice Research Station (RRS), Mankombu, the situation was good for farmers who were yet to begin the cultivation. "It is good for those paddy fields where the second round of cultivation is yet to begin," she said.

K.G. Padmakumar, former associate director of Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS), Kumarakom cautioned against increasing the area of second round of paddy cultivation known as 'Viruppu'. "There should be enough space to retain the flood water. If most of the paddy fields are cultivated, then it will result in increase in flood water level. Cultivating large areas of paddy fields could result in delay in beginning the

'Puncha' season," he said. He said there was an increasing trend in recent years to go for cultivation of more areas for the second round. "The obvious reasons are the easy availability of combine harvester machines and favourable rainy season. But the situation has changed this year with heavy rains lashing the district. So it is not advisable to cultivate in large areas. There should be some mechanism to limit the area under cultivation," he said.

Mr. Padmakumar also pointed out that the heavy rains had come at a good time as salinity in the Vembanad lake was at its highest. "This year the salinity is 14 ppt, which is the highest since 1986. However, the rains will flush out the salinity. The water from the eastern side will bring in the silt that increases the soil acidity needed for cultivation," he said. However, Ms. Sajitha said the target this year was to bring 13,000 hectares of the paddy fields in the district under second round of cultivation. This was higher than the last year, she added.

Drought-resistant paddy seeds sought by farmers

Representatives of various farmers' associations have urged the district administration to introduce drought-resistant 1121 paddy seeds.

Participating in the farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday, Devadoss, a farmer, asked the district administration to provide 1121 paddy seeds in order to reduce their dependence on water release from dams for irrigation.

Another farmer, Pulavar Chellappa, urged the district administration to desilt and renovate tanks and supply channels on a war footing so that water could be stored during the rainy season.

The farmers' representatives also urged the district administration to provide call tractors, similar to the ones established in Tirunelveli district, for the benefit of the farmers.

The District Revenue Officer said steps would be taken to provide call tractors for Rs.370 per hour.

The farmers also objected to the construction of houses on the banks of irrigation channels as the effluents from the houses would pollute the water.

The officials informed the farmers that a circular had been sent to the representatives of local bodies in this regard.

Collector S.Nagarajan, District Revenue Officer S.Palanisamy and Executive Engineer (PWD) U.Subramanian attended the meeting

Collector warns fertilizer traders

Selling of agro inputs at inflated prices will invite action”



Collector C.Samayamoorthy has warned traders that failure to display the prices of fertilizers and pesticides and selling of these agricultural inputs at inflated prices will lead to cancellation of their licences and initiation of action against them.

Addressing the farmers' grievance day meet at the Collectorate here on Friday, Mr.Samayamoorthy said steps had been taken to ensure adequate availability of fertilizers and pesticides at right prices since all reservoirs in the district were getting good inflow making the situation conducive for farming operations, especially 'kar' paddy cultivation. While the available fertilizer stocks would meet the farmers' requirements for two weeks, more fertilizer would reach Tuticorin harbour in the first week of July, he pointed out.

When the officials said the existing stock had been kept at Tirunelveli, the Collector instructed them to send the fertilizers to all Primary Agriculture Cooperative Banks across the district so that the farmers could easily buy them.

"Buy the fertilizers after checking their prices and ask the traders to give receipts for your purchase so that action can be taken against those who sell them at inflated prices," Mr.Samayamoorthy said, and added that distribution of Kisan Credit Cards should be completed within 30 days.

R. Kasamuthu, a farmer, suggested that the Collector convene a special meeting either in March or April to identify water bodies and irrigation channels that need to be desilted so that the exercise could be completed before the onset of the southwest monsoon. A Revenue Department

official, who gave an evasive reply to a farmer's appeal for sanctioning of a drying yard in his village, faced the Collector's ire.

"Whenever you come to a meeting, you should be prepared to answer any question associated with your department, or else, you need not come," the Collector said

Dubious firm dupes peasants

It collected money promising teak saplings, tractors

A dubious financial organisations allegedly cheated poor peasants promising saplings and tractors at low price in Ganjam district.

Cheating of peasants in the name of promoting agricultural income came to light for the first time in recent times. The farmers who were cheated by the dubious organisation were from Bhanjanagar sub-division in the district.

As per an assessment the company duped poor peasants of Rs. 50 lakh . A group of these duped peasants met the Bhanjanagar Sub-Collector requesting intervention of administration, police and government so that they could get back their amount. Some of the cheated peasants also filed a complaint with the Tarsingh police station in Ganjam district. The peasants were lured by the claim of the dubious company that it would provide teak saplings and tractors at very low price. The company was named 'Janmangal Agro Care'. It had opened its branch at Tarsingh a few months ago and now the branch downed shutters. "Some of the duped farmers also reached Bhubaneswar to locate the State office of the

company but they were shocked to find that no such office existed in Bhubaneswar at the address provided in the company brochures,” said Kasinath Mallik, a farmer who has been duped by the company.

Agents of the company had assured the farmers that the company would provide teak saplings at Rs. 90 rupees per sapling but the farmers had to buy at least 100 saplings. They have collected Rs. 500 from each farmer as advance. The agents of the company also came up with a scheme that tractors would be provided at Rs. 85,000 but the money had to be deposited in advance. Many farmers deposited the money with company with the hope of getting tractors at low price.

The company agents had promised to deliver the tractors on May 1. However, no delivery was made. All of a sudden the branch office of the company closed down and even after more than a month the depositors did not receive the teak saplings or the tractors.

Farmer makes mosquito repellent from arecanut

Exporter shows interest in taking the product to Africa

A mosquito repellent derived from arecanut and cow dung has all the chances of entering the African market if an exporter has his way.

Made at Mundaje village in Dakshina Kannada, it was exhibited at Biofach Trade Fair at Nuremberg, Germany, in February by a delegation of State Agriculture Department.

The product is the brainchild of Dayanand Patawardhan, an arecanut grower-cum-entrepreneur of Mundaje. Mr. Patawardhan told *The Hindu* that an exporter from Tamil Nadu who saw it at the trade fair has shown interest in exporting the product to African countries. "Negotiations are under progress," he said, and added that he had given 10 boxes of the repellent to the Agriculture Department for the fair.

Years of research

The entrepreneur, sells slices of white arecanut to *pan-beeda* shops, said years of research had gone into making the repellent.

He said that alcolides in arecanut act as repellent to mosquitoes.

A repellent available in the form of a thick stick is five inches long with 10mm circumference.

Though it lasts two hours, its impact (smoke's effect) will be there for six hours. It inactivates mosquitoes and does not kill them. Mosquitoes fly away because of its odour.

Mr. Patawardhan said that a stick weighs five grams and contains three grams of fine white arecanut powder. The other ingredients are cow dung and gum.

A pack of repellent contained 10 sticks and is priced at Rs. 25.

"I have been selling five boxes a week in the last one year," he said. A box contained 100 sticks.

Awaiting patent

Mr. Patawardhan has applied for a patent for his repellent.

K.B. Hebbar, Head, Department of Physiology, Bio-chemistry and Post-harvest Technology, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod, said that since areanut had high dose of alcolides they could act as repellent.

“It is possible,” he said, and added that CPCRI had not conducted any specific study in this regard.

Sridhar G. Bhide, a director, Mangalore Agriculturists Sahakari Sangha, said that he had used the repellent and it was useful. Making the repellent is one of the ways of adding value to arecanut, he said.

Mr. Patwardhan said that besides Dakshina Kannada the product is sold in Bijapur, Gulbarga and Tamil Nadu.

Some samples had been sent to Gujarat and Maharashtra recently.

Soya bean seed shortage: police face farmers' ire



Agonising wait: Anxious tribal farmers queue up for soya bean coupons since early in the morning at Utnoor on Friday.—PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

While the failure of Agriculture Department in supplying soya bean seed has made farmers in the district agitate, it is not the Agriculture officials but the police who have to face problems trying to maintain law and order during such situations.

As the officials are known to make their appearance scarce whenever farmers stage protests, police officers have to come up with a practical solution to handle such problems. “I get the local Assistant Agriculture Officer (AAO) to accompany me in my jeep everyday, all through the day. This way, I am in a position to present him for answering the questions of angry farmers on the delay in supply of seed,” reveals Utnoor CI Atcheshwar Rao.

Utnoor and the four tribal mandals of Indervelli, Jainoor, Narnoor and Sirpur (U) are among those facing acute shortage of subsidised soya bean seed. Tribal farmers queue up at the centres for seed coupons from early in the morning.

Farmers such as Ranjit Singh Chauhan from Hasnapur complain that they have already wasted six days waiting for supplies to arrive. “Though some quantity came today, it will not be sufficient for all those in the queue,” he told *The Hindu* on Friday.

Better marketing strategies needed to boost banana trade'

With infrastructure facilities, varieties could be exported



Action needed: N. Kumar, Dean, Horticulture College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, addressing the meet on banana in Tuticorin on Friday— Photo: N. Rajesh

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Tuticorin, organised a 'First Stakeholder Meet on Banana' at Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam, here on Friday, aiming at boosting banana trade.

M.M. Mustafa, Director, National Research Centre for Banana, in his special address, said though banana cultivation was being taken up widely in the district, farmers were unaware of the significance of creating a brand image to market the produce. Other districts, including Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari, were also known for cultivating more than 20 varieties of banana.

Besides depending on the Kerala market for marketing varieties like 'nenthran,' 'red banana' and 'matti,' the progressive farmers should explore avenues for marketing bananas in Bangalore, Mumbai and in North India.

With sufficient infrastructure facilities, mainly cold storage, the traditional banana varieties could be exported to Malaysia, Singapore and Gulf countries as well.

By maintaining quality and adding value to banana, the farmers could get a good price for their produce. The farmers had been experiencing 30 percent wastage and loss in the post harvest management and they had to be sensitised on reducing losses gradually, Dr.Mustafa added.

N.Kumar, Dean, Horticulture College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said the banana farmers should have an exposure to the developing infrastructure facilities, to store the produce. The stakeholders could well rely on those who preferred bananas of Tamil Nadu, and adopt suitable strategies. An action plan would be developed during this schedule to open up more avenues in the banana industry.

Ravichandran Purushothaman, chairman, CII - Tamil Nadu Banana Festival, said Tamil Nadu with 37 varieties of bananas was the largest producer of the fruit in India. He said less than three percent of bananas grown in India were branded and it should be promoted for export trade. Agriculture sector could play a major role in boosting the economy to attain inclusive growth.

In Vision Tamil Nadu - 2023 document, emphasis was on agriculture sector to enhance rural economy. By building a good supply chain infrastructure between farmers and super markets, the banana farmers could be guided to new heights. With better management practices in pre-harvest, post-

harvest periods and branding, the farmers could expect a manyfold increase in their income levels, he said.

B.Thiagarajan, convenor, Agriculture and Food Processing Panel, CII - Tamil Nadu, said banana with nutritional, medicinal and processing values could be a bonanza for farmers.

A.P.Karuppiyah, secretary, Theni District Banana Growers and Traders Association, shared his success stories after the introduction of the latest technologies with farmers. S.K.S.C.N.Dharmaraj, vice-chairman, CII, Tuticorin, also spoke.

60 service centres to come up in Ariyalur district

Printouts of requisite certificates can be had from these kiosks

Ariyalur district will get 60 facilitation (service) centres for e-governance shortly, District Collector M. Ravikumar said here on Friday.

Presiding over the agriculturists grievances" day, the Collector said Ariyalur was one of the three districts in the State to have implemented e-governance throughout the district.

"At present, applications for various government documents such as community certificate, income certificate, nativity certificate, widow certificate, and first-generation graduate certificate are received and accepted only at the three taluk offices. On July 1, 30 facilitation centres that would issue these certificates would be opened in various parts of the

district and on August 1, an equal number would be opened,” Mr. Ravikumar added.

Explaining how these centres, to be manned by members of the Poverty Alleviation Groups constituted under the Pudhu Vazhvu project in rural areas, would function, the Collector said the moment an application was received for any such document, it would be posted on line.

Both the village administrative officer and the tahsildar would post their input online after verification.

“On the third day, the applicant would be able to receive the requisite certificate. There is no need for the applicants to submit the application or receive the document only at their place of residence.

“They can do so anywhere in the district,” he said.

These centres would handle electricity bill, telephone bill, mobile recharge, and a number of minor works such as issue of printouts.

Buoyed by the success of the tender coconut project (the first district in the State to have implemented it) under which a coconut was sold at Rs. 12 a piece as against the open market price of Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 thus ensuring a fair and remunerative price for farmers and fair price for the consumers, the Collector planned to embark on another project to help farmers.

“I propose to form a group of farmers who produce drumsticks (the total production of drum sticks in the district is 70 to 80 tonnes a day) and appoint a liaison at the Koyambedu market. If the vegetable procured in

bulk in Ariyalur district could be transported to Koyambedu market, it would fetch considerably higher price. Thus the producers would substantially benefit," he said.

Farmers ask officials to clear channels for monsoon

A section of farmers have urged the district administration to dredge irrigation channels and minor tanks in the district before October to ensure proper storage of rainwater during the northeast monsoon season.

G.S. Dhanapathy, district chairman, Farmers Forum of India, underlined the role played by minor tanks, maintained by panchayat unions, in storing rainwater and urged the administration to harvest rainwater for irrigation. He sought action to check the monkey menace in several parts of the district.

Appavu Balandar, farmer, said the current dry season was ideal for clearing silt and deepening irrigation and supply channels. A comprehensive plan should be evolved and implemented on a war-footing, he said.

Rama Theerthan, a progressive farmer, pleaded for a comprehensive plan for resolving the drinking water crisis in the district. C. Manoharan, District Collector, who chaired the meet, advised officials to go in for a coordinated action plan for assessing drought-relief. He advised farmers to submit their petitions at the taluk offices.

To address monkey menace, Agriculture Department would identify areas frequented by monkeys and the Forest Department would set up cages to be made by TANSI , Mr. Manoharan said.

Priority would be accorded for resolving drinking water crisis in Keeranur. Under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, farm ponds would be set up at 704 places and works already commenced at 160 sites.

Referring to a plea for clearing encroachments on tanks, the Collector said that necessary action had been taken and encroachments are being cleared regularly.

Low marks in maths rule out even agri courses

What connection does mathematics have with agriculture?

This question has become a moot point of discussion among hundreds of candidates who have lost the chance of gaining admission to undergraduate programmes in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, home science and sericulture for not having scored high marks in maths in their Class XII examinations this year.

According to sources, the strange situation had arisen because Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) adopts a common format for calculating cut-off for admission to its 'agricultural science programmes' which lead to Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degrees and 'agricultural technology programmes' that lead to Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) degrees.

They pointed out that Anna University excludes biology and considers marks scored in mathematics, physics and chemistry alone for calculating the cut-off required for admission.

Likewise, the Directorate of Medical Education excludes mathematics and considers marks scored in — biology, physics and chemistry — alone for admission to medical colleges.

However, TNAU considers marks scored in all four core subjects (except English and second language) in Class XII for arriving at a cut-off required for admission to its agricultural courses.

As a result, students who have scored high marks in physics, chemistry and biology but low marks in the fourth subject, which could probably be maths or computer science, end up really low in the rank list compared to those who had scored better marks in the fourth subject too.

A Madurai candidate, who had been declared to have scored a cut-off of 190.25 and ranked in a position beyond 1500 out of more than 17,000 candidates in the fray, said that his cut-off would have risen to 196 and he would secured somewhere around 60 rank if TNAU had excluded maths from the subjects taken into consideration for admission to B.Sc. (agriculture) course.

Talking to *The Hindu* over phone, P. Kalaiselvan, Registrar (in-charge), TNAU, said, “The system of taking mathematics into consideration even for B.Sc. courses has been in vogue for the last four years in accordance with government orders. We will set right the problem possibly by the next academic year.”

As per TNAU norms, candidates applying for B.Tech. degree courses in agricultural engineering, food process engineering and energy and environmental engineering must have studied either in Group I comprising mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology or Group II consisting of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computer science in their Class XII.

However, mathematics was not prescribed as a mandatory subject for admission to other 10 courses leading to B.Sc. degrees in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, home science, sericulture, agribusiness management and B.Tech. degrees in biotechnology, horticulture, bioinformatics, agricultural information technology.

In so far as admission to these 10 degree courses was concerned, the candidates must have compulsorily studied physics, chemistry and biology in Class XII. The fourth core subject could be mathematics, computer science, biochemistry, biotechnology, home science or microbiology. But, the marks scored in the fourth subject would also be considered for arriving at a cut-off.

Use of biofertilizer to withstand drought stressed

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) has advocated the use of Methylobacterium biofertilizer, popularly called Pink Pigmented Facultative Methylo trophs (PPFMs), to protect crops from heat and drought conditions.

“Methylobacterium” developed by the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) and available in liquid and powder forms could be a boon to farmers in this drought-prone district, who mostly cultivate paddy in rain-fed areas, said R. Durai Singam, Professor and Head, KVK, TNAU.

Explaining the benefits of Methylobacterium at the Agricultural grievance day meeting at the Collectorate here on Friday, he said spraying of the biofertilizer once in 15 days from the vegetation stage could help protect the crops from solar radiation and enhance growth and yield by 8 per cent.

PPFMs, naturally occurring beneficial bacteria in plants, soil, dust and various fresh water supplies, live by utilising the methanol evolved from leaves as the source of carbon and energy and in response, secrete essential nutrients such as cytokinin, auxins and nitrogen, vital for plants, Mr Singam said. “This can benefit the crops in many ways as it improves the chlorophyll intensity and increases the leaf area,” he said adding that increase in leaf area improved the yield. It also helps to considerably reduce flower drops, especially in chillies and pulses, he said.

Similarly, the seed germination and root dipping would help in early growth and to improve the vigour of the seedlings, he said.

The spraying of the biofertilizer had been successfully tried for the first time in the Cauvery delta region last year, when paddy crops on vast areas, faced the danger of withering for want of water. The TNAU sprayed the symbiotic organisms and saved the crop on hundreds of acres in the region, he said.

Farmers could buy the liquid at Rs. 300 per litre and use 200 ml mixed with water per acre, Mr Singam said.

Farmers could contact KVK for farm trial and demonstrations.

The KVK proposed to conduct demonstrations in all the blocks in the district on various agriculture innovations and new technologies.

It has also proposed to get funds from the National Agriculture Development Project, specifically for this district, for mitigating the drought due to high solar radiation, he added.

In a related development, a farmer couple from Dindigul, V.A Maruthamuthu and M Vasuki shared their success story in the cultivation of tuberoses on 60 cents of land at Thavasimadai, about 13 km from Dindigul.

Maruthamuthu, a software engineer, resigned his job in Chennai to take up agriculture full time with his wife, a B. Ed graduate.

They wanted to raise a crop, which would provide sustained income on a daily basis and chose to cultivate "Prajwal," a hybrid tuberose variety.

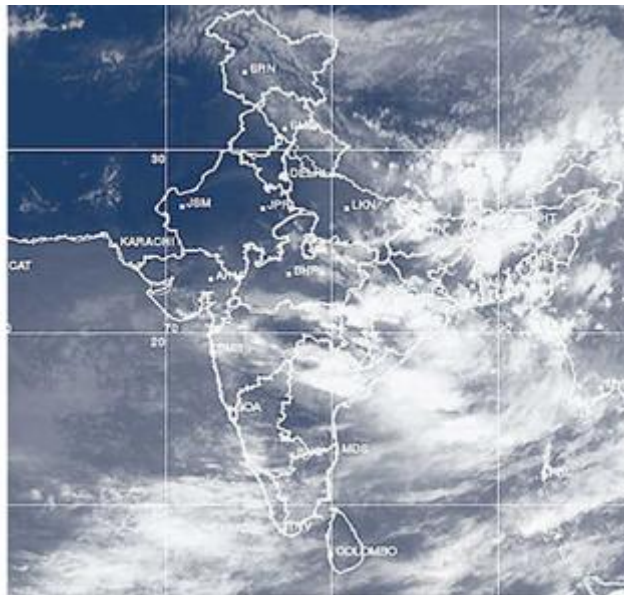
As the flower vendors were used to local varieties, there were no takers for the new variety in the market, initially. However, the market picked up by word of mouth, they said.

By purely resorting to organic farming, they had cultivated 81,000 kg of tuberoses last year from January to December and sold them for Rs 5.23 lakh. They had spent about Rs. 2.18 lakh for the cultivation and earned a profit of Rs. 3.04 lakh, Mr Maruthamuthu said.

“On an average, we cultivated 22.18 kg of flower and earned a daily income of Rs. 1428,” Ms. Vasuki said and offered to share the details with other farmers.

'Methylobacterium' improves chlorophyll intensity and increases leaf area

weather



	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	40	29	0	154

New Delhi (Sfd)	38	27	0	113
Chandigarh	36	28	0	185
Hissar	41	26	0	101
Bhuntar	33	20	0	115
Shimla	24	18	0	166
Jammu	39	29	0	28
Srinagar	31	17	0	32
Amritsar	40	25	0	131
Patiala	38	29	0	117
Jaipur	39	24	1	86
Udaipur	36	27	0	84
Allahabad	37	27	0	75
Lucknow	35	25	0	164
Varanasi	36	27	0	53
Dehradun	32	25	0	635
Agartala	34	27	tr	109
Ahmedabad	36	27	0	103
Bangalore	30	20	6	130
Bhubaneshwar	36	22	78	255
Bhopal	35	22	7	150
Chennai	39	29	0	123
Guwahati	36	26	tr	70
Hyderabad	34	24	2	156
Kolkata	34	25	111	263
Mumbai	31	27	5	821
Nagpur	36	26	0	171

Patna	35	27	0	42
Pune	30	23	0	262
Thiruvananthapuram	29	24	5	297
Imphal	34	23	46	77
Shillong	25	18	13	235

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 western end of Monsoon trough at MSL runs to foot hills of Himalayas and eastern end passes through Basti and thence east wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and east Uttar Pradesh. Weather was mainly dry over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: EAST RAJASTHAN: Manohar Thana 3, Masuda and Bakani 2 each and Atru, Chabra, Phagi, Khanpur and Piplu 1 each and WEST RAJASTHAN: Jaitaran 1.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 23rd June

2013: Rain/thundershowers may occur at isolated places over Uttarakhand during next 48 hours. Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over north Uttar Pradesh from 23rd onwards. Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over east Rajasthan. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE
MORNING OF 23rd June 2013: Partly cloudy sky.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Chinese buy up Canada farms; is Beijing behind it?

With too few farms in China to feed a burgeoning population, Chinese immigrants have started buying up agricultural lands in Canada and shipping produce to Asia.

But with new investment comes fears that a generation of young Canadian would-be farmers are being squeezed out of the market by newcomers that some suspect are being bankrolled by the government in Beijing.

In Saskatchewan province, home to 45 per cent of all arable land in Canada, the price of farmland has risen an average of 10 per cent in the last year, and as much as 50 per cent over three years in areas where Chinese immigrants have settled, according to farmer Ian Hudson, who lives near the village of Ogema.

Provincial authorities counted a half dozen large investment firms buying up farmlands in the province of one million people, but could not say if any of them are linked to Beijing, nor estimate the size of their land holdings.

Facing mounting demands from local mayors for an investigation, Saskatchewan officials began looking into the issue last year.

"The law in Saskatchewan is clear that investment in farmland in this

province (buying more than 10 acres) is restricted to citizens of Canada and permanent residents," provincial agriculture minister Lyle Stewart told AFP.

Similarly farm corporations must be 100 per cent Canadian-owned.

However, he added, a special investigator was hired to probe "rumors that certain interests are trying to get around our law... that these people are funded by offshore money," as well as "where the investment money is coming from."

"Two or three suspicious cases" were identified that are facing further scrutiny, the minister said, declining to offer further details while the investigation is ongoing.

Stewart noted also that Saskatchewan real estate is relatively cheap, taxes are low, borrowing rates are at a historic low, commodity prices are on the upswing and hence, "conditions are perfect for people who want to invest."

But after Chinese state-owned firms poured vast sums into neighboring Alberta's oil sands -- which forced Ottawa to tighten its investment rules to try to prevent foreign governments from controlling Canadian resources -- many in rural Saskatchewan are quick to believe that Beijing is now targeting their farmland to feed its people.

"Some people say that the Chinese state is behind this. That's wrong," said

Andy Hu, the 39-year-old chief executive of Maxcrop, an upstart investment firm that deals in rural Saskatchewan real estate.

"Our investors are people with money and they're looking for a good investment," he said.

Founded in 2009, the company owns 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) and manages nearly 30,000 hectares for investors.

A former manager of a Mattel toy factory in China, Hu moved to Canada in 2004 and started a real estate firm in Alberta before relocating to Saskatchewan after seeing potential profits in its "undervalued" farmlands.

China's emerging middle class "needs more protein" and "they're ready to pay to get good food," he noted.

So Hu scoured the province in search of the best lands and set his heart on Ogema, a village of 400 inhabitants.

His clients, most of them investors rather than farmers, and some with Canadian citizenship but living abroad, quickly snapped up thousands of hectares of land in the vicinity, which Maxcrop now leases to local farmers.

Real estate speculation, however, has made it harder for young local farmers to buy their own lands, notes fifth-generation farmer Stuart Leonard, 34.

Fresh tender to be floated for terminal market in Mihan

A modern terminal market for agriculture produce will be set up in Multi-modal international hub airport at Nagpur (Mihan) for which the state government has allotted 100 acres of land. Varanga in Nagpur rural is the location for the market but the first attempt to find a private developer has proved futile. "We will float a fresh tender now," said state agriculture minister Radha Krishna Vikhe Patil said here on Friday.

"It's a big project to be taken up as a private-public partnership. But no big player evinced interest when a tender was issued for it earlier. We will provide the land and the developer will be required to invest around Rs 200 crore in building logistics and infrastructure facilities for farm exports," said Vikhe Patil. He was talking to reporters on the sidelines of a two-day workshop on strengthening of agriculture produce marketing committees in Nagpur and Amravati revenue divisions that the minister inaugurated on Friday. Additional chief secretary (agriculture and marketing) Sudhir Goyal, state agriculture commissioner Umakant Dhangat, warehousing corporation managing director Vishwas Bhosale were among the officials present at the inaugural.

The state agriculture and marketing division is executing the project for setting up two marketing terminals in the state. While the one at Mihan is still at the initial stage of seeking bids, the other one at Bapdev, near Thane, has progressed with Deepak Fertilizers as the developer, the minister said.

"With good rains and consequently good crop expected this year, we are now firming up our plans to strengthen basic infrastructure at the APMCs. Farmer has to be focal point of our plans and the aim to enable farmer to get best price for his produce. The middleman can be eliminated of our APMC once village levels become well-equipped. Unfortunately, our APMC till now did little in this regard except collecting cess from farmers.

"Now, for the first time we are getting business development plans ready for 100 APMCs in the state. Price Water Cooper has been appointed as consultant to work out their economic feasibility," said Vikhe-Patil. Also a Rs 1209 crore Asian Development Bank aided project was launched in 2010 and expected to be completed in 2017 and a Rs 700 crore World Bank aided project is in the pipeline.

"We are on track for the targeted 4% growth in farm sector. In line with that we have to integrate our marketing division so as to facilitate farmers to improve their incomes. We are aiming at exports in a big way. For this we have opened a marketing office in Dubai, said the agriculture minister. For domestic markets offices are being set up in Chennai, Kolkata and New Delhi, he added.

"Augmenting warehousing capacities, computerizing the APMCs are included in the plans besides developing silos at railheads for quick movement of produce. Farmers can store their crop and get bridge loans on the stock receipts and sell when they get right price avoiding distress sales," said the minister unraveling grand plans of the agriculture marketing

arm. For this new post of district marketing officer has been created besides a panel of 350 educated and well qualified personnel for appointment as secretaries of APMCs has been created as part of the revolutionary plans," said Vikhe Patil.

Nabard targets 1 lakh crore finance for strengthening rural infrastructure in UP

National Bank for Agriculture and Development (Nabard) has set a target of Rs 1, 01,315 crore of bank financing in 2013-14 to strengthen rural infrastructure in UP. Of this, Rs 73,491 crore was earmarked for agriculture, KK Gupta, the new chief general manager of Nabard, has said. Gupta has also said that the bank has played a vital role in developing the rural credit delivery system in Uttar Pradesh.

Nabard's annual business operations in Uttar Pradesh during 2012-13 rose to Rs 7160 crore in comparison to Rs 6506 crore during the previous year. On its part, Nabard plans to provide over Rs 10,500 crore financial support to various institutions in UP during the current fiscal. The financial support during 2012-13 includes Rs 1413 crore to the Uttar Pradesh government under the rural infrastructure development fund (RIDF), taking the total RIDF disbursements to the UP government to Rs 10,550 crore.

Gupta also said projects worth Rs 2148 crore were sanctioned to the state government for flood protection, irrigation, rural roads and rural bridges, raising total sanctions so far to Rs 14,152 crore for 52,870 projects. For 2013-14, Nabard envisages sanctions of Rs 2200 crore and disbursements

of Rs 1750 to the UP government. The bank is also supporting construction of warehouses in rural areas through the state corporations and individual entrepreneurs.

Gupta said Nabard released Rs 388 crore as subsidy for centrally sponsored schemes for supporting infrastructure investments by farmers in dairy, poultry and rural godowns. In addition, Rs 107 crore was released to non-government and voluntary organisations in UP for various promotional programmes in the farm, non-farm sector and the micro-finance sectors for self-help groups (SHGs).

Vegetable vendors stage hunger strike over loss at market

Frustrated over their prolonged demand of repairing the toilets inside K Pudur vegetable market and the civic body attempting to construct new toilets hindering the entrance, vegetable vendors staged a sit-in hunger strike by closing down all the shops on Friday. There are 200 vegetable shops inside the market premises catering to the needs of the public in K Pudur and surrounding areas.

According to the vendors, the city corporation proposed to construct new toilets near the northern entrance of the market as an Amma canteen is functioning nearby while the toilets inside the market are stinking without maintenance for over six months. They also alleged that the local AIADMK councillor is behind this issue projecting as though the vendors are stalling the toilets for Amma canteen.

"The local councillor is troubling us in all possible ways after we resisted

paying the market rent without receipts and the recent toilet stunt is his handwork," rued M Neethirajan, secretary of KPudur All Vendors Association. Recently, three dustbins were placed in front of the market to dump medical waste causing health hazard, he charged.

"We are not against the construction of toilets for Amma canteen but we only demand them to be constructed inside the market and repair the existing ones," Neethirajan pointed out. "We have been demanding the city corporation to repair the toilets inside the market for many months and staged whatever sort of protest we can to no avail including holding siege of local minister. So, we decided to express our agitation against the city corporation through hunger strike," charged a vegetable vendor. As many as 120 women and 20 men participated in the protest following which the city corporation began repair works on the toilets inside the market.

Govt to sell 10.5 mt of wheat, rice in open market

In an effort to contain inflation, the Government has decided to provide 10.5 million tonnes (mt) of food grains to wholesale and retail traders and to the States through Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

The Government said food grains are being provided to suppliers at a rate which is less than the market price.

Briefing the decisions of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs here on Friday, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said that the Government has comfortable stock positions of wheat.

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister K.V. Thomas hoped that the decision would help in controlling inflation.

“We are providing 10 mt wheat and 0.5 mt rice from FCI godowns. This will definitely help in controlling the prices,” Thomas said. The Government will provide a subsidy of Rs 5,491 crore for 10.5 mt of food grains.

“The prices of both wheat and rice are less than the current market prices,”

Thomas claimed. Thomas also said the CCEA has approved allocation of about 5,00,000 tonne of rice to States for retail consumers at Rs 1,875 a quintal plus freight.

The CCEA, however, deferred the decision to export additional wheat.

Government sources said the proposal to allow the export of two million tonnes of wheat through PSUs is before the Cabinet.

“The proposal to allow export of additional wheat through private vendors has been deferred for the time being,” a Government functionary said.

Tea prices gather steam at Kolkata auction

This week at Sale No 25 at Kolkata tea auction, the average prices of both the Orthodox and CTC varieties were higher than those of last week (Sale 24), according to J Thomas & Company Pvt Ltd, the tea auctioneers.

The average price of the Orthodox was Rs 239.32 a kg (Rs 218.99) and that of the CTC was Rs 146.98 (Rs 142.37). An estimated 93.03 per cent (94.28 per cent) of the Orthodox and 61.85 per cent (62.42 per cent) of the CTC volumes offered were sold.

This week the total offerings (packages) at three North Indian auction centres at Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri were 2,87,013 compared with 2,45,971 in the corresponding sale (No 25) of last year. The offerings at Kolkata comprised CTC/Dust 98, 251 (84,799), Orthodox 26,720 (12,448) and Darjeeling 6,024 (7,165). The offerings at two other centres, mainly CTC/Dust, were: Guwahati 74,666 (79,773) and Siliguri 81,352 (61,786).

Improved Assam CTC teas sold well at dearer rates with liquoring categories selling at attractive rates. Dooars sold irregularly lower. Tata Global operated on the liquoring sorts. Hindustan Unilever operated

selectively on the mediums. Western India operated actively for the liquoring teas.

Orthodox, tippy, whole leaf grades were readily absorbed at attractive levels but tippy brokens saw fewer enquiries at easier rates. Darjeeling teas showing seasonal improvement in quality sold well.

Latex stretches gains on fresh enquiries

Spot rubber closed unchanged consecutively for the fourth day on Friday. An almost similar trend in domestic futures and the absence of active traders kept the sentiments almost neutral during the session.

Sheet rubber finished flat at Rs 175.50 a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, according to traders and the Rubber Board. Latex improved further on fresh enquiries while the overall volumes were low.

The July futures slipped to Rs 172.19 (172.52), August to Rs 168.20 (268.59), September to Rs 165.20 (165.65), October to Rs 161.94 (162.59) and November to Rs 163.25 (164.85) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs 165.83 (164.95) a kg at Bangkok. The June futures firmed up to ¥ 232 (Rs 140.68) from ¥ 229 during the day session but then remained steady during the night session 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: 121.50 (120).

Sethuraman estate gets US certification for robusta coffee

Indian coffee estates are moving slowly to gain US' roasters interest.

As a first step, the Sethuraman Estates located at Magundi in Chikmagalur after showcasing its produce at various speciality coffee events in the US has now become the first Indian coffee estate to get 'R Grade' certificate.

'R Grade' certificate are given for washed robusta coffees by the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) which is an arm of Speciality Coffee Association of America (SCAA).

getting premium

The SCAA recently tested Sethuraman Estate's robusta coffee submission at the CQI and found to have all the required quality parameters. This certificate facilitates the estate to sell and charge a high premium in the US

The certificate and recognition allows Sethuraman Estates to sell its entire submission of 15 tonnes speciality robusta in the US market spread over a year by using the CQI and SCAA logo.

"The 'single-origin estate-branded' coffee of Sethuram Estates has so far fetched a premium of over 30 per cent over the domestic market prices.

Currently the domestic washed robusta coffees is trading at Rs 145 a kg,” said Nishant R. Gurjer, Managing Partner, Sethuraman Estates.

entering US

“This certificate and recognition will allow us to enter the lucrative US café market as well,” he added.

The Sethuraman estate located at Chikmagalur began in operations in the 1950s. In the US market, the company is marketing estate-branded coffees - the Sitara Parchment Robusta and the Ne Plus Ultra of Robusta coffee brands.

The US, a traditionally arabica-consuming country, is slowly replacing it with robusta coffees and few companies have initiated moves to source from various countries for create blends.

shift to robusta

This has led to the Coffee Quality Institute, which used to certify only Arabica coffees, now has introduced separate certification for robusta coffees.

ratings

According to the institute’s finding of Sethuraman Estates, the following are the rating with baseline score of 7.14. Aroma 7.58 , flavour 7.42, aftertaste 7.42, acidity 7.83, mouth feel 7.42, balance 7.50, Uniformity 10, clean cup 10 Sweetness 7.42 cupper points 7.58.

Gurjer said, “We entered the US market in 2006 by exporting just two containers (36 tonnes) and so far have reached the level of 8 containers (144 tonnes) of speciality robusta coffees.”

Kalam inaugurates containment facility at Icrisat

A new greenhouse containment facility for transgenic crops at the International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics (Icrisat) was inaugurated by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of the nation.

The facility will be part of the Platform for Translational Research on Transgenic Crops (PTTC) at Patancheru campus of the institute.

Speaking on the occasion, Kalam recalled that this year marks the 30th anniversary of the first successful introduction of a foreign gene into a plant. “There is clear evidence that the use of Genetically Modified (GM) crops has resulted in significant benefits like higher crop yields, reduced farm costs, increased farm profit and improvement in health and the environment,” he said, “and yet there is a heated debate over GM crops. No illusionary fears can stop the advancement of what is rational and logical. The solution lies in developing beneficial transgenic crops locally. I find today a historical step taken in this direction. The PTTC will be the birthplace of a new generation of transgenic crops,” he said.

The \$6.2-million PTTC, headed by Kiran Sharma, was established jointly by the Department of Biotechnology and Icrisat in 2009, a press release from the institute said.

Pepper gains on demand

Pepper futures both on IPSTA and the NMCE and on the spot shot up on Friday on strong domestic demand amid tight supply.

Arrivals continued to be very thin and only five tonnes of fresh pepper arrived and that were traded at Rs 370 a kg for high range pepper, market sources told *Business Line*. Primary market dealers told that back to back coverage was very difficult and the farmers were not releasing and some has showed interest but they were not ready to sell below Rs 400.

Stockists in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand are all active in Karnataka and covered substantial quantities at prices ranging from Rs 350 and Rs 375 a kg, they said.

All the active contracts July, Aug and Sep increased by Rs 500 a quintal each to Rs 37,435, Rs 37,373 and Rs 37,374 respectively. Total open interest remained unchanged at 32 tonnes. Total turnover dropped by 6 tonnes to 28 tonnes.

Spot prices increased by Rs 400 to Rs 35,300 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,800 (garbled) a quintal.

Monsoon could become even more unpredictable, say researchers

Even as disaster managers fight hard to tackle the massive human tragedy at flood-ravaged Uttarakhand, researchers are predicting that Indian monsoon could become even more unpredictable.

Daily variability of the monsoon might increase, according to computer simulations run by Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Indian monsoon is a complex system which is likely to change under future global warming, scientists at the institute said.

FLOOD RISK

While it is in the very nature of weather to vary, the question is how much and whether we can deal with it. Extreme rainfall, for example, bears the risk of flooding, and crop failure.

About 80 percent of annual rainfall in India occurs during the monsoon season from June through September.

Focusing on the average is not always useful. If rainfall comes in a spell and is followed by a drought, this can be devastating even if the average is normal.

RAINFALL TRENDS

This requires the right kind of adaptation measures that account for this variability – such as intelligent insurance schemes, authors of a study at Potsdam said.

Factors that could influence rainfall trends include the higher holding capacity of moisture of warm air. But cooling in the higher atmosphere, which changes current pressure, also could change the pattern.

“Increased variability translates into potentially severe impacts on people who cannot afford additional loss,” says Anders Levermann, co-chair of research domain on sustainable solutions at Potsdam.

GLOBAL WARMING

Even if seasonal mean precipitation would remain unchanged, impacts could be substantial, he added.

“Limiting global warming is key, adaptation cannot replace but rather complement it.”

The strongest change of 13 to 50 per cent is found in a scenario in which greenhouse gases continue to be emitted unabated.

Even if global warming would be limited to the internationally acknowledged threshold of two degrees Celsius, this would bear the risk of additional day-to-day variability between 8 and 24 percent above pre-industrial level, the study said.

Excess production pulls vannamei shrimp prices down



Slump: Exporters slash prices whenever there is an excess production, even though conditions in the international market are favourable.

The slump in prices of vannamei shrimp in Andhra Pradesh by roughly Rs 100 or so a kg (30 count) has left farmers disappointed, and they allege that the seafood exporters are depressing the prices.

However, on the whole, trade sources as well as farmers and also Government agencies say that vannamei shrimp culture during the past few years has proved profitable to farmers, notwithstanding the recent price slump.

Andhra Pradesh, always at the forefront in shrimp culture, has switched over to vannamei culture during the past few years from monodon (tiger shrimp) culture in the nineties and the early years of the first decade.

Fortunately, there has been no disease problem in vannamei culture so far.

According to G. Raj Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture, samples have been sent to labs for analysis and there is no sign of early mortality syndrome. He said the international market conditions were all right for vannamei culture at present, as Thailand and other countries were grappling with early mortality syndrome.

Exotic variety

He said vannamei was an exotic species and therefore the brood stock was being imported and supplied to hatcheries, after being subjected to the quarantine scrutiny.

He admitted that there were many unauthorised farmers taking up culture in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. The farmers should obtain permission from the Coastal Aquaculture Authority of India.

For want of enough seed, some of the hatcheries were supplying local seed, resulting in some problems.

He said if the farmers stocked the ponds with certified seed and observed the bio-security measures and sanitation measures there would be no problems in vannamei culture.

G. Rambabu of Kesanakurupalem said he had been in aquaculture for the past 20 years.

Prices decline

“Earlier, I used to culture monodon and now I have switched over to vannamei. However, whenever there is excess production as now, the importers depress prices. One month ago, the prices were in the range of Rs 410-430 a kg and Rs 370 (40 count). Now, we are being paid Rs 320 (30 count). I think we do not have enough processing capacity and therefore the exporters depress prices whenever there is excess production, even though the conditions in the international market are favourable. The farmers are at the mercy of exporters,” he said.

Chantibabu of Kajuluru in East Godavari is of the same opinion.

“There is no rational explanation for the recent slump in prices. It happened last year also during May, June and July when vannamei production was high. The margins for exporters are high, as there is good demand for the shrimp in the international market. There is no market intervention mechanism for the produce and therefore we have to accept whatever price is paid by the exporter,” he lamented.

There are also apprehensions expressed by some experts over the culture of vannamei in Indian conditions.

Dr T. Rajyalakshmi, former Director of the Centre for Brackish Water Aquaculture, is of the opinion that many precautions should have been taken before the introduction of an exotic species such as vannamei. She fears many more complications may crop up in future.

Cotton traded higher on supply concern



Cotton prices improved on the back of decreasing supply and good demand of domestic mills.

Moreover, weak rupee position may encourage export demand for short term.

supply position

Traders said that immediate supply concern and weak rupee were supporting domestic prices.

Domestic supply position remained tight due to higher exports and strong local consumption.

Traders said that if the rupee sustained at current levels, further export of 7,00,000-8,00,000 bales can not be ruled out.

Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton increased by Rs 300 to Rs 40,200-40,500 for a candy of 356 kg.

Kapas or raw cotton price gained by Rs 10-15 to Rs 1,000-1,035 for 20 kg and gin delivery kapas was traded at Rs 1,035-1,050.

arrivals

About 6,000-7,000 bales cotton arrived in Gujarat and 20,000-22,000 bales arrived in India.

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) sold 12,000 bales cotton through e-auction at Rs 40,400-42,000 on June 20.

Cotton ready delivery quoted at Rs 4,250-4,315 a quintal in Punjab, Rs 4,200-4,225 in Haryana and Rs 4,230-4,240 in Rajasthan.

Mustard oil extends gains on weak arrivals



Mustard-rapeseed oil extended gain by Rs 4 and palmolein declined by Rs 5 for 10 kg on Friday.

Mustard-rapeseed oil gained on continued uptrend in producing centres due to weak arrivals.

In Rajasthan also, mustard oil witnessed an uptrend with demand outstripping supply.

Groundnut, soyabean, sunflower and cotton refined oils were unchanged. Volume was thin on slack physical demand, said sources.

Volume remained thin at 350-400 tonnes during the day. About 180-200 tonnes palmolein were resale traded at Rs 530 for ready and 180-200 tonnes at Rs 535-536 for July 1-15." Soyabean arrivals were about 1.15 lakh-1.20 lakh bags including 60,000-65,000 bags in Madhya Pradesh and its prices were Rs 3,900-3,920 ex-mandi and Rs 3,990 for plant delivery.

Mustard seeds arrivals were 1.50 lakh-1.60 lakh bags and priced at Rs 3,160-3,600.

At the end of the day, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 555, super palmolein Rs 590 and super deluxe Rs 610. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 560 and Rs 540 ex-JNPT; soyabean refined oil Rs 690 for June-July and Rs 693 for August; sunflower refined oil Rs 810. Gokul's rates for palmolein were Rs 542 for June and Rs 545 for July. In Rajkot, groundnut oil was steady at Rs 1,470 (Rs 1,480) for *telia* tin and Rs 950 (Rs 950) for loose 10 kg.

On National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil July futures dropped by Rs 4.75 to Rs 699.20 (Rs 703.95); August down by Rs 5.30 to Rs 692.50 (Rs 697.80) and September declined by Rs 4.40 to Rs 684.35 (Rs 688.75).

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil July contracts closed lower at MYR 2,432 (MYR 2,457), August ended at MYR 2,446 (MYR 2,472) and September closed at MYR 2,440 (MYR 2,462) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: Groundnut oil 975 (975), soya refined oil 685 (685), sunflower exp. ref. 745 (740), sunflower ref. 810 (810), rapeseed ref. oil 702 (698), rapeseed expeller ref. 672 (668) cottonseed ref. oil 675 (675) and palmolein 533 (538).

Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai, quoted Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 585 ex-Chennai for delivery in 15 days.

Bearish sentiment unlikely in masoor



Increased buying support at lower rate and rise in dollar have perked up masoor to Rs 4,400-4,450 a quintal (Rs 4,375-4,425), masoor (medium) ruled at Rs 4,000-4,200. Compared to last week, masoor, however, is ruling Rs 50 lower.

Rise in the dollar value has lifted masoor prices in Indore mandis in the past two weeks by Rs 150-200.

With steep decline in domestic stocks, imported masoor are turning costlier.

Given the continuous decline of the rupee against the dollar, bearish sentiment in masoor in near future appears unlikely.

Rise in buying support in masoor also lifted its dal with masoor dal (average) on Friday was quoted at Rs 4,925-50 a quintal, masoor dal (medium) at Rs 5,025-50, while masoor dal (bold) ruled at Rs 5,125-50.

Moong ruled stable on subdued demand with moong (best) being quoted at Rs 4,800-5,100, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs 4,000-4,700.

Moong dal ruled higher on improved demand with moong dal (medium) being quoted at Rs 6,100-6,200, moong dal (bold) at Rs 6,600-6,700 a quintal, while moong mongar ruled at Rs 7,000-7,100.

Urad and its dal also ruled stable on slack demand.

Urad (bold) in mandis was quoted at Rs 3,500-3,600 a quintal, while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 3,000-3,200 a quintal.

Similarly urad dal also ruled stable with urad dal (medium) being quoted at Rs 4,100-4,200, urad dal (bold) at Rs 4,700-4,800, while urad mongar ruled at Rs 5,600-5,900 a quintal.

Sugar futures rule steady with thin volatility



Mumbai, June 21:

Sugar prices at producing level dropped by Rs 10 on Friday on slack demand.

In the Vashi wholesale market, prices ruled steady on routine retailers demand.

Sufficient inventory stocks and in the absence of positive cues, stockists kept away from taking fresh risk amid thin volatility in futures markets.

Loading-unloading activities were close till noon due to felicitation programme of Mathadi Union leaders Shashikant Shinde and Narendra Patil. Moral was weak.

Sources said supply from mills continued while local offtake remained slightly weak as retailers have already covered sufficient stocks.

Low demand

Consumer's demand is also lower after reopening of school and collages. Prices on domestic futures market ruled steady with thin volatility.

Need based demand at upper level cooled down mill tender rates by Rs 10 as some needy mills offloaded commodity at lower rates for managing financial liquidity.

Market trend will remain weak till month end due to continuous supply, sources said.

From next month, sentiment may become positive due to Ramadan and Ashadhi Ekadashi Festivals.

Festival season

Festival seasons will start from next month till December.

Arrivals in the Vashi market were 64-65 truck loads (each of 100 bags) and local despatches were about 62-63 truck loads.

On Thursday, 12-13 mills offered tenders and sold about 34,000-35,000 bags at Rs 2,940-3,000 (Rs 2,950-3,010) for S-grade and Rs 3,020-3,110 (Rs 3,020-3,120) for M-grade.

On National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, sugar July futures were lower by Rs 2 to Rs 3,058 (Rs 3,060), August was Rs 3,111 (Rs 3,110) and September higher by Re 1 to Rs 3,160 (Rs 3,159) till noon.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 3,064-3,141 (Rs 3,064-3,141) and M-grade Rs 3,172-3,341 (Rs 3,186-3,341).

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).

Wheat futures may remain range-bound



A range bound movement is likely to be witnessed in the futures market while wheat in physical market may remain steady, said trade experts.

Wheat market continued to witness a steady trend and prices of dara wheat ruled firm. Around 1,000 bags of wheat arrived on Friday and stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. In the physical market, after witnessing a good rally last week, wheat prices have been ruling unchanged since then. Dara wheat ruled flat and sold at Rs 1,535-1,540 a quintal. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,535 while delivery at the chakki was at Rs 1,540.

Desi wheat variety sold at Rs 2,300. Demand matched supply. Market may continue to rule around current levels for next few days, said Subhash Chander, a wheat trader. In Delhi's Lawrence road market, a benchmark for the country, wheat mill quality traded at Rs 1,580-1,600. On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, a weak tone was witnessed at the futures market.

Wheat for July contracts decreased by Rs 11 and traded at 1,574 a quintal with an open interest of 16,330 lots. The grain had made a low at Rs 1,570 a quintal earlier in the day. August contracts went down by Rs 18 and traded at Rs 1,591.

While, wheat spot prices on the exchange traded at Rs 1,485. Meanwhile, the Government has deferred a decision on allowing additional wheat for overseas sales.

Following a steady trend in wheat, flour too continued to rule flat and quoted at Rs 1,800. On the other hand, Chokar witnessed a fall on account of lack of buying and went down by Rs 25 to Rs 1,225-1,250.

Low quality pounds turmeric; falls by Rs 1,190/quintal



Prices of the turmeric decreased sharply at the Regulated Market Committee (RMC) on the last day of the week on Friday.

Though the three turmeric markets did not assemble for the past five days, the RMC alone conducted the sale for the past four days.

During the last four days, 787 bags arrived for sale, but only 273 were sold. On Friday, 179 arrived for sale.

Traders expressed their dissatisfaction over the quality and one or two traders quoted decreased prices and purchased 116 bags.

The price of finger variety decreased by Rs 1,190 a quintal and the root variety fell by Rs 250.

Only 30 bags of root variety arrived for sale. The traders said that they are buying the stock for local orders and still waiting for upcountry orders.

Now due to severe rain in North India, it is doubtful to get fresh orders till July.

Meanwhile the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association declared that as usual all the four markets will conduct auction from Monday.

They are expecting heavy arrivals.

Similarly at the Sathyamangalam Cooperative Marketing Society, the auction was conducted. The polished finger turmeric was sold at Rs 6,009, while the root variety was sold at Rs 5,559.

The unpolished finger variety was sold at Rs 5,109. Of 350 bags that arrived, 225 bags were sold on Friday.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,360-6,409, the root variety Rs 5,699-5,949.

Of the arrival of 179 bags, 116 were sold.

Business Standard

Kharif sowing picks up as monsoon intensifies in Karnataka



Sowing of foodgrains, oilseeds and cash crops is in full swing across Karnataka, thanks to the copious rains. The farmers, who have suffered drought for two consecutive years, are happy with the arrival and spread of monsoon across the state.

The sowing was above normal across Karnataka in the first three weeks since the onset of monsoon in the state on June 1. The sowing of various food crops, oilseeds and commercial crops has begun in all 176 taluks of the state.

The state as a whole has recorded 22 per cent higher rainfall during the period from June 1 to June 17, 2013. The state recorded an actual amount of 128 mm of rainfall as against the normal rainfall of 96 mm which is classified under excess category by the Indian Meteorological Department.

For the period between June 1 and June 20, sowing has been completed in about 1.86 million hectares, which is about 25 per cent of the total targeted

area for the current year, according to data available with the department of agriculture. For the corresponding period last year, sowing was completed on 729,000 hectares.

The state agriculture department has set a target of 7.42 million hectares during the Kharif season this year, which is about 41,000 hectares less than last year. The farmers could complete sowing on about 6.28 million hectares out of the targeted area of 7.47 million hectares during the last Kharif owing to shortage of rainfall.

For the present Kharif (2013-14) the state is aiming to cover 5.09 million hectares under foodgrains and 1.28 million hectares are planned for oilseeds besides 1.05 million hectares under cashcrops.

The state is targeting a foodgrain production of 9.42 million tonnes during the Kharif season, which is about 8 per cent higher than last year's production. According to second advance estimates, the foodgrain production was about 8.75 million tonnes in Kharif season last year. However, the entire year's foodgrain production is pegged at 12.5 million tonnes as per the second advance estimates. The production was below the target last year owing to large-scale drought across the state. Out of 176 taluks, as many as 126 taluks were reeling under the drought last year. For the present Kharif season, the farmers in the state have started sowing for maize, jowar, greengram, groundnut, castor, sunflower, cotton, and tobacco in south interior parts. In northern parts of the state, sowing is in full swing for tur, bajra, blackgram, til, soybean. The sowing for paddy and

ragi will commence from the first week of July.

Sowing was above normal in 14 districts, normal in four districts, below normal in five districts and negligible in seven districts till June 21, 2013, according to information reaching the department of agriculture.

Out of 176 taluks, 112 taluks have received excess rainfall, 41 taluks have got normal rains and 23 taluks have been classified under deficit category during the period from June 1 to June 17. Last year, for the same period, rainfall was excess in five taluks, normal in six taluks and scanty in 124 taluks.

Seed firms upbeat on robust kharif sowing



Seed companies are upbeat. This kharif season, sowing has kicked off on a robust note, raising the demand for seeds more than anticipated. "With the early onset of monsoon this year, sowing has picked up in most parts. Unlike last year, when a delayed monsoon had spoiled the party for seed companies, this year, we expect demand to exceed estimates," said a senior National Seed Association of India (NSAI) official.

The onset of the southwest monsoon was about a week ahead of schedule. By June 13, northern India, too, recorded rains. As such, most cultivable regions across the country were covered. Cotton, maize, groundnut, soybean and cereals are the key kharif crops, and farmers have already started sowing these in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

India's overall seeds industry is estimated at about Rs 7,500 crore. It is expected this would grow at about 15 per cent a year.

"With the progress of the monsoon, we expect sowing activity to pick up during July. This may boost the demand for seeds. Last year, it was pretty dull, owing to delayed and insufficient rains in key growing regions," said Hasmukh Dabhi from Bhartiya Kisan Sangh.

"Early sowing has cleared most of the cotton seed inventory. Cotton seed demand is robust in parts of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. There is a possible rise in the demand for maize seeds as well," said the NSAI official.

Sources said farmers in states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh were increasingly adopting maize cultivation. "This year, there would be a rise of at least five to seven per cent in the demand for maize seeds, owing to the favourable monsoon. Last year, the prices were good; this year, too, these are likely to remain upbeat," said a Bangalore-based person involved in the seeds business.

"Other crops, such as soybean and paddy, would also see a rise. This year, there is increased inclination towards hybrid paddy. The demand for seeds has grown. However, we have not seen 100 per cent widespread rains. Parts of Maharashtra haven't received rains yet," said Sameer Mulay of Ajeet Seeds.

Last year, Indian seed companies had sold about 42 million packets (of 450 g each) of cotton seeds.

"Sowing has not yet picked up in many parts of the cotton-growing regions of Gujarat and Maharashtra. The season has just begun; we expect the demand for cotton seeds to meet the demand seen last year," said a senior official at a leading BT cotton seeds company.

In Gujarat, one of the largest cotton-growing states, cotton sowing was carried out on 5,02,000 hectares during June 1-17, a 107 per cent rise compared to the year-ago period. During the same period, groundnut sowing rose 218 per cent to 3,99,200 hectares, against 1,25,400 hectares in the corresponding period last year.

Groundwater recharge: solution from the blue

The answer to the problem of declining groundwater table probably will pour from the heavens.

The union ministry of water resources has told the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) to do nationwide surveys of groundwater resources and guide the states in scientific and technical matters in this regard.

The CGWB's strategy is to channelise rainwater, which has been going waste till now, into surface streams. Following the guidelines, the agriculture department of Punjab has started educating farmers and general public about the groundwater situation across the state.

Special training camps will be organised in the Malwa region also, as most farmers there are unaware how they can collect groundwater and rainwater. The farmers of this region harvest groundwater for irrigation. "The CGWB has declared three (Moga-1, Nihal Singh Wala, and Moga-2) of the five revenue blocks of Moga district dark zones already because of the fast depletion of the water table," said Arshdeep Singh Thind, deputy commissioner of Moga.

For Sukhdev Singh Brar, chief agriculture officer of Moga, the campaign's aim is to reduce or even reverse the declining level of groundwater.

"Groundwater extraction has reached a very high stage and brought problems such as failure of wells and tubewells; deterioration in

groundwater quality; and saline water for drinking,” he said. For the artificial recharge of groundwater, it was essential to conserve every drop of rainwater, said chief agricultural officer Brar.

“To prevent the water table from depleting further, farmers should switch from paddy to growing maize, sugarcane, pulses, and basmati rice,” said state-award-winner agriculture expert Jaswinder Singh Brar.

If we manage rainwater at the mass level, it will not only enhance the water availability but also improve the water quality and reduce flood hazard, opine experts.

Rain sets veggie prices on fire

If the threat of rising flood levels was not enough, consumers across the city have to grapple with skyrocketing prices of vegetables.

With the prices of essential vegetables such as onions and tomatoes set to rise by 100-200% in the coming week, consumers are struggling to keep household finances in check.

"Over the past three days, the prices of vegetables have shot up. There are also fewer retailers now and the vegetables are not fresh. It is very distressing because it puts a lot of pressure on our finances. The burden of climatic factors invariably burns a hole in our pockets," said Neeta Kaushal, a resident of Nirman Vihar.

With Yamuna levels crossing the danger mark, vegetables grown along the belt have been destroyed. Retailers say the rise in prices is largely due to high procurement prices from wholesalers and farmers because of the destruction of harvest caused by the flooding of the Yamuna and flash floods in Uttarakhand.

"The supply of vegetables has gone down drastically because of the floods and rain. Because of this, the price of vegetables has gone up. Demand for vegetables such as onions, tomatoes and potatoes always remains constant. We pay more to wholesalers to procure the products and have no option but to charge more from consumers," said a retailer at Mayur Vihar.

	Current	Estimated
Onion	₹25	₹50
Tomato	₹20	₹60
Potato	₹25	₹35-40
Cauliflower	₹50	₹60-65
Ladyfinger	₹25	₹40

(PRICES PER KG)

Officials claimed that green vegetables grown along the Yamuna belt as well as other farm produce have been severely damaged due to the rains, prompting them to procure produce from other states, thereby raising costs significantly.

"Green vegetables that are sold in the city are grown along the Yamuna belt - all of which has been destroyed because of the flooding. Tomatoes are procured from Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, which have also been hit badly. The fields have been totally flooded and sourcing these vegetables from other states has pushed up costs heavily," said Anil Malhotra, member, Agricultural Produce Market Committee.

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Saturday, Jun 22

Max Min

36° | 29°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 49

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:43

Sunset: 06:37

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Sunday, Jun 23

Max Min

38° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday
Jun 24



38° | 29°

Cloudy

Tuesday
Jun 25



38° | 29°

Overcast

Wednesday
Jun 26



37° | 28°

Overcast

Thursday
Jun 27



38° | 28°

Overcast

Friday
Jun 28



36° | 28°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:24

Humidity: 37

Sunset: 07:22

Wind: normal Barometer: 1000

