

## **Paddy, banana cultivations bear brunt of rain fury**

Paddy and banana crops in the district have borne the brunt of the monsoon with initial estimates putting submerged acreage under paddy at 1,000 hectares out of a total of 1,200 hectares that came under sowing with the onset of the rains.

Banana cultivation has been hit equally hard with the district office of the agriculture department estimating that nearly 1 lakh banana plants, both bunched and non-bunched, have either collapsed under heavy winds or remain submerged over the past seven days.

Reports are just coming in and these figures are from the first information reports received from various blocks in the district, said a senior official of the department on Wednesday.

The initial monetary losses have been put at more than Rs. 4 crore, about Rs. 3 crore being accounted for by damage to banana crop.

Large areas under vegetable cultivation, nutmegs, rubber, arecanut, and tuber crops like elephant foot yam, tapioca, have also been affected.

Ernakulam district has received 140 per cent more rain over the past seven days than the long-term average for the period, said data from Indian Meteorological Department. Ernakulam received 369 mm of rain during the past week against the normal rainfall of 149 mm.

Between June 1 and 26, the district received 1,156 mm of rain against the normal 589 mm, a departure of 96 per cent, IMD data said.

### **BANANA PLANTS DAMAGED**

Kothamangalam block has reported damage to more than 10,000 banana plants as well as 50 hectares of paddy, which remained submerged on Wednesday after heavy overnight rain. Twenty hectares under tapioca too has been submerged in Kothamangalam block and if the rain continues the entire crop will be lost, said a field official. Keerampara, Pallarimangalam, Paingottoor, Kottappadi and Kavalangad are among the villages seriously affected by the heavy rain and subsequent flooding.

Koovappady block has reported the loss of nearly 35,000 banana plants, which collapsed in heavy winds over two days. A total of 14 hectares of banana plantations are reported to have sustained serious damage and a hectare each under tapioca and rubber have also been lost to the rain and wind.

Moovattupuzha block has reported a loss of 10,000 banana plants till Wednesday. Banana crop in villages like Maradi and Aarakkuzha have sustained serious damage and reports said that a farmer in Ayavana had lost 2,500 plants.

Initial reports from Piravom indicated the loss of more than 2,500 banana plants and more than 500 rubber trees under tapping. Six hectares of vegetable and two hectares under tapioca have been submerged. Paddy has been totally lost on 2.4 hectares. Damage to paddy is likely to be more extensive though no confirmed reports have come in so far.

Thiruvaniyoor village has lost 40 hectares of paddy and another 20 hectares is on the verge of being submerged with the rain continuing. Poothrikka village too has sustained serious damage to paddy. Field reports said that 30 hectares under paddy and 10 hectares each under banana and vegetables has been lost.

Angamaly block reported submersion of 25 hectares of paddy, spread over Mookkannur, Kalady and Kanjoor areas. Around 20,000 banana plants have also been lost in the block.

Nedumbassery block has lost 8,000 banana plants and 25 hectares of paddy sown area has been submerged.

Submersion of the Pallikkeri paddy field collective in Choornikkara has resulted in a loss of more than 1,000 banana plants.

### **Coconut rejuvenation scheme for all districts**

Coconut Development Board (CDB) will extend the scheme for replanting and rejuvenation of coconut palms to all the districts in the State. The scheme, intended for removal of old and unproductive palms and planting new ones, was introduced on a pilot basis in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Thrissur districts in 2009-10.

The union government had allotted Rs. 75 crore for the programme in the 2013-14 budget. The scheme will be extended to 11 districts in a phased manner, according to CDB officials. Under the pilot project, farmers were given subsidy of Rs.500 per palm for the removal of 20 palms and Rs.250 per palm for the palms removed subsequently, subject to a maximum of Rs.13,000 per hectare. The cutting and removal of the palms were followed by replanting for which a subsidy of Rs.20 per seedling was provided. A subsidy of Rs.15,000 per hectare was provided in two installments for rejuvenation of the remaining palms.

### **ROOT WILT DISEASE**

“While the project is intended to increase productivity, utmost care should be taken to plant disease-free and high yielding varieties”, said Pushpadas, an agricultural scientist who had worked in coconut research stations. The root wilt disease (lethal yellowing) continues to be a cause of concern for farmers and unless a disease-free strain is developed, the intended progress might not be achieved, he said.

George V.Thomas, Director of Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, which is engaged in research on containing root wilt disease, said remedy for root wilt disease (phytoplasma) was yet to be found out. “A complete remedy is not available anywhere in the world”, he said. Nevertheless, agronomic practices can limit the impact of the disease. “Two strong varieties that have shown 75-80 per cent resistance to the disease have been developed”, he said. Removal of affected palms is the ideal strategy. The programme has already started in phases and it will be extended to the entire country during the 12 Plan period, he said.

### **REJUVENATION SCHEME**

Coconut Development Board envisages involvement of Coconut Producers Societies and Coconut Producers Federations in the rejuvenation scheme. Dwarf varieties could be the ideal choice for those areas where the farmers face difficulty in getting the services of skilled labour for harvesting operations. The Board Chairman, T.K.Jose, had taken a novel initiative to form ‘Friends of Coconut Trees’, a group of trained personnel for harvesting and maintenance operations. Though it is functioning successfully at different locations, there are areas where adequate number of personnel for harvesting is not available.

The Board has recommended an increase in the fund allotment for rejuvenation from Rs.15,000 to Rs.17,500 per hectare, taking into account the higher input cost. Similarly, a higher subsidy of Rs.40 per seedling has been recommended for replanting. The upgraded subsidies have to be approved by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation. The programme is expected to be completed in a year in the districts of Wayanad and Idukki where the area to be covered is less compared to other districts.

The total area targeted for implementing the scheme in Kerala was 1.33 lakh hectares and 2000 hectares in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. During the project period, an area of 1.37 lakh hectares

was covered in Kerala and 2000 hectares in Andaman and Nicobar islands. Projects worth Rs 234.45 crore were approved by the Board for the implementation in three districts of Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar islands. The union government had sanctioned Rs. 141.12 crore for the projects, according to the Board.

### **Blossoming fame and withering life**



*FOOTLOOSE From the jasmine fields to the flower market, T. SARAVANAN and A.SHRIKUMAR find that Madurai Malli is a phenomenon that rules the whims and wants of traders and flower-lovers*

At the Mattuthavani flower market, we first encounter putrefying garbage and slushy floor. Heaps of flower petals and leaves rot in the open and cattle roam around binging on them. There is only chaos, noise, rush and ubiquitously unpleasant odours.

A village woman pushes us aside dragging a huge gunny bag along. A man yells out flower names “Kanagambaram, Champangi...” Old women bargain with lungi-clad traders sitting cross-legged and holding a weighing balance. . Intricately woven garlands are displayed at every shop. We wait for the moment, an explosion of colours and scents. And there they arrive. Rose varieties including Tajmahal, Jerpura, Dutch rose and Gladiator from Bangalore, ‘Champangi’ from Pallapatti in Dindigul, ‘Kozhi poo’ from Usilampatti, ‘Kanagambaram’ from Chinnamanur in Theni and ‘pattu rose’ from Rajadhani Kottai in Kodai Road... the scene changes to a riot of hues and a medley of fragrance.

But what we can’t escape or ignore is the strong refreshing whiff of ‘Gundu’ malli. There is no dearth of colourful blooms in the market but every buyer seems to be searching for the queen of blooms. Jasmines from various villages become one here, under the tag ‘Madurai malli.’

“Flowers from every village are different in texture and size,” says Rameswari, a buyer from Simmakal. “We feel the bud between our fingers to check the quality .” Suddenly voices take over as a fierce bargaining is on to fix the rate of the flower for the day. After much haggling, the ‘farmer-trader-buyer’ trio arrive at a consensus. . “Every hour, the price varies depending upon the quality and demand,” says Muthu, another buyer. “The peak season of jasmine is during March to July. The quantity of flowers arriving at the market dwindles in winter.”

S. Ramachandran, president of Madurai Mattuthavani Flower Market recalls the days when every farmer would bring 10 to 15 kilos of jasmine every hour. “Now, it is down to just 10 per cent,” he says.

Around Madurai, jasmine is cultivated in more than 30 villages spread over north and south blocks. The flowers from Eliyapathi, Valayankulam, Salvarpatti, Parapathi, Parampupatti, Sundarangundu, Thirumal, Solanguruni, Vellakulam and Veppangulam are much sought-after for their size and texture.

What makes Madurai grown malli so unique? “The malli grown in our belt is bigger and the stem is stronger. It lasts long and the fragrance is intense. It’s because of the soil quality and the tropical climate,” says Mokkai a farmer from Eliyapathi, a village off the Arupukottai Road.

This village, as we discover, is known less by its name and more by its flower's fame. Malli is the name of every first flower and every second girl child here. Our eyes feast on the blue hills, green fields, red earth and colourful people as we walk through Mokka's three-acre field. Long rows of lush green plants studded with bunches of sparkling white buds, steal the sight. We feel the moist earth – freshly watered -- and inhale as much of the scent until it hits our brains.

. "Beware!" warns, Samayakkal, a sexagenarian, from behind. "Snakes are waiting to greet you," and we retreat in a huff. "We start our day before the dawn breaks. I have been doing this work for four decades and feel the fragrance in my fingers forever," Samayakkal flashes a paan-stained smile. "But we have to brave the snakes," her voice trembles remembering one of the workers who died of snake bite while working in the field two months ago.

It's because of people like her that the much-acclaimed Madurai malli reaches places the world over, on time. "We dispatch the first batch of flowers at 6 a.m. to the airport to be sent to other countries and cities. From then on, every hour, we keep sending batches for the local and outstation markets," she says.

Jasmine means more than just a flower to the 1,100 farmers and 10,000 other people dependent on it. It's the lifeline in more than 30 villages in the south block. Mokka, who has been cultivating malli for two generations, says, "Over the years, the production has come down to a quarter of what it used to be." Scarcity of water, poor appreciation of the produce, shrinking farmlands and labour shortage seems to be the major reasons. Sadly, dry fields and dying jasmine are a common sight today.

Our next stop is Thirumal, a hamlet near Thirumangalam, where jasmine is said to be as common as any street-side flower. But we had to search the fields with malli playing hide-and seek! We found every other crop -- groundnuts, ladies finger and brinjal – but not jasmine.

"Earlier, this village had only of jasmine fields. Now people have switched over to other plants," Kathiresan narrates another heart-wrenching story about the slow death of jasmine. "Farmers should be involved in activities related to jasmine development," he says. "Most traders and officials are far removed from the ground reality," says Kathiresan, whose four-acre jasmine garden has shrunk to 30-cents.

Though jasmine farming doesn't require copious rains, the flower needs one lakh litres of water per acre, every 10 days to get maximum yield. The first buds can be harvested within 60 days of transplantation of saplings.

The parent sapling (pathiyam) for all the jasmine plants is obtained from Thangachimadam near Rameswaram. The sea breeze and optimum temperature is said to favour the growth of jasmine saplings in the coastal town.

The plant reaches up to three feet in three years time and lasts for 20 years yielding flowers every season. In each bunch, the plant gives up to twelve flowers. As jasmine buds bloom in the evenings, they are plucked in the early mornings to be sent to outstation markets.

As president of the Madurai Mattuthavani Flower Market, he trains farmers and flower vendors on the techniques of marketing and weaving and also provides financial aid to encourage farmers to continue jasmine cultivation. "We want to save the flower from becoming extinct," asserts Ramachandran, also a member of Madurai Malli Development Council. (*City 3Sixty is a monthly column that captures the different moods of the city. It appears last Thursday of every month.*)

## Agro bio pharmacy concept well received by Kerala farmers



On sale: The biopharmacy concept envisages converting Kerala into an entirely organic state in five to 10 years.— Photo: Special Arrangement

Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) or farm science centres exist in almost all districts of the country to support farming activities. But only a handful of them are able to conceive new innovative ideas and transform them into action at the field level.

The Kerala Kannur kendra is one such institution that has been successful in introducing an agro bio pharmacy and farmers' engineering service and training (FEST) centre.

The major problem faced while adopting organic farming is the non-availability of trustworthy organic products and the cumbersomeness of preparation of organic products.

### **Different products**

An array of products ranging from tobacco decoction to pheromone traps are produced and sold at the pharmacy. The labour for the production of these items is provided by different self-help groups trained by the Kendra.

“It is a concept conceived by us and is aimed at providing inputs required for organic agriculture. Safe use of insecticides is just one of the numerous tools of Integrated Pest Management recommended by agricultural scientists to safeguard soil and human health,” says Dr. K. Abdul Kareem, Programme Coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kannur, Kerala Agricultural University.

“Farmers, however, usually depend solely on chemical insecticides as they think that this is the only practical control measure to obtain quick results. The biopharmacy offers organic substitutes to chemicals,” he adds.

Another important product available at the pharmacy and is quite rare in other organic bio input manufacturing units is neem oil soap named as Neem-X, which is a ready-to-use neem based pesticide.

The biopharmacy concept promoted throughout the State as the organic farming policy of the government envisages the phasing out of chemical pesticides and fertilizers from the farming sector to convert Kerala into an entirely organic state in five to 10 years.

### **Mango cultivation**

Another work the Kendra presently does is highlighting the importance of mango cultivation as an alternative food crop to cashew and rubber in Kerala.

Many believe rubber has been destroying the other native crops of the region, including cashew, and thus harming biodiversity.

The Kannur KVK has produced and supplied over 50,000 mango grafts of 15 varieties, including rare and indigenous ones such as Phirangiladua, Kalappadi, Mallika, Malgoa, Alphonso, Sindhooram, Banganappally, Banglora, Imampasand and Kudadat as also home-grown varieties such as Chandrakkaran and Kuttiyattor to different farmers.

All these varieties have been carefully collected from various sources, including the KAU's Research Stations, Aralam Farm and Karimbam Farm of the Department of Agriculture.

### **Encouraging response**

“The response to this novel idea of promoting mango in villages is encouraging as there are no mango growers in the region. Mangoes are not grown on a commercial scale here,” says Dr. Abdul.

The initiative is envisaged as a drive to groom mango cultivators by encouraging them to adopt scientific cultivation practices, including irrigation, fertilizer application and plant protection measures.

To combat farm labour shortage, the Kendra groomed teams of certified para-technicians and named them as paddy task force, vegetable technicians etc.

These new generation workers are trained in the use of machines, technologies and customer relations.

They apply science based technologies and undertake work on contract basis. The model enables a shift in focus of extension from farmers to technicians.

### **Recommendation**

The Kerala Planning Board recommended the paddy task force model for state-wide adoption.

Started with 16 women in one panchayat, the task force today has spread to seventeen panchayats with 81 members.

A farmers' engineering service & training has also been started to extend services such as repair, maintenance, spare parts fitting, service and training for agriculture equipment.

The Kendra was conferred a national award for its work among the farming community.

For more details interested readers can contact Dr. K. Abdul Kareem, Programme Coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kannur, Kerala Agricultural University, Kanhirangad PO: 670142, email:kvkpanniyur@rediffmail.com, mobiles: 09995020782 and 0460-2226087.

### **Israel promises farm technology**



Synergy:Israeli Ambassador to India Alon Ushpiz along with president and CEO of Makhteshim-Agan India Private Limited, Josef (Yossi) Goldshmidt, at IKP Knowledge Park in Turkapally in Shameerpet Mandal of Ranga Reddy district on Wednesday.–Photo: Nagara Gopal India and Israel will together set up 29 Centres of Excellence (CoEs) as part of a cooperation programme between the two nations, primarily aimed at helping increase farm output and facilitate transfer of technology from the laboratory to the farm.

Revealing this to presspersons here on Wednesday, Israel's Ambassador to India, Alon Ushpiz, said the CoEs would work on helping the farming community with specific inputs in crop, pest,

water and soil management. “It is a three-year programme and will be crop and region-specific. For example in Maharashtra and parts of A.P., it will be mango, while in Rajasthan it could be for dates and olives,” he said.

Mr. Ushpiz said the technology would be brought here and modified according to local conditions before transferring it to farmers and affirmed that Israel’s popular water management technologies would also be brought here. By this year-end, 15 of the CoEs would be up and running, he informed

The envoy visited the research and development facility of Israeli crop protection products major Makhteshim-Agan India. The company’s president & CEO, Josef (Yossi) Goldshmidt said they were drawing plans to double the 1.2. lakh litre capacity of its Indian manufacturing facility at Dahej at double the initial investment of Rs. 110 crore. While one unit makes herbicides, the other makes insecticides and fungicides, each with a capacity of 60,000 litres a day. Makhteshim-Agan has a global portfolio of 75 different products and has released products suited for Indian agro-climate, with a network of 38 warehouses across India.

### **Dip in jasmine price worries ryots**

*Poor returns attributed to over cultivation*



Losing fragrance:A woman worker plucking jasmine buds in a field at Ammavaritopu in Nellore district.—Photo: K. Ravikumar

There is a spurt in the number of jasmine hawkers these day on the busy GT Road in Nellore. As the price is surprisingly low this season, most of those passing on the road are happily buying these flowers.

However, the jasmine farmers are a worried lot with the prices seeing a steep fall this year. The price had come down to as low as Rs. 15 per kg in the past few days. And this is at a time when they have to pay Rs. 30 for every kilo of jasmine buds plucked by the worker in the field.

The sudden fall in price is attributed to over-cultivation as lots of small and marginal farmers took to jasmine all over the district this year. This has come as a shocker to traditional jasmine farmers. “We have been in this field for more than 30 years. This situation never occurred before,” said Attipati Seenaiah, a farmer from Ammavarithopu in Buchireddypalem mandal in Nellore district.

He now ponders on what to do next year. The heavy rush of farmers into jasmine cultivation was spurred by good returns in 2012 and 2011.

Last year, though there were slight fluctuations, the jasmine farmers got money in the range of Rs. 20 to Rs. 60 per kg. So they ended up with a reasonable profit. But this year, low price of Rs. 15 and Rs. 20 per kg are prevailing most of the days and the highest price they got was just Rs. 45.

Mr. Seenaiah said that now they were pinning hopes on the marriage season starting in August. During marriages, a high price of nearly Rs. 200 per kg is given for jasmimes.

Jasmine cultivation first started in Talamanchi in the district and it was later taken up at select places like Damaramadugu, Buchireddypalem and Dontali in Rapur area. The new areas where jasmine cultivation started this year are mainly those in upland areas where water facility is available.

The jasmine crop season is from February to October here and for this crop, there should be no moisture in the air. Some farmers are bringing the hybrid seed from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu

#### **Tirumayam to get copra procurement unit**

With a view to ensure an impetus to the copra production in the district, the Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society in Tirumayam has planned to start a new copra procurement centre shortly.

The procurement centre will offer a fair price to the coconut cultivators and will fetch them an assured price.

In a release issued here on Wednesday, C. Manoharan, District Collector, has appealed to the copra cultivators to submit an application form to register their names with the procurement centre.

#### **Data collection**

He said the Agriculture, Revenue and Cooperative department officials would inspect the coconut groves for ascertaining the data and details given by farmers. An identity card would be issued to each farmer.

He has appealed to farmers to take advantage of the procurement centre.

#### **Increasing dam level raises farmers' hopes**

Even though the Public Works Department engineers have remained silent on the release of water for irrigation this season, a majority of farmers in Cumbum Valley have intensified farming activities for the first crop in the double cropping areas, thanks to the sharp increase in the storage level of the Periyar dam and the good flow in the Periyar river.

The water level in the dam touched 123.6 feet on Wednesday. The inflow into the dam was 5,320 cusecs. The PWD engineers stepped up the discharge to 1,372 cusecs to improve the storage level in the Vaigai dam. Copious rainfall in the catchment areas and in the Periyar dam has brightened the hopes of farmers.

Now farmers in Cumbum, Kokilapuram, Anamalayanpatti, Uthamapalayam and Chinnamaur have started raising nurseries tapping the Periyar water. All irrigation channels under the authorised ayacut were opened without official permission. Water from the Periyar river was also diverted to irrigation tanks at Kokilapuram to irrigate lands around the village. Raising of nurseries was in full swing in many places.

Some farmers in Uthamapalayam block, who had already raised nurseries, have started transplantation work. Even farmers in the tail end areas near Palanichettipatti have been preparing their lands for the first crop.

However, the PWD officials were keen on improving the storage level in the Vaigai dam.

Despite a substantial discharge from the Periyar dam, only 933 cusecs reached the Vaigai dam.

#### **Supply broken grains at subsidised rates, say poultry farmers**

The poultry industry has made an appeal to the Union Government to help them get broken grains at a subsidised price from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and to restructure bank loans to prevent more poultry farms from turning into non performing units.



President of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association R. Nallathambi told newsmen here on Wednesday that industry leaders have been making repeated representations to the Union Government for about a year.

“Last week we met Finance Minister P. Chidambaram to fulfil our demands,” he added.

### **Severe loss**

He claimed that the industry — broiler meat and egg industry — in Tamil Nadu suffered severe loss to the tune of a few hundred crore rupees due to escalating feed prices.

He reiterated their demand of urging the FCI to release broken grains in wheat and rice that cannot be used for human consumption, but could be used as chicken feed.

Mr. Nallathambi said that close to 100 poultry farms in Tamil Nadu became non performing units in the financial year 2012-13.

“We sought moratorium for one year on repayment of the instalments and interest towards term loans that poultry farmers obtained from various banks and to give a subsidy of six per cent for at least two years.

“Relief was also sought for the non performing farmers to continue in the trade,” he added.

### **‘Sensitise farmers about crop insurance schemes’**

The Department of Agriculture came under criticism at the zilla panchayat general body meeting for failing to sensitise farmers about the State government’s crop insurance schemes.

Navalgund MLA N.H. Konaraddi said the district had not benefited from these schemes as the number of farmers who opted for them was fewer than in other districts.

Around 3,843 farmers had paid the premium and 3,678 farmers had received insurance, said Mr. Konaraddi. The total premium paid was Rs. 91.2 lakh, while Rs. 1.23 crore was received as insurance amount. In neighbouring Haveri, 1.18 lakh farmers opted for the scheme and the district received Rs. 89 crore as insurance amount, he said.

Mr. Konaraddi accused Agriculture Department officials of not doing proper surveys to identify agrarian losses.

They had failed to create awareness about the schemes, even though the district had been facing drought for four years, he added. Zilla panchayat members Basavaraj Karadikoppa and Adivappa Manami demanded that officials conduct awareness programmes for farmers at the gram panchayat level.

Zilla panchayat chief executive officer P.A. Meghannavar instructed officials to actively implement the scheme.

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### **Rejuvenation scheme**

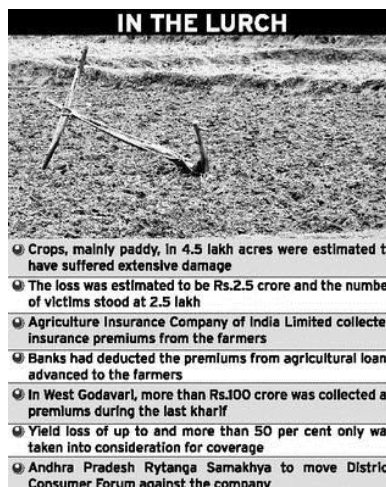
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### **Double blow**

*Compensation for crop loss under insurance coverage eludes farmers badly affected by Neelam cyclone*



For farmers badly hit by the Neelam cyclone in West Godavari district, compensation for crop loss under the insurance coverage appears to be like the proverbial sour grapes.

Crops, mainly paddy and the other cash crops, in 4.5 lakh acres were estimated to have suffered extensive damage during the disaster. The loss was estimated to be Rs.2.5 crore and the number of victims stood at 2.5 lakh.

The Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited (ACI), a limited company, collected insurance premiums under the Modified National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) from the farmers through commercial banks with an offer to extend yield-based and weather-based insurance coverage for crops damaged during the natural calamities.

The banks had deducted the premiums from the agricultural loans advanced to the farmers at the rate of Rs.500 per acre for paddy and Rs.1,000 for commercial crops such as sugarcane, and credited the amounts in the account of the insurance company. In West Godavari district, more than Rs.100 crore was collected from farmers as premiums during the last kharif. To quote Maganti Sitarama Swamy, president of the Andhra Pradesh Rytanga Samakhya, the scheme had literally failed to insure the farmers, thanks to the alleged tricks employed by the official agencies in yield assessment during the crop cutting experiments.

B. Balaram, secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Rytu Sangham, pointed out that the yield loss up to and more than 50 per cent only was taken into consideration for coverage of insurance. If that were the case, the crops that suffered losses even up to 49 per cent would be eliminated from the coverage. This was an unscientific method failing to reflect the ground realities pertaining to yield losses, Mr. Balaram said.

The alleged baseless approach adopted during the crop cutting experiments was reported to have resulted in elimination of several mandals, lock, stock and barrel, from insurance coverage in spite of the fact that they were very much affected by the cyclone.

For instance, Mr. Sitarama Swamy said, extensive damage was reported in both paddy and dry land crops such as maize, mirchi and banana during the cyclone in Pedavegi mandal. But none of the farmers in the mandal was benefited by the insurance scheme due to “erratic yield assessments.” Mr. Swamy said the samakhya had decided to move the District Consumer Forum against insurance company.

### **Farmers receive compensation after three years**

A major hurdle to bring water from Gundalakamma to the Bavanasi tank to stabilise the ayacut covering 10,000 acres was cleared with payment of Rs.5.21 crore as compensation to 163 oustees on Wednesday.

The farmers, whose lands were taken for the purpose, were a satisfied lot getting the cheques from Prakasam district Joint Collector K. Yakub Naik and Ongole Revenue Division Officer M.S. Murali, ending a three-year-long wait.

Elated former Addanki MLA and YSR Congress leader Gottipatti Ravikumar told *The Hindu* that it was YSR who had laid the foundation stone for the project to augment water supply from Gundalakamma instead of Nagarjunasagar to stabilise the ayacut by constructing a canal to a distance of 11 km. The farmers had suffered heavily due to insufficient storage in the Nagarjunasagar this year. The project should be hastened by earmarking Rs.20 crore for acquisition of 200 acres to widen the canal and construction of protection wall to prevent water entering the Prasanna Anjaneyaswamy temple, said Mr. Ravikumar.

After protracted negotiations, the farmers from Zakarayapalem, Mylavaram, and Vemprala agreed to take Rs.5 lakh per acre as compensation.

## Farmers avail gold loans

*This is to avoid repayment of crop loans waiver which is high on parties' agenda*



Farmers wait for crop loan disbursement near a bank in Indervelli on Wednesday. —PHOTO: BY ARRANGEMENT

Crop loan waiver will climb high on the agenda of political parties as the general elections draw closer if the current trend in rural areas of Adilabad is any indication. Farmers have come up with the novel idea of making do with gold loans for agriculture investments thereby continuing to avoid repayment of old dues.

The 'tactic' has gained ground surprisingly in the five tribal mandals in this district resulting in brisk business for the Adilabad District Cooperative Central Bank (ADCCB) which charges lesser rate of interest than other banks.

Hundreds of defaulting members of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) in Indervelli, Utnoor, Jainoor, Sirpur (U) and Narnoor mandals, who are ineligible for renewal of the interest-free crop loan this season, are opting for the costlier gold loan.

"Even if I pay interest at the rate of 12.5 per cent per annum for the gold loan, I will get to save at least Rs. 87,500 of my previous loan as the waiver is expected to be announced early next year.

No political party can afford to ignore the issue in the light of the promise of a waiver made by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N. Chandrababu Naidu," says Yashwant Rao Chauhan, a tribal farmer from Yenda in Utnoor mandal as he talks of the 'strategy'.

"We have advanced about Rs. 1.4 crore to 264 borrower-farmers so far," reveals ADCCB Utnoor branch manager L. Ram Reddy.

The amount has crossed the crop loan advances made by the bank during last kharif season which stood at Rs. 1.25 crore disbursed among 618 members of the PACS concerned.

"The recovery of crop loans issued earlier, including the Rs. 93 lakh in rabi season, stand at just 40 per cent. It is understandable as a large number of poor farmers from aboriginal tribes are not in a position to repay," Mr. Reddy adds.

The Adivasi farmers are also unable to draw any benefit from the new strategy in order to avoid repayment of old crop loan. A majority of them do not own gold like their plains tribe counterparts.

### **Area under cotton cultivation comes down**

*Ryots opting for other crops due to high labour cost, poor remunerative price for cotton*

The extent of cotton cultivation has drastically come down in the district with farmers opting for other crops owing to the risk and low remuneration in growing cotton.

Of the total 2.67 lakh hectares under cotton, nearly 67,000 hectares had come down with a majority of farmers shifting to maize cultivation which is considered to be more remunerative than cotton.

When asked, senior scientist R. Uma Reddy, coordinator of District Agriculture Technology and Transfer Centre (DAATTC) says increased labour cost, low yield and poor remunerative price are the reasons why the farmers have started growing other crops.

A labourer demands Rs. 200 plus and picks only 10 kg of cotton per day. It means half of the earning would go towards labour charge while the remaining towards other investments.

For growing maize, the farmers can engage harvesting machines, the yields and the market rate is also good. "Cotton crop duration is 180 days while for maize it is just 110 days," Mr. Uma Reddy explained.

According to him, the demand for maize would grow and internationally, it was needed for ethanol production.

The demand from poultry industry for maize was more and hence farmers can get good price in market.

However, there was no government support for growing maize. The agriculture university did not do much research in maize. "We in the university brought out DHM 117 variety some time ago," Mr. Uma Reddy said.

The university should focus more on maize and make the seed available in large quantities.

At present, private companies are exploiting the farmers offering different varieties. The farmers are forced to go blindly by the claims of private companies with the regard to yields and quality.

The shifting of farmers from cotton to maize and other crops has lessened the burden on the district administration which would otherwise have been on tenterhooks this time of the year.

There was no scrambling for the cotton seed and no protests this time.

The district administration should, however, keep a tab on the private companies exploiting the farmers with fake claims.

### **Power: farmers urge government to spare them from penal action**

*Farmers use two-phase power because of distress situation'*

The Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association has appealed to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to avoid action against any farmer undertaking agricultural operations utilising two-phase supply.

In a statement here, Mahadhanapuram V. Rajaram, working president of the association, thanked her for assuring 12-hour three-phase power supply for kuruvai cultivation.

#### **Misuse of supply**

He admitted that some farmers did use two-phase supply for agriculture because of non-availability of 12-hour three-phase supply apart from serious drought and acute paucity of water in the rivers and canals. "If it were to rain or if they were to get water in the Cauvery, farmers won't use even the three-phase supply. The Government knows it. Even in the Assembly, the Minister for Electricity did mention that although utilising two-phase power for agriculture was legally wrong, the government has not initiated any action against any agriculturist."

Mr. Rajaram said that under the previous Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam regime, action was taken against farmers for utilising free power for crops such as coconut and banana and other horticultural crops.

Even if free power was used for watering milch animals, it was treated as an offence. If some drumstick trees in a farm were watered, the then Electricity Board treated it as “power theft”. “That was why farmers were forced to launch an agitation against the State government then,” he said.

However, Ms. Jayalalithaa had ordered the Electricity Department to avoid any action against farmers who were using two-phase supply for farming operations.

According to Mr. Rajaram, farmers felt that the Chief Minister should explicitly direct the Electricity Department not to initiate any action against them if they were using two-phase power. “They could be given a warning. Otherwise, farmers, who had been struggling against the drought, would start harbouring resentment against the State government,” he said.

He appealed to Ms. Jayalalithaa not to permit any such “wrong” on the part of the Electricity Department.

### **Water release**

While he was reconciled to the delayed opening of the Mettur dam for irrigation as it was necessary to have a substantial storage in the reservoir, he pleaded that considerable water should be released for the crops on 1.25 lakh acres of land in Salem, Namakkal, Erode, Karur, Pudukkottai, and part of Thanjavur and also to meet the drinking water needs.

### **Agro bio pharmacy concept well received by Kerala farmers**



**ON SALE:** The biopharmacy concept envisages converting Kerala into an entirely organic state in five to 10 years. Photo: Special Arrangement

Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) or farm science centres exist in almost all districts of the country to support farming activities. But only a handful of them are able to conceive new innovative ideas and transform them into action at the field level.

The Kerala Kannur kendra is one such institution that has been successful in introducing an agro bio pharmacy and farmers’ engineering service and training (FEST) centre.

The major problem faced while adopting organic farming is the non-availability of trustworthy organic products and the cumbersomeness of preparation of organic products.

### **Different products**

An array of products ranging from tobacco decoction to pheromone traps are produced and sold at the pharmacy. The labour for the production of these items is provided by different self-help groups trained by the Kendra.

“It is a concept conceived by us and is aimed at providing inputs required for organic agriculture. Safe use of insecticides is just one of the numerous tools of Integrated Pest Management recommended by agricultural scientists to safeguard soil and human health,” says Dr. K. Abdul Kareem, Programme Coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kannur, Kerala Agricultural University.

“Farmers, however, usually depend solely on chemical insecticides as they think that this is the only practical control measure to obtain quick results. The biopharmacy offers organic substitutes to chemicals,” he adds.

Another important product available at the pharmacy and is quite rare in other organic bio input manufacturing units is neem oil soap named as Neem-X, which is a ready-to-use neem based pesticide.

The biopharmacy concept promoted throughout the State as the organic farming policy of the government envisages the phasing out of chemical pesticides and fertilizers from the farming sector to convert Kerala into an entirely organic state in five to 10 years.

### **Mango cultivation**

Another work the Kendra presently does is highlighting the importance of mango cultivation as an alternative food crop to cashew and rubber in Kerala.

Many believe rubber has been destroying the other native crops of the region, including cashew, and thus harming biodiversity.

The Kannur KVK has produced and supplied over 50,000 mango grafts of 15 varieties, including rare and indigenous ones such as Phirangiladua, Kalappadi, Mallika, Malgoa, Alphonso, Sindhooram, Banganappally, Banglora, Imampasand and Kudadat as also home-grown varieties such as Chandrakkaran and Kuttiyattor to different farmers.

All these varieties have been carefully collected from various sources, including the KAU's Research Stations, Aralam Farm and Karimbam Farm of the Department of Agriculture.

### **Encouraging response**

“The response to this novel idea of promoting mango in villages is encouraging as there are no mango growers in the region. Mangoes are not grown on a commercial scale here,” says Dr. Abdul.

The initiative is envisaged as a drive to groom mango cultivators by encouraging them to adopt scientific cultivation practices, including irrigation, fertilizer application and plant protection measures.

To combat farm labour shortage, the Kendra groomed teams of certified para-technicians and named them as paddy task force, vegetable technicians etc.

These new generation workers are trained in the use of machines, technologies and customer relations.

They apply science based technologies and undertake work on contract basis. The model enables a shift in focus of extension from farmers to technicians.

### **Recommendation**

The Kerala Planning Board recommended the paddy task force model for state-wide adoption.

Started with 16 women in one panchayat, the task force today has spread to seventeen panchayats with 81 members.

A farmers' engineering service & training has also been started to extend services such as repair, maintenance, spare parts fitting, service and training for agriculture equipment.

The Kendra was conferred a national award for its work among the farming community.

For more details interested readers can contact Dr. K. Abdul Kareem, Programme Coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kannur, Kerala Agricultural University, Kanhirangad PO: 670142, email:kvkpanniyur@rediffmail.com, mobiles: 09995020782 and 0460-2226087.

### **Wheat procurement lower by one-third so far this market year**

Wheat procurement has declined by 33 per cent to 25.08 million tonnes so far in the 2013-14 marketing year starting April, mainly due to lower arrival of wheat in the mandies with aggressive buying by private traders.

Food Corporation of India (FCI), the nodal agency for procurement and distribution of food grains, and state agencies had procured 37.35 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

Although wheat marketing year runs from April to March, the entire procurement exercise generally gets over by June.

The lower procurement than targeted could, however, address the storage problems being faced by the government.

According to the FCI data, the arrival of wheat in mandies have dropped by 28.23 per cent so far in 2013-14 at 29.16 million tonnes as compared to 40.63 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

An FCI official attributed the lower arrival of wheat to the aggressive buying by private traders at a higher price than the government's minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1,350 per quintal.

The farmers are getting better rates from traders in the range of Rs 1,500-1,600 per tonne, the official said.

"The procurement process is almost complete and it is unlikely that the total figure would cross 26 million tonnes in 2013-14 marketing year," he added.

FCI and state agencies had procured a record 38.14 million tonnes in the entire 2012-13 marketing year.

According to the third advance estimate of Agriculture Ministry, wheat production is projected to decline to 93.62 million tonnes in 2012-13 crop year as against record 94.88 million tonnes in the previous year.

At the beginning of the marketing year, the food ministry had set a procurement target of 44 million tonnes, which was later scaled down to 33 million tonnes, with now even that looking difficult to achieve.

As per the data, the maximum fall in the procurement this season has been registered in Uttar Pradesh, where so far government has procured 6,82,433 tonnes of wheat against 4.8 million tonnes in the corresponding period of previous year.

Punjab and Haryana, the major wheat growing and procuring states, have also witnessed dip in procurement.

So far, 10.88 million tonnes of wheat has been procured in Punjab and 5.87 million tonnes in Haryana as against 12.82 million tonnes and 8.66 million tonnes, respectively, during the last season.



### **Self-propelled wetland direct rice seeder**

*Costs Rs.10,000 to seed a hectare*

A self-propelled riding type wetland direct rice seeder has been developed for sowing pre-germinated paddy seeds in puddled fields by Agricultural Engineering College & Research Institute, Kumulur, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

The seeder can be operated by a 4.4 hp horizontal type air cooled four stroke single cylinder diesel engine. The gear boxes used in this machine are taken from the transplanter of riding type machine. Rubber moulded iron lugged wheels are used as ground wheel.

#### **Chain and sprocket**

The ground wheels are fitted at both end of the axle. The ground wheel drive is transmitted to the countershaft fitted at the rear side of the lower frame through chain sprocket arrangement.

An opening is made in the upper part of the seed drum for storing the pre-germinated seeds at the time of operation. Funnel and seed disc with cup feed is placed inside the seed drum for effective dropping of seeds from the seed drum to the field. The eight seed drums are bolted to the “L” angle in order to prevent rotation of the drums during operation. The spacing between seed drums is adjustable from 250 to 300 mm.

The funnel receives the seeds from the cup and the seeds are dropped on the puddle soil by gravitational force. Float is made of PVC and placed in between the two wheels of the machine for leveling the puddle field.

#### **Adjustable**

The rear end of the float is attached to “L” angle of the seed drum with the help of a chain for automatic depth adjustment according to the field. The seeder is an eight row machine and is capable of sowing pre-germinated seeds at 1.92 ha/day.

It is priced at Rs.90,000. The cost of seeding by this machine is Rs.635 per hectare. The machine is capable of sowing pre-germinated rice at 9 kg/hectare. Cost of manual transplanting comes to Rs.7,000/hectare whereas for machine transplanting it comes to Rs.10,000/ha inclusive of seeds.

(Dr. R. Thiyagarajan, Assistant Professor and Prof. A.Tajuddin, Dean, Agricultural Engineering College & Research Institute, Kumulur- 621 712, Tiruchi district, mobile: 09884666994.)

#### **Summer school at TNAU**

A summer school on Information and Communication Technology for Inclusive Agricultural Development, sponsored by The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), will be held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University from July 3 to 23.

The summer school will provide the participants – 25 extension scientists belonging to various States – information of many areas.

It will include scope and potential of ICT-driven extension, ICT-based tools such as decision support system, expert system, Web portal, video conferencing, reusable learning objects, community radio, social media, e-learning, etc., ICT applications in frontline extension, agri-business development, weather forecasting, gender mainstreaming, cloud computing, remote sensing, and so on. Ravi Kumar Theodore, Head, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, TNAU, will be the course director.

#### **Tirumayam to get copra procurement unit**

With a view to ensure an impetus to the copra production in the district, the Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society in Tirumayam has planned to start a new copra procurement centre shortly.

The procurement centre will offer a fair price to the coconut cultivators and will fetch them an assured price.

In a release issued here on Wednesday, C. Manoharan, District Collector, has appealed to the copra cultivators to submit an application form to register their names with the procurement centre.

#### **Data collection**

He said the Agriculture, Revenue and Cooperative department officials would inspect the coconut groves for ascertaining the data and details given by farmers. An identity card would be issued to each farmer.

He has appealed to farmers to take advantage of the procurement centre.

#### **‘Sensitise farmers about crop insurance schemes’**

The Department of Agriculture came under criticism at the zilla panchayat general body meeting for failing to sensitise farmers about the State government’s crop insurance schemes.

Navalgund MLA N.H. Konaraddi said the district had not benefited from these schemes as the number of farmers who opted for them was fewer than in other districts.

Around 3,843 farmers had paid the premium and 3,678 farmers had received insurance, said Mr. Konaraddi. The total premium paid was Rs. 91.2 lakh, while Rs. 1.23 crore was received as insurance amount. In neighbouring Haveri, 1.18 lakh farmers opted for the scheme and the district received Rs. 89 crore as insurance amount, he said.

Mr. Konaraddi accused Agriculture Department officials of not doing proper surveys to identify agrarian losses.

They had failed to create awareness about the schemes, even though the district had been facing drought for four years, he added. Zilla panchayat members Basavaraj Karadikoppa and Adivappa Manami demanded that officials conduct awareness programmes for farmers at the gram panchayat level.

Zilla panchayat chief executive officer P.A. Meghannavar instructed officials to actively implement the scheme.

#### **AGRICET hall tickets despatched**

Hall tickets for AGRICET-2013, to be held on June 30, have been despatched, the Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University said in a release. They can also be downloaded from the university website. For more details, visit [www.angrau.ac.in](http://www.angrau.ac.in).

#### **Rain takes its toll on crops, properties**

Heavy rain in Wayanad in the past three days caused extensive damage to crops and properties. Many low-lying areas at Thavinjal, Periya, Kottathara, Pozhuthana, Muttil and Vellamunda grama panchayats as well as Kalpetta municipality were inundated.

Destruction of plantain farms, ginger plantations and paddy crop had been reported.

#### **Traffic disrupted**

Traffic on the Mananthavady- Kozhikode highway and Mananthavady-Kulathada- Nirvilpuzha highway was disrupted after road stretches went under water. The traffic on the Mananthavady-Kuttiyadi State highway had been partially restored.

A few minor landslips had also been reported from some parts of the district.

District Collector K.G. Raju said 18 villages under Vythiri, Mananthavady and Sulthan Bathery taluks were the worst affected.

He instructed village officers and tahsildars to be prepared to meet any eventuality.

Two houses were destroyed and 79 houses suffered partial damages in rain-related calamities, N.T. Mathew, Additional District Magistrate, said. The damages to the houses were put at Rs.31.89 lakh.

He said 2,627 people had been shifted to relief camps in the district. As many as 39 relief camps and five medical units were functioning in the district, he added.

Revenue Department started boat services at Panamthara of Periya village in Mananthavady taluk to connect isolated villages.

The damage to crop was estimated at over Rs.9 crore since June 3, sources in the Agriculture Department said.

### **KAU to map water-stress status**

*Project under Centre of Excellence in Environmental Economics*

The newly formed Centre of Excellence in Environmental Economics (CEEE) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) plans mapping of the State's water-stress status based on climatological, social, and agronomic factors.

The CEEE, established with financial support from the State Department of Environment and Climate Change, is intended to carry out research in the field of environment protection through natural resource management.

The CEEE will generate, compile, and interpret data on key environmental attributes to support policy decisions in environment management. The Centre will function at the College of Horticulture, Vellanikkara.

#### **Focus areas**

KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran said the CEEE would focus on areas such as organic farming, sustainable agriculture, and conservation of land, water and forest resources.

“The socio economic and environmental impact of policy interventions will be studied in detail. The objectives of the CEEE include knowledge generation on key issues in natural resource and environmental management; capacity building in research and teaching in a multidisciplinary perspective; facilitating policy process in environmental management through dialogue between researchers and policy makers; training and information dissemination; networking national and international bodies for capacity building; and research collaboration and information sharing,” he added.

P. Indira Devi, who heads the CEEE, said the project for mapping the State's water stress status would begin this year. “The quantification and valuation of water conservation/ recharge function of wetlands based on the social and geographical indicators and field studies will be done. Training programme for elected members of local bodies and officials is another priority area.

Development of curriculum for starting new courses in this area is also planned. The outreach projects include educational and action programmes in association with eco-clubs, Bhoomitra clubs, and non-governmental organisations.

The CEE also plans to publish project reports of eco-friendly technologies in agriculture and waste management methods developed by the KAU,” she said.

## **SFAC has failed to achieve desired results, says official**



Students participating in a workshop on venture capital assistance organised by the SFAC in Bijapur on Wednesday.

L.P. Soni, an official in the Union Ministry of Food Processing and representative of the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), has regretted that despite its setting up in 2004 to promote agribusiness in India, the consortium has failed to achieve the desired results.

Speaking at the inauguration of a workshop on venture capital assistance (VCA) organised by SFAC and the zilla panchayat here on Wednesday, he said that the Centre set up SFAC to provide financial assistance to farmers in agribusiness.

“Owing to lack of awareness, the ambitious scheme did not achieve the desired results. To rectify this, SFAC has held awareness programmes across the country, and this is the 19th such programme,” Mr. Soni said.

Elaborating on SFAC's activities, he said it could help in preparing detailed project reports, securing interest-free loans from nationalised banks, and establishing food processing units, among other activities. “Farmers could set up an agro-industry depending on the locally grown agricultural produce. For instance, as Bijapur was popular for grapes and pomegranate, an industry could be set up for byproducts,” Mr. Soni said.

Earlier, Vithal Halolli, Lead Bank manager, said banks were ready to offer financial assistance to farmers who wished to set up cold storage or food processing units in Bijapur.

## **‘Home-made jackfruit snacks can boost price**

Pramod Madhwaraj, MLA, said on Tuesday that it was essential to create a good market for jackfruit. He was speaking after inaugurating the two-day State-level jackfruit festival organized by University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and other organizations, here.

Mr. Madhwaraj said that a large quantity of fruits and vegetables rotted due to lack of proper facilities to market them. The price of jackfruit had also gone down due to poor marketing.

## **Proper marketing**

With proper marketing, the price of jackfruit could rise. It was necessary to encourage home-made jackfruit snacks, which could be sold under the ‘Udupi’ brandname. This would also create employment opportunities for women, he said.

Gowri Poojary, president of Udupi Taluk Panchayat, Mallika Poojary, Zilla Panchayat member, M. Hanumanthappa, Associate Research Director of KVK, N. Nagaraj, Extension Director of UAS, and others were present.

Many varieties of jackfruit and jackfruit snacks and jams, were on display at the festival

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Mr. Rajaram said that under the previous Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam regime, action was taken against farmers for utilising free power for crops such as coconut and banana and other horticultural crops.

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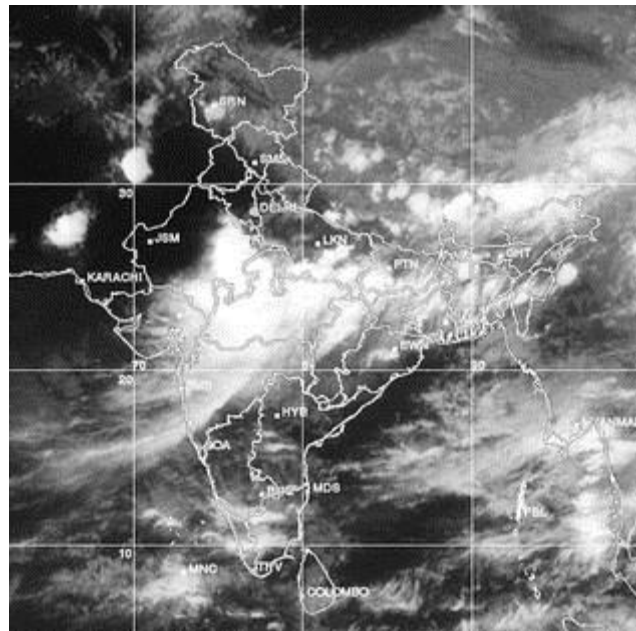
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**Weather**



	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	36	27	0	154
New Delhi (Sfd)	36	27	0	113
Chandigarh	33	26	7	193
Hissar	41	28	0	101
Bhuntar	29	21	5	122
Shimla	24	16	68	118

Jammu	36	24	8	56
Srinagar	34	22	0	32
Amritsar	39	28	0	131
Patiala	34	26	3	121
Jaipur	40	23	63	149
Udaipur	35	25	9	93
Allahabad	38	29	0	76
Lucknow	35	25	0	164
Varanasi	37	27	1	72
Dehradun	29	24	tr	831
Agartala	30	25	20	355
Ahmedabad	36	28	0	103
Bangalore	27	21	0	139
Bhubaneshwar	35	26	0	292
Bhopal	32	22	115	335
Chennai	38	29	0	123
Guwahati	34	25	25	285
Hyderabad	27	23	0	193
Kolkata	30	26	24	310
Mumbai	27	25	38	931
Nagpur	26	24	187	454
Patna	34	28	1	43
Pune	26	22	14	289
Thiruvananthapuram	29	23	16	398
Imphal	34	23	23	101
Shillong	24	19	19	308

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

Southwest Monsoon has been vigorous over Himachal Pradesh and active over Uttarakhand. The axis of Monsoon trough at MSL passes through Sriganganagar, Bhiwani, Mathura, Prayag and thence southeast wards.

**RAINFALL:** Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over Himachal Pradesh, at many places over Uttarakhand, at a few places over Jammu and Kashmir, east Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (5 cm and above) HIMACHAL PRADESH: Nagrota Surian 15, Amb 10, Kangra and Bangana 9, Shimla 7, Bhoranj 6, Kasol, Jogindernagar, Sundernagar, Arki, and Kandughat 5 each, JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Kathua 6, Udhampur 5, PUNJAB: Nangal 6, EAST RAJASTHAN: Badesar 10, Kapasan 8, Shahpura and Rashmi 7 each, Chittorgarh, Jaipur and Naraina 6 each, Nimbohera, Gangdher and Mandana 5 each, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Neemsar 7, Ankinghat and Pallikalan 5 each, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Bareilly 19, Etah 10, Kasganj 7, Moradabad, Sahabad, Jalalabad and Bisauli 5 each and UTTARAKHAND: Haldwani 11, Pantnagar 10 and Nainital 5.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 28th June 2013:** Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar

Pradesh and east Rajasthan. Rain/thundershowers may occur at a few places over rest of the region outside west Rajasthan where it may be at one or two places.

**HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING:** Heavy to very Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand east Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh during next 48 hours.



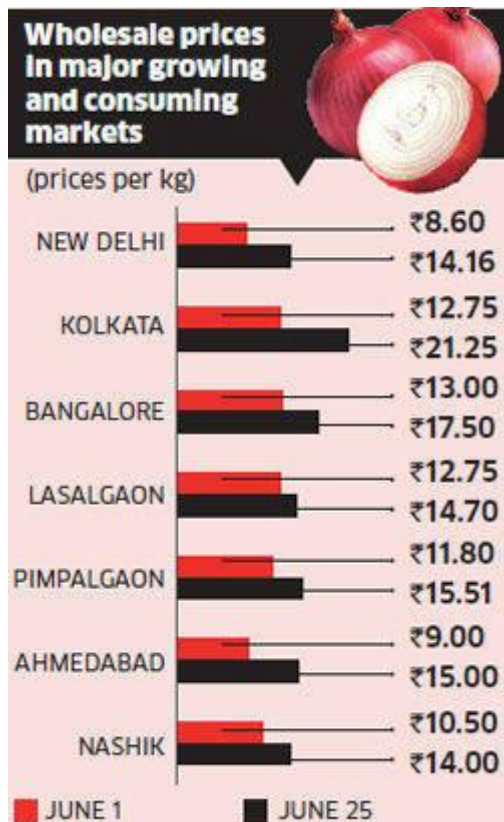
# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Timely rains likely to lift onion output

The timely arrival of the monsoon is likely to increase onion production in the country. But for the time being, consumers have to pay 25 per kg in the metros. Prices are expected to increase further next month.

Traditionally, onion prices increase during the transition period when the stored onion is getting over while the kharif crop is late or less. This year, though the stored onion is slightly less, the fresh kharif crop is expected to be early and abundant. Due to the early arrival of the monsoon, acreage is expected to increase substantially this year compared to the past year.

"The kharif crop will be good this year and early by 15 days. Demand for onion seeds is very good," said RP Gupta, director, Nashik-based National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF).



Most experts agree that prices should not have increased at this time. Yet wholesale prices have soared by about 50% in June in most of the markets in the country.

"Prices in the country are controlled from Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon, the wholesale onion markets. As the new crop will be early this year, traders have started increasing the prices early," said a source in the government.

Average wholesale prices are about Rs 15 per kg in most of the producing markets in the country. According to Moin Suleman, managing director of Mumbai-based export house Sarah Exim, prices will go up till August. "There is no need to panic. The new crop will start arriving in September and October from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh," he said.

The main onion crop of the country is grown in winter and harvested during summer. Farmers store this crop and feed the markets during the rainy season when there is no fresh harvest. Due to drought-like conditions in major onion producing states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka last year, production of rabi onion declined to 99 lakh tonne from 108 lakh tonne in the previous year.

At 27 lakh tonne, onion storage this year is less by 7% over the previous year, according to the first estimate of NHRDF.

"Farmers sold onions when prices were Rs 8-10 per kg. Due to wastage and carrying costs, wholesale prices go up to Rs 15 per kg," said Changdev Holkar, director of National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation.

Onion production in Madhya Pradesh last year was 1.5 times the production in the previous year. This helped the markets to tide over the shortage in production in drought-affected states. Apart from feeding its traditional markets in north India, Madhya Pradesh also supplied onions to Maharashtra and other southern states.

### **Farmers protest against poor power supply**

A large number of farmers, under the aegis of Jamhuri Kisan Sabha and Border Area Sangharsh Committee, staged a dharna in front of the office of the chief engineer, Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, against poor power supply to them.

Jamhuri Kisan Sabha president Satnam Singh Ajnala said farmers were already reeling under a debt of Rs 38,000 crore. "Due to poor remuneration for their crops, many were forced to kill themselves. Now the hiked power tariff has only added to the woes of farmers," he said.

Border Area Sangharsh Committee general secretary Rattan Singh Randhawa said that after the end of voluntary disclosure scheme, farmers had to pay Rs 6,000 per horsepower to increase the electricity motor load to run their tubewells. He said due to poor power supply, farmers were facing various difficulties and feared it may lead to poor crop yield, resulting in financial losses.

**HC summons officials over delay in cane dues payment**  
The Allahabad high court has summoned principal secretary sugar industries and cane commissioner on July 4 over delay in payment of cane dues to farmers. The order came from a vacation bench of Justice SS Chauhan and Justice DK Arora on a writ petition filed by a farmer Shrav Dutt Singh.

The petitioner has sought his cane dues. During hearing, VM Singh filed an intervener application to become a party in the litigation, raising grievance of several farmers.

Dues of several farmers of western UP have not been paid since long.

The farmers, who have now been hit by floods and facing financial crisis, say their woes have increased due to delay in payment of the sugar cane dues by the government. The matter will next be heard on July 4.

### **HDFC Bank penetrates villages in Punjab for growth**

HDFC bank, second largest private bank, is looking at aggressive rural penetration for growth in Punjab at a time when several new banks are to enter the banking industry.

Going beyond the RBI guideline mandating 25% branches in non urban areas, the bank is targeting 84% branches in rural and semi urban areas in Punjab by the third quarter of current financial year.

"The bank's 100 new branches will be opened in semi urban areas and unbanked villages in Punjab," reveals branch banking head, HDFC, Govind Pandey. In fact in the last two years, the bank has opened all the 117 new branches in rural and semi urban areas in Punjab, he said.

HDFC bank's aggressive branch expansion has reduced the average distance between the bank branches to 7-km from 11-km in the last two years. "We are targeting to further reduce the average distance to five-km in Punjab by opening new branches," Pandey says. By the end of September this year HDFC banks' 84% branches will be located in semi urban or rural areas, he claims.

HDFC's aggressive rural penetration in Punjab has already far surpassed RBI mandated norm that requires banks to open 25 per cent branches in semi urban and rural areas.

The bank has accelerated expansion after the HDFC Bank's Board approved mandate to bring 10 million unbanked families (40 million individuals) into the banking fold in the country.

"In Punjab the financial inclusion is not just part of social commitment or compliance to regulatory framework but we are seeing serious commercial value for the bank," says Pandey.

The private bank made deep penetration in the Aarthy finance market in Punjab that primarily caters to wheat, paddy and cotton.

The bank now holds 40 per cent of the Aarthy finance market in Punjab. The market for the three-crops sold through aarthy system is valued at around Rs 80,000 in Punjab.

The bank's rural drive is buttressed by reliable crop loan market due to non-existent crop failures in Punjab and Haryana. "HDFC is looking at larger pie of the strong remittance market, tractor loans and micro finance loans by going further into the hinterland offering full service operations in rural locations," says zonal head, HDFC bank, Vineet Arora.

"The banks' incremental CD ratio of 149% in Punjab shows that we are not averse to loans to farmers," he said. The advances has grown to Rs 8735 crore an increase of 53 per cent in financial year 2012-13 in Punjab.

With headcount of 8,000 in Punjab, HDFC bank **BSE 2.00 %** is among the largest private employers in the state. "Local hiring has advantage to gel with rural populace and it also keeps attrition under check," he said.

To cater to the rural market, HDFC has focussed on format of two-three member branches to keep low operating costs. The bank has introduced Grameen Banking Officer (GBO) initiative in Punjab to reach out to the door step of rural customers.

Under the pilot program an executive of the bank visits targeted villages 4-8 times in a month to cater to financial needs. A GBO carries a mobile swipe device that acts as an ATM. "Customers have welcomed the GBO initiative and already 3.5 transactions per village per day are being achieved," says the official.

For prior intimation the bank arranges announcement of arrival of a GBO though Gurudwaras or through rickshaws in the villages.

### **India-Israel free trade agreement to boost trade volume**

The implementation of the proposed free trade agreement between India and Israel is expected to boost the bilateral trade multi-fold, a top Israeli diplomat today said.

"These are very detailed and difficult negotiations. From my point of view, they are focusing now on the list of items. Because, every FTA by definition, goes through a very long list of items and lowers taxes. Now, the significance of an FTA in India-Israel case goes beyond the volume of trade.

"Our estimation is that the volume of trade will go up by billion dollars once we have an FTA," Israel's Ambassador to India Alon Ushpiz told reporters here.

The FTA would lead to two other significant advantages of promoting interaction between the private sector of the two countries and also enable the workforce of both the nations to work together to "invent, produce and market" things together in areas that are not traditionally covered, he said.

"I think it is important for both governments and for both negotiating teams to look at the immediate obstacles, but also to look at the potential of what we will achieve once we have an FTA. But, these are complicated things. These things take time," he said.

Replying to a query, he said he cannot put a timeframe on when the FTA is likely to be sealed. In energy cooperation, India and Israel were negotiating an agreement for conducting Research and Development together, Ushpiz said, hoping that the pact would be clinched in the coming months.

In agriculture, a three-year working plan from March 2012 till March 2015 is in place. The effort is to provide technology which can be adapted to the needs of Indian farmers, he said.

Replying to a query, he said the process is on with regard to the IT fund proposed during the recent visit of Union Telecom Minister Kapil Sibal to Israel.

The Ambassador earlier visited the R&D facility set up by Makhteshim Agan India Pvt Ltd, the Indian subsidiary of a leading Israeli agri-solutions company, here.

Ushpiz said the company is developing crop protection products like one for fighting fungus, and several of its products are tailor-made for Indian farmers.

The two-way trade between the countries stood at \$ 6 billion in 2012-13.

### **Shimla to host organic food festival**



*Shimla to host organic food festival (Thinkstock photos/Getty Images)*

*The Himachal Pradesh agriculture department will organise a three-day annual organic fair and food festival in the state capital from June 28, a statement said here Wednesday.*

The aim of the fair is to create awareness on organic farming and products amongst farmers and people, the official statement said.

The main attractions of the event would be an organic food court where dishes made of organic vegetables and pulses will be served.

Exhibitions in which farmer groups and organisations will display and sell their organic products, workshops and seminar would be organised.

The International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture and state-run Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation are partners in the fair

### **Big business welcomes foreign multi-brand retail**

Big business welcomed the Karnataka government's decision to allow foreign multi-brand retail to operate in the state, but small business expressed their wariness and indicated they may protest the move.

Any which way, nobody expects a rush of foreign retail into the state. The Central government is yet to receive a single application from multi-brand retailers to establish operations in India, thanks partly to the stringent requirements that it has put on them, and partly to the absence of clarity on certain requirements. The Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC), whose members are mostly big corporates, has welcomed the state government's decision, terming it as a 'step in the right direction'.

"This decision will not only induce a surge of retail activities in the state but also boost employment, which will ultimately benefit the consumers and bolster the state's economic growth," said M Lakshminarayan, president of BCIC and MD of global audio major Harman International India.

## Lucknow mangoes earn fans in foreign countries



*Ambassadors and high commissioners of more than 10 countries would be gathering in a town of Malihabad on June 29 to enjoy a 'mango party'.*

The rich mangoes of India, especially Dussehri breed of Malihabad mangoes seem to have a huge fan following even in foreign countries. Ambassadors and high commissioners of more than 10 countries would be gathering in a town of Malihabad on June 29 to enjoy a 'mango party'.

The town has not been revealed yet. Malihabad is 30 km from Lucknow.

This event 'Ek Shaam Malihabadi Dussehri Ke Naam' (An evening dedicated to Malihabad's Dussehri) would be hosted by the Mango Grower Association of India. The programme is aimed at earning popularity for Dussehri all across the globe and also seeking government's assistance for Mango growers and exporters of the country.

The association would also provide Dussehri mango saplings to the foreign diplomats and encourage them to promote its cultivation in their countries as well. The diplomats would be coming from different countries like Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Algeria, Fiji, Brunei, Kazakhstan and Nigeria, etc.

Association's spokesperson informed that the Union minister of state for agriculture and food processing, Tariq Anwar, would also be attending the programme.

The mango belts in Uttar Pradesh include Lucknow (Lucknow, Malihabad, Bakshi-ka-Talaab), Saharanpur and Sambhal-Amroha-Muzaffarnagar districts. Malihabad is globally known for its sweet and aromatic Dussehri, extensive mango plantations, which has been granted Geographical Indication (GI) registration in 2009. Malihabad is situated on Lucknow-Hardoi state highway number 25.

In Lucknow, mango plantation belt extends across 25,000 hectares, which produces world famous Dussehri mango. It alone comprises about 30 percent of the state's annual mango production. This year, the state's mango production had much been lower compared to last year. During 2012, the UP mango production was about 38 lakh tonnes, while this year the production is pegged at only 15 lakh tonnes.

An association's member said, "At present, the subsidy of Rs 26 per kg on export and branding purposes of mango is grossly inadequate, the mango growers and exporters need subsidy on air freight to make their plantations more profitable." The association has also informed about seeking Central Government's help in promoting mango-based food processing industries.

### **CCEA may consider hike in paddy MSP by Rs 60/qtl tomorrow**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) is likely to consider tomorrow a proposal to increase the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy by Rs 60 at Rs 1,310 per quintal for 2013-14 crop year.

"The price policy of kharif crops for the 2013-14 is on the agenda of the CCEA meeting tomorrow," sources said.

Barring for two crops -- bajra and tur, the Agriculture Ministry has accepted most of the recommendations of the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP) on MSP of kharif crops for 2013-14, they said.

In the CCEA note, the ministry has proposed an increase in the MSP of common variety paddy by Rs 60 per quintal at Rs 1,310 and price of 'A' grade variety paddy by Rs 65 per quintal at Rs 1,345.

Paddy is main kharif crop, sowing of which begins with the onset of monsoon in June and harvesting starts from October.

Although CACP has suggested no hike in the price of bajra and tur for this year, the Ministry however has proposed an increase in support price of bajra by Rs 75 per quintal at Rs 1,250 per quintal and that of tur by Rs 450 per quintal at Rs 4,300.

Bajra and tur prices stood at Rs 1,175 per quintal and Rs 3,850 per quintal, respectively, last year.

The Ministry has proposed keeping the support price of ragi unchanged at Rs 1,500 per quintal during 2013-14.

Besides tur, the Ministry has proposed an increase of Rs 100 per quintal in support price of moong at Rs 4,500 per quintal. But it recommended no change in urad MSP at Rs 4,300 per quintal for this year.

To boost oilseeds output, the Ministry has recommended an increase of Rs 2,300 per quintal in the MSP of soyabean black at Rs 2,500, and Rs 320 per quintal jump in the price of soyabean yellow at Rs 2,560 for 2013-14.

It has also suggested a Rs 300 per quintal rise in the MSP of sesamum at Rs 4,500. But it proposed maintaining the support price of sunflower seed and nigerseed unchanged at Rs 3,700 per quintal and Rs 3,500 per quintal in 2013-14.

Among cash crops, the Ministry has suggested Rs 100 per quintal rise in cotton price at Rs 3,700 (medium staple) and Rs 4,000 per quintal (long staple).

Farmers protest against poor power supply

A large number of farmers, under the aegis of Jamhuri Kisan Sabha and Border Area Sangharsh Committee, staged a dharna in front of the office of the chief engineer, Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, against poor power supply to them.

Jamhuri Kisan Sabha president Satnam Singh Ajnala said farmers were already reeling under a debt of Rs 38,000 crore. "Due to poor remuneration for their crops, many were forced to kill themselves. Now the hiked power tariff has only added to the woes of farmers," he said.

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## **FDA issues food-borne salmonellosis warning**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the national food regulatory body, has issued an advisory following the outbreak of salmonellosis, a food-borne bacterial infection, in the US and New Zealand.

Use of Tahini sesame paste from Turkey in food preparations has been found to be the origin of the infection. The FSSAI issued the advisory in the country because imported sesame paste is used in Indian cuisine and there is a possibility that the product have entered our food chain.

"The particular outbreak appears to be over. However, this product has a long shelf-life and it may still be at people's homes. The product has been recalled. Consumers unaware of the recall could continue to eat the product and fall sick. Hence, the FSSAI issued an advisory on June 19," said Shashikant Kekare, joint commissioner (food), Food and Drugs Administration (FDA), Pune division.

FDA assistant commissioner Dilip Sangat said, "Soon after receiving the FSSAI's advisory, we carried out thorough inspections at food stores that stock imported food items. We have not found Tahini sesame paste from Turkey. But there are chances that it may be used in households in Pune. Hence, people need to be made aware that they should immediately stop using the product. We are keeping a vigil to ensure that the product does not enter the city's imported food supply chain."

As per the FSSAI's advisory, the recalled consignment of Tahini sesame paste has expiration dates from January 1 to June 8, 2014 and from October 16, 2014 to March 15, 2015. The manufacturer of the paste in Turkey is called GESAS Genel Gida Sanayi Ve Ticaret A S of Konya, Turkey.

Food-borne salmonella is a leading cause of food-borne illnesses. Traditionally, most cases of salmonellosis were thought to originate from meat and poultry products. However, an increasing number of outbreaks are occurring as a result of contaminated produce, say researchers.

Several produce have been specifically identified in outbreaks, and the ability of salmonella to attach or internalise into vegetables and fruits may be factors that make these items more likely to be salmonella sources. In addition, environmental factors, including contaminated water sources used to irrigate and wash produce or crops, have been implicated in a large number of outbreaks, experts said.

Salmonella is carried by both domesticated and wild animals and can contaminate freshwater by direct or indirect contact. In some cases, direct contact of produce or seeds with contaminated manure or animal waste can lead to contaminated crops.

The US-based Centre for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that consumers do not eat recalled Krinos brand tahini sesame paste and discard any remaining product at homes.

### **Outbreak of salmonellosis in US**

\* Total 16 people infected with the outbreak strains of Salmonella Montevideo or Salmonella Mbandaka were reported from nine states till June 21

\* The number of ill people identified in each state was as follows: California (1), Georgia (1), Iowa (1), Louisiana (1), Minnesota (2), New York (1), North Dakota (1), Texas (7), and Wisconsin (1)

\* Collaborative investigation efforts of state, local, and federal public health and regulatory agencies indicated that tahini sesame paste distributed by Krinos Foods, LLC of Long Island City, New York was the source of this outbreak

## Weather- Chennai

### Today's Weather



Cloudy

**Thursday, Jun 27**

Max 39° | Min 29°

Rain: 0  
Humidity: 55  
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:44  
Sunset: 06:38  
Barometer: 1006

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

**Friday, Jun 28**

Max 36° | Min 28°

### Extended Forecast for a week

**Saturday  
Jun 29**



37° | 29°

Cloudy

**Sunday  
Jun 30**



36° | 28°

Overcast

**Monday  
Jul 1**



36° | 28°

Overcast

**Tuesday  
Jul 2**



36° | 28°

Overcast

**Wednesday  
Jul 3**



35° | 28°

Overcast

### Airport Weather

Rain: 0    Sunrise: 05:25  
Humidity: 84    Sunset: 07:22  
Wind: normal    Barometer: 999



# THE HINDU Business Line

## No. 1 exporter



Sitting pretty: A trader takes stock of onion inventory at Mahboob Ganj Market in Hyderabad on Wednesday. India emerged as the top exporter of onions in 2012-13 shipping to the tune of Rs 1,929.29 crore, according to Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority. — P.V. Sivakumar

### **Amul camel milk, from Kutch**

Amul, which collects, processes, packages and markets buffalo and cow milk, will now do an encore with camel milk that is low on fat content and seen as curing lifestyle diseases. India's best known milk and dairying products brand will commence marketing camel milk from August 15.

Camel milk will be collected and processed by the Kutch District Cooperative Milk Producers Union, popularly known as Sarhad Dairy, and marketed by the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, Valamjibhai Humbal, President of the Kutch union and a Director at the State milk marketing body, told *Business Line* on Wednesday.

"We have discussed the camel milk issue with Amul in detail," he said. Sarhad Dairy is a member of the State milk marketing body.

Humbal said camel milk is rich in Vitamic-C that can help patients suffering from high blood pressure, tuberculosis, gastric complications and even cancer. The announcement on the sale of camel milk was made at the third annual general meeting of Kutch Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan, an association of camel breeders in the arid district.

He said that Kutch has nearly 12,000 camels, half of which are milch animals. Nearly 3,000 she-camels yield five to six litres of milk daily. "Since camels are migratory cattle, we cannot run after them to collect milk. So we have roped in an NGO, Sahjeevan, to collect the milk and deliver at our village-level societies that would transport these to our bulk milk cooling facilities."

The facilities will cool milk at three to four degrees Celsius before moving it to a processing plant near Bhuj.

Humbal said that Sarhad Dairy would initially collect and process about 1,000-1,500 litres of camel milk daily. Gradually, depending on the demand, the collection and processing would be increased as Kutch can produce up to 18,000 litres of milk a day.

Asked about marketing of the product, Humbal said that unlike cow and buffalo milk, camel milk is expected to be used by a niche segment, mainly patients. "We will be carry out advertising, publicity and marketing campaigns along with Amul for this product as well."

At present, camel milk is priced at Rs 12-15 a litre that is expected to increase to Rs 40 after processing to increase its shelf-life. Unprocessed camel milk has a shelf-life of only 4-5 hours. "We will also take a decision on the pricing issue at next week's meeting," he said.

### **Year's 2nd highest offer at Coonoor tea auction**

The rising trend in the arrival of tea for Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions continues this week with a volume of 18.87 lakh kg being offered at Sale No: 26 to take place on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of the brokers' listings.

It is the second highest offer this year after 19 lakh kg offered on January 10. It is some 64,000 kg more than last week's offer but about 2.28 lakh kg less than the offer this time last year.

Of the 18.87 lakh kg on offer, 13.66 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 5.21 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 17.95 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.92 lakh kg, orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, only 0.52 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 13.14 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.40 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 4.81 lakh kg, CTC.

Of the 18.87 lakh kg coming up for sale, fresh tea accounts for 18.11 lakh kg. Only 76,000 kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions.

pot rubber improved on Wednesday mainly on supply concerns following another firm closing on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

According to observers, there were certain enquiries from the manufacturing sector on late trading hours though they kept a low profile. The overall volumes continued to be dull.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 176.50 (Rs 175.50) a kg, according to traders. The grade increased to Rs 176 (Rs 175.50) both at Kottayam and Kochi as reported by the Rubber Board.

July futures firmed up to Rs 177.70 (Rs 174.29), August to Rs 171.90 (Rs 169.46), September to Rs 168.00 (Rs 165.67), October to Rs 165.00 (Rs 163.11) and November to Rs 163.70 (Rs 162.11) while the December contracts dropped to Rs 165.50 (Rs 165.80) on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) closed marginally higher at Rs 164.98 (Rs 164.81) at Bangkok. July futures weakened to ₹225 (Rs 139.50) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

**Spot rubber rates Rs/kg : RSS-4: 176.50 (175.50); RSS-5: 171 (170.50); Ungraded: 161 (160.50); ISNR 20: 162.50 (162) and Latex 60 per cent: 127 (125).**

### **Centre fixes base price for arecanut imports**

Coming to the rescue of arecanut growers, the Government has, for the first time, set a tariff value of \$1,613 a tonne for customs duty purposes.

At the current exchange rate of Rs 60.7 to a dollar, the tariff value or base import price for arecanut works out to Rs 97.90 a kg. At present, arecanut attracts import duty of 108 per cent.

The Revenue Department's move to set a base import price comes a month after the Directorate General of Foreign Trade hiked the minimum import price from Rs 75 a kg to Rs 110 a kg for all types of arecanut, including whole, split, ground and others.

Whenever there is huge volatility in international prices of a commodity, a tariff value or base price is put in place to prevent under-invoicing of imports.

On the other side, the minimum import price refers to the price below which import of a commodity will not be permitted.

While the tariff value relates to customs duty, the minimum import price relates to permissibility of imports, official sources said.

The price of new varieties are currently ruling at around Rs 140 a kg, while the older varieties are being traded at around Rs 200 in the coastal markets of Karnataka, the largest producing State. The annual production of arecanut hovers a little above 5 lakh tonnes.

### **Cabinet to consider hike in crop support prices today**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) is likely to approve an increase in minimum support prices (MSP) of oilseeds, such as groundnut and soyabean, and pulses such as moong among others on Thursday.

The declaration for minimum support price this year has been delayed by about two weeks compared with last year, even as the monsoon progressed swiftly and covered the country about a fortnight ahead of schedule.

### **May boost output**

The support price for groundnut and soyabean are likely to be hiked by Rs 300 a quintal, while that for moong may be increased by Rs 100 a quintal.

The increase in support price for oilseeds and pulses is likely to give a fillip to output, reducing import dependence.

The support price for groundnut may be recommended at Rs 4,000 a quintal against last year's Rs 3,700 .

Similarly, for black soyabean, the price may be set at Rs 2,500 against last year's Rs 2,200.

The support price for soyabean yellow is likely to be fixed at Rs 2,560 against last year's Rs 2,240 .

For pulses – arhar and urad – the price may be unchanged, while for moong it may be increased by Rs 100 to Rs 4,500 a quintal.

For common grade paddy, the suggested support price increase is about Rs 60 a quintal at Rs 1,310 (Rs 1,250). grains

For the Grade A paddy, the price may be fixed at Rs 1,345 (Rs 1,280).

Among cereals, jowar may remain unchanged at Rs 1,500, while the support price for maize is likely to be hiked to Rs 1,310 a quintal (Rs 1,175).

Among oilseeds, the support price for sunflower and nigerseed may be unchanged at last year's Rs 3,700 and Rs 3,500 a quintal, respectively, while that of sesame may see a rise of Rs 300 a quintal at Rs 4,500.

For medium staple cotton, the price may be hiked by Rs 100 to Rs 3,700 a quintal and for long staple, the support price may be fixed at Rs 4,000 a quintal against last year's Rs 3,900 a quintal.

The proposed hikes in minimum support price are broadly in line with the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices, an advisory body to the Government.

## Govt puts on hold approval for GM crops' field trials



Green troubles: A file photo of the field where the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is conducting trials of GM corn for the Monsanto in Coimbatore. The decision to put on hold all approvals has been taken in view of an ongoing public interest litigation case on the bio-safety of GM crops.

The Environment Ministry has confirmed that the recent decision of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee to permit field trials of genetically modified crops such as rice, wheat, maize, castor and cotton has been “put on hold”.

The appraisal committee, the official body to give approval for commercial release and field trials of transgenic crops in the country, had on March 22, permitted field trials of genetically modified crops developed by a host of multinational companies, private Indian seed companies and the public sector research institutions.

### **Info removed**

The details of the appraisal body approvals were even uploaded on the Environment Ministry’s Web site last Tuesday – almost three months after the biotech regulator’s meeting. However, all this information was removed a day later.

The GEAC Web site currently carries no reference to the minutes of the March 22 meeting that had been uploaded earlier.

A top Environment Ministry official told *Business Line* that the minutes of committee’s March 22 meeting had not been officially approved while terming the appearance of such clearance details in the public domain a “mistake”.

Significantly, the committee’s next meeting was scheduled to be held on July 11, but it has now been deferred indefinitely, the official said.

The decision to put on hold all approvals – including those granted by the committee – has been taken in view of an ongoing public interest litigation case on the bio-safety of field trials of genetically modified crop – being heard by the Supreme Court.

According to the information that had been uploaded earlier on the Ministry’s Web site, the committee had permitted Bayer Bioscience to conduct trials of GM rice for insect tolerance in States such as Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Kerala.

Bayer’s proposal to conduct pollen flow study in cotton to measure the distance pollen containing a herbicide tolerance gene flows was also approved in the GEAC meeting.

The Hyderabad-based Directorate of Oilseeds Research’s proposal seeking extension of validity of trials in castor was approved, while Monsanto’s insect protection and weed management in maize also secured the GEAC clearance. Mahyco and BASF India Limited also received approval by GEAC to carry out trials on GM rice.

Mahyco’s proposal to conduct seven selection trials at more location for experiments in nitrogen use efficiency in cotton and extended trials for weed management in wheat was also approved by

GEAC. The Central Institute of Cotton Research, Nagpur's proposal seeking extension of validity to event selection trials on transgenic cotton for bollworm resistance was also approved by the GEAC.

### **Monsoon weakens except over Hills and along West Coast**

The South-West monsoon may be holding strong along the Himalayan hills and over the West Coast, but it has weakened to some extent elsewhere in the country.

Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services has noted the weakening trend, which it says will continue into early July.

### **FRESH RAIN**

When it revives, a fresh rain system from the Bay of Bengal is forecast to spiral along in a northward direction towards eastern flanks of the Himalayas.

In this manner, heavy to very heavy rain might pummel northern and north-eastern fringes of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, before wading into the North-East.

US National Centres for Environmental Prediction sees large parts of North-West and central India, apart from most of the peninsula, starting to dry up from the weekend.

These areas might post deficits ranging between 25 and 50 per cent in rainfall during the week beginning Wednesday.

### **SOIL MOISTURE**

Since most of the areas received bountiful rain during the rapid initial advance of the monsoon, these deficits should not affect soil moisture unless the lull lasts for far too long.

India Met Department has, however, said in second stage long-range forecast maintained that July was likely to return 101 per cent and August, 96 per cent.

Both had factored in an error margin of nine per cent.

It had also retained the forecast for rainfall for the four-month season to be normal, between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of the long-period average.

Meanwhile, the monsoon was 'vigorous' (intensely heavy) over Himachal Pradesh, west Uttar Pradesh, Vidarbha and south interior Karnataka during the 24 hours ending on Wednesday morning.

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### **Weak export buying crushes castor seed**



Castorseed spot price decreased on the back of weak demand but restricted sales curtailed the downtrend.

Castorseed futures fell as market participants indulged in profit-booking.

**weak demand**

According to castor traders, demand for castor is low as currently export buying is weak.

Moreover, local demand is limited putting pressure on the price.

On the back of weak spot demand, transactions in the futures market were restricted.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange, castorseed September contracts declined by Rs 68 to Rs 3,734 a quintal.

Spot castor seed fell by Rs 43.50 a quintal.

**futures**

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, castorseed July contracts declined by Rs 75 to Rs 3,523 a quintal, with an open interest of 136,170 lots. August castorseed prices decreased by Rs 72 to Rs 3,619 a quintal with an open interest of 114,580 lots.

**arrivals**

About 50,000-55,000 bags of castorseed arrived in Gujarat and they were quoted at Rs 655-705 for *amaund* of 20 kg.

Some 3,000-3,400 bags arrived in Saurashtra and quoted at Rs 660-684 for a maund.

Castor oil declined by Rs 8 to Rs 712 for 10 kg.

**Weak rupee cushions fall in imported edible oils**



Weak demand and rise in selling pressure amid bearish futures continued to drag edible oil prices this week.

Groundnut and sunflower expeller refined oil declined by Rs 10 each for 10 kg, cotton refined oil lost Rs 3 on monsoon lashing producing centres.

Lower closing of Malaysian palm oil futures pulled down palmolein and soyabean refined oil by Rs 3 and Rs 5 each.

Weak Indian currency capped further drop in imported oils.

Sources said that stockists kept away from fresh bulk buying and concentrated on fulfilling old commitments.

During the day, resellers offloaded about 250-300 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 523-525 for ready and 250-300 tonnes at Rs 530-532 for July delivery.

Shailesh Kataria, a broker, said that continuous weakness in India currency against dollar this month is the driving force for the uptrend in imported edible oils.

Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoted palmolein at Rs 543, super palmolein Rs 578 and super deluxe Rs 598. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 545, soyabean refined oil Rs 670 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 800. In Rajkot, groundnut oil declined by Rs 20 to Rs 1,450 for *telia* tin and by Rs 20 to Rs 930 for loose (10 kg).

**Malaysian BMD crude palm oil's** July contracts closed lower at MYR 2,370 (MYR 2,400), August at MYR 2,382 (MYR 2,412) and September at MYR 2,379 (MYR 2,412) a tonne.

**The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg):** groundnut oil 950 (960), soya refined oil 670 (675), sunflower exp. ref. 735 (745), sunflower ref. 800 (800), rapeseed ref. oil 698 (698), rapeseed expeller ref. 668 (668) cottonseed ref. oil 661 (668) and palmolein 525 (528).

**Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai** quoted Rs 580 ex-Chennai for Malaysian super palmolein for 15 days delivery.

### **Volatile inputs may keep poultry feed static**



Prices of poultry feed products are likely to remain unchanged for the next few days.

Aditya Mishra, a commodity expert, told *Business Line* that too much fluctuation in prices of key ingredients kept feed prices unchanged. "We were waiting for the prices to stabilise and feed products may continue to rule without alteration for the next few days," he said.

In the physical market, soyameal dropped by Rs 1,400 to Rs 35,600 a tonne. Bajra improved further by Rs 50 to Rs 1,600 a quintal, DCP quoted at 35 a kg, MBM eased by Rs 500 a quintal to 35,000 while maize went up by Rs 150 to Rs 15,150 a quintal.

Mustard de-oiled cake dropped by Rs 400 to Rs 15,100 a tonne, DRB improved by Rs 600 and quoted at Rs 11,000 a tonne while rice bran oil went up by Rs 6 and ruled at 54 a kg.

### **Feed products**

After witnessing an uptrend last weekend, poultry feed prices remained unchanged this week. Broiler concentrate feed was at Rs 2,050 for a 50-kg bag while Broiler Starter Mash quoted at Rs 1,550.

Pre-lay mash was sold at Rs 1,040 while layer grower mash quoted at Rs 980. Layer concentrate 25 per cent ruled at Rs 1,490 while layer concentrate 35 per cent went for Rs 1,175.

## **Poultry Products**

Meanwhile, a mixed trend was witnessed in the poultry products market, on Wednesday. Egg decreased by seven paise and sold at Rs 3.18. Broiler improved by Rs 8 and quoted at Rs 82 a kg, while chick went for Rs 12, remained unsold.

## **Growers refuse to sell pepper at current rates**



Pepper prices on the futures and spot market continued to head north on speculative activities amid non-availability.

On the spot, there were no arrivals and hence no trading activities took place, market sources told *Business Line*.

Growers are not ready to release their produce at current prices as they expect prices to touch Rs 400 a kg, they said.

The last traded price for all the active contracts on the National Multi Commodity Exchange were Rs 39,650 a quintal for July, Rs 40,000 for August and Rs 39,700 for September. The Total open interest decreased by 5 tonnes to 99 tonnes.

The total turnover increased by 28 tonnes to 62 tonnes.

Spot prices soared by Rs 500 a quintal to Rs 36,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,000 (garbled) on strong demand.

Indian parity in the international market was around \$6,750 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and around \$6,900 a tonne (c&f) for the US for delivery in July.

It was above other origins. Indian parity would have been much higher but for the weak rupee against the dollar, they said.

## **Tur seen turning dearer on imports**



The sluggish trend in pulses and pulse seeds continued on poor demand and weak buying support.



Tur (Maharashtra) declined to Rs 4,350-75 a quintal (Rs 4,425-50) on Wednesday. Similarly, tur (Madhya Pradesh) declined to Rs 3,900-Rs 4,000 a quintal (down Rs 100).

Due to rain in various parts of Madhya Pradesh, trading in almost all the pulses seeds remained sluggish in the past few days. In the past one week, tur (Maharashtra) prices have almost declined by Rs 200 a quintal.

Notwithstanding lower domestic crop, tur prices have been ruling sluggish for quiet sometime on poor buying support in pulses.

However, in the coming days, tur with dependency on imports may see bullish trend on higher import.

On other other hand, tur dal ruled stable with tur dal (full) in local mandis being quoted at Rs 6,200-6,300, tur dal (sawa no) at Rs 5,800-5,900 a quintal, while tur marka ruled at Rs 7,000 .

Moong (best) ruled sluggish at Rs 4,900-5,100 a quintal, whole moong (medium) at Rs 4,500-4,700 a quintal.

Moong dal on the other hand remained unchanged with moong dal (medium) being quoted Rs 6,000-6,100, moong dal (bold) at Rs 6,500-6,600 , while moong mongar ruled at Rs 7,000-7,100 a quintal.

Urad prices in Indore mandis have dropped by Rs 100 a quintal in the past one week on poor demand; prices of urad (bold) on Wednesday quoted at Rs 3,400-Rs 3,500 a quintal, while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 3,000-3,200 a quintal.

Urad dal remained unchanged with urad dal (medium) being quoted at Rs 4,000-Rs 4,100 , urad dal (medium) ruled at Rs 4,700- 4,800 , while urad mongar ruled at Rs 5,600-5,900 a quintal.

### **Retail demand for sugar likely to improve next week**



Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market ruled flat on Wednesday amid thin trade. Supply from producers was higher despite local demand easing with month-end in sight.

In the physical market, most of the activities remained limited for bold and fine variety. Retailers are keeping away from stocking up in view of the monsoon being active. From next week, demand from retailers may improve, sources said.

An observer said: “Local demand continues to be need-based as higher inventory in the market is keeping stockists away. In the futures market, prices gained after 4-5 days, tracking a rebound in the world market where August futures have increased by \$29.5 in last three days. In the

domestic futures, Rs 3000 a quintal could be the support as new crushing season is 3-4 months away.”

Maharashtra is set to float a tender to buy sugar for the public distribution system next month to meet the State’s requirement until October. Andhra Pradesh has already finalised the tender to buy 11,000 tonnes and it is set to float tender for another 22,000 tonnes soon. Procurement by State Governments will provide some relief to producers who are still facing inventory pressure.

Arrivals in the Vashi market were 64-65 truckloads (of 100 bags each) and local dispatches were about 58-60 loads. On Tuesday, 14-15 mills offered tenders and sold about 48,000-50,000 bags to local traders at Rs 2,920-2,980 (Rs 2,920- 2,980) for S-grade and Rs 3,000-3,090 (Rs 3,000-3,090) for M-grade.

**The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were (Rs/quintal):** S-grade Rs 3,062–3,131 (Rs 3,062– 3,131) and M-grade Rs 3,162 - 3,311 (Rs 3,162- 3,311).

**Naka delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,010 -3,060 (Rs 3,010-3,060) and M-grade Rs 3,100-3,180 (Rs 3,100-3,180).

# Business Standard

## Vegetable price up as rains hit supply

### Retail vendors have taken benefit of the situation by selling vegetables at double the purchase price, aggravating consumers' woes

While early monsoon rainfalls raised the prospects for kharif crops, vegetable prices have already spiked due to disruptions in supplies to consumption centres from major producing zones. Retail vendors have taken benefit of the situation by selling vegetables at double the purchase price, aggravating consumers' woes.

Prices of all frontline and leafy vegetables have risen sharply in the last two weeks. In the Vashi Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), stockists bought ladies finger or okra at Rs 40-46 a kg, a rise of 33 per cent in the last two weeks.

"Lower rainfall during the last monsoon season reduced the water table in major ladies finger producing centres in Maharashtra. Also, there was no pre-season rainfall this year. As a result, farmers could not sow seeds in April-May for harvesting in June-July. Consequently, supply has been very low in Vashi APMC," said Suresh Salunkhe, deputy secretary and head (vegetable section), Vashi APMC. "Even at reduced supply, arrivals of vehicles to mandis were low due to heavy rainfall and, thereby, road blockades."

Vendors in the close vicinity of Mumbai have been selling okra at Rs 120 a kg, almost three times the cost of purchase.

"What to do ?" asked Ram Gupta, a vegetable vendor in Worli, near Mumbai. "Over half of ladies finger we purchase gets spoiled in transit as it gets wet during transportation. The quantum of spoilage goes higher if the quality of ladies finger is low. We don't have any option but to sell at higher price considering the spoilage," added Gupta.

The worst-hit in the lot was ginger, which witnessed a sudden price spurt in the last two weeks. From the level of Rs 110 a kg, the spice used for adding flavour to vegetables and tea shot up to

Rs 140 a kg before cooling off to Rs 115 on June 26.

Ginger production has been abysmally low in Karnataka, India's largest producing state. Because of lower price last year, farmers in the state shifted to other remunerative crops resulting in supply pressure. Fresh supplies from Satara (Maharashtra) and Assam are three weeks away. Prices are set to remain firm before the new quantity hits the market.

## COOKING HOT

Vegetables	Price (₹ / kg)		Variations in lower side (%)
	Jun 11, '13	Jun 26, '13	
Lady's finger	30-36	40-46	33
Guard	10-20	14-22	40
Cauliflower	14-20	20-24	42
Cabbage	6-8	10-14	67
Capsicum	30-32	34-38	13
Tomato	32-36	38-40	19
Brinjal	20-22	24-26	20
Green peas	40-58	60-80	50
Coriander (10 bunches)	300-400	800-1,000	167
Palak (10 bunches)	40-80	50-80	25

Source: APMC, Vashi

Cauliflower also followed suit with prices shooting up 42 per cent to Rs 20-24 a kg on Wednesday against Rs 14-20 a kg in the Vashi APMC market two weeks ago. Cabbage moved up 67 per cent to change hands at between Rs 10 and Rs 14 a kg versus Rs 6-8 a kg in the period under consideration.

Tomato has also moved up in tandem. According to Salunkhe, against the total demand of around 300 tonnes, the supply stood at just 160 tonnes. Adding to that is the spoilage, which kept market on a firm note, he added.

Leafy vegetables including coriander and palak, have also moved up proportionately.

### **Huge damage to crops in U'khand**

#### **In Himachal Pradesh, huge damage to the Kinnauri apple has been reported**

The recent flash floods triggered by the cloudbursts and untimely snowfall and rain in the hilly states of north India has hit the agro economies of the region. In Himachal Pradesh, huge damage to the Kinnauri apple has been reported. In Uttarakhand, 25-30 per cent of the crop under cultivation has been destroyed, with potato and sugarcane affected the most.

The apple grown in the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh (the high altitude growing belt) is known for its flavour and colour. It is sold at a premium over the price of apples grown in the Shimla belt. Jagat Singh Negi, the MLA from Kinnaur, himself an apple grower, beside being deputy speaker of the state legislative assembly, said the entire upper reaches of the region had seen crops badly hit.

Kinnaur district is divided into three blocks - Pooh, Kalpa and Nichar. All of Pooh block is hugely affected. In some pockets, snowfall of three to five feet has been recorded. This had never happened earlier in June. At some places, the plants are almost dead and in others, up to half have died. This is also a long-term loss for farmers, as the gestation period of an apple tree is between five and eight years. An apple sapling costs about Rs 400. Besides apple, the crop of sweet peas has been wiped out. This was to be harvested in July. Nor is much left of the pulses crop.

A senior official of a private apple trading company surmised a crop loss of about 60 per cent in apples; the normal Kinnaur production is about 40,000 tonnes annually. With a month left for harvest, weather conditions in the remaining period would be crucial in saving what was left, he said. In Uttarakhand, the initial estimate of 25-30 per cent of the cultivated crop being destroyed is a conservative estimate, say officials of the state's agriculture ministry. The land under cultivation in the state is 768,000 hectares (ha). The area under paddy is 32,922 ha and mostly in Garhwal; since this wasn't much affected, the damage here is limited.

However, at least half of the potato crop, cultivated over 15,500 ha is gone. Sugar cane, cultivated on 149,900 ha, is also likely to have been badly hit.

Mentha is also grown in the state and most of the crop was destroyed in the early rain.

The regional chamber of commerce says agriculture and allied services constitute 10.9 per cent of the gross state domestic product.