

‘Farm sector neglected’

The Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam led by M.R. Sivasami, State president, has criticised the Union Budget saying it had neglected the farm sector. In a release he had said that the allocation of Rs. 29,000 crore shows that the Central Government had neglected the sector, which provided employment for 60 per cent people.

Farmers were pushed to committing suicide because the Central Government fixed the minimum support price, which was uneconomical for the farmers who, after obtaining loans from banks found it difficult to repay the same. Left with no option, the farmers were forced to commit suicide. The budget had ignored the concerns of the southern states in that there was no allocation for compensating the farmers.

Metter level

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 29.44 feet on Sunday against the full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 138 cusecs and the discharge 300 cusecs.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 43.80 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 124.07 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 80.39 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 9 cusecs and 30 cusecs of water was discharged.

Nagercoil

While the water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 3.70 feet, it was 32.60 feet in Perunchani, 4.95 feet in Chittar I, 4.65 feet in Chittar II and 5.90 feet in Poigai dam.

Settle arrears without any delay, demand sugarcane farmers

Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers Association has appealed to the State Government to instruct a private sugar mill in the district to settle the cane arrears without any further delays.

Farmers claimed that the mill management had promised that it would utilise 85 per cent of its revenue to settle the cane arrears in the tripartite meeting conducted by the district administration recently. “But the management is yet to fulfil its promise and payment was not

made to a large number of farmers for the past several months,” association president T. Gopinath told reporters here on Sunday.

Mr. Gopinath said the farmers had taken up the issue to the notice of the officials in the district administration on several occasions and made repeated representations to the mill management demanding it to clear the arrears immediately.

“Many farmers were not able to re-pay the crop loans due to the inordinate delay in the payment from the factory. The banks were sending notices demanding the farmers to re-pay the loans,” Mr. Gopinath pointed out.

The association urged the authorities concerned to ask the mill management to clear the arrears. “We will stage a demonstration to attract the attention of the Government on March 5. If the arrears were not cleared quickly, we would resort to a series of agitations,” Mr. Gopinath said.

Water level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 112.50 feet (136 feet), with no inflow and discharge of 105 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was at 47.34 feet (71 feet), with no inflow and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar - Vaigai credit was at 2235 mcft. There was no rain in the region.

Vegetable traders split over shifting to G. Corner Ground



READY TO MOVE? Onion traders are willing to shift, but banana and fruit merchants are opposed to the move on the grounds that the site is inadequate to accommodate all of them.

Tiruchi Corporation’s decision to shift the wholesale traders in onion, banana, and jaggery, currently functioning around the Gandhi Market in the city, to the G. Corner Ground on the outskirts, has evoked mixed reactions with civic activists and a section of traders opposing the move.

With the Corporation Council approving, at its last meeting, a proposal to shift the *vengaya mandi*, *vazhakkai mandi*, *vellamandi*, and *pazha mandi* to G. Corner Ground where the civic body owns about five acres of land, civic officials are expected to clear the site for the purpose soon.

Established more than 70 years ago, the Gandhi Market has been bursting at its seams with even retail traders spilling out to occupy the roads around the market. Road traffic often comes to a standstill as the wholesale mandis are all situated around the market.

The proposal to shift the wholesale traders has been hanging fire for over two decades as the civic body was unable to identify an alternative site.

Corporation officials say the G. Corner ground, where the civic body has five acres to spare after setting up a slaughterhouse for cows, is ideally suited for relocating the wholesale traders as it is close to the highway.

But traders are divided over the issue. While onion traders are willing to shift, banana and fruit merchants are opposed to the move on the grounds that the site is inadequate to accommodate all of them. "We are willing to shift to G. Corner provided the vazhakkai and thakkali mandis are shifted along with us. The Corporation should build pucca shops with at least 1,000 square feet of space. The new premises should have proper arrangements for loading and unloading goods," says A. Thangaraj, general secretary, Tiruchi Onion Traders' Association. The onion market, with about 75 traders, handles about 700 to 800 tonnes of Bellary and small onions a day and caters to a wide market in and around Tiruchi.

But banana merchants are not agreeable to shifting a few sections of wholesale traders. "It is a different matter if the entire market is shifted. Until such time, we wish to continue here. The wholesale and retail sections of banana and other fruit markets are inter-dependent and cannot be separated," says K.P. Palnival of the Banana Traders' Association. He rejects the allegation that banana traders were posing a hindrance to road traffic. The corporation, if necessary, can shift the goat slaughterhouse to G. Corner and accommodate the banana market at the place, he says.

There are about 60 wholesale and retail banana traders and most of them require a large space to store fruits. It remains a moot point whether five acres will be adequate to accommodate them along with other traders.

Civic activists also oppose the move saying the site is situated in an awkward junction, with no proper access. "The corporation should elicit the views of the public before implementing the decision. It will be chaos if the wholesale traders are to be shifted here. Both traders and public will be put to inconvenience," says H. Ghouse Baig, secretary of Golden Rock branch of Consumer Protection Council, Tamil Nadu.

The G. Corner ground is accessible now only by a service road which runs into a dead-end near the railway bridge. Trucks will be forced to use the service road between Tollgate and G. Corner in both directions and this will only make for a traffic bottleneck, he says.

The Corporation should first build an underpass at the junction, as demanded by Golden Rock residents, before considering any move to shift the traders, Mr. Baig says.

N. Ramakrishnan, a civic activist, says five acres will not be adequate all the wholesale traders. "It is an ill-advised move. The Corporation should look to identify a suitable site to set up an integrated market complex to accommodate all wholesale traders, rather than splitting them into different groups," he says.

Corporation Commissioner V.P. Thandapani says the civic body will build shops for traders. Although there were some additional government land at the site, it is involved in litigation and more space can be provided only after these cases are resolved.

Financial assistance for cardamom farmers

Cardamom farmers should submit applications for financial help from the Spices Board for re-plantation before March 31. Those having up to eight hectares of land are eligible for the aid, a release here said. Those having up to four hectares of land will be given Rs.17,780 in the first stage and Rs.17,036 in the second stage. Those having up to eight hectares of land are eligible for getting Rs.13,470 in the first stage and Rs.12,905 in the second stage. The applications should be accompanied by copies of documents, including receipts of land tax and details of bank accounts, the release said. — A Correspondent

Food safety champions

Chennaiites should have tasted cookies, hot cakes or at least loaf of bread from Adyar Bakery, but the student members of Citizen Consumer Club, D.G. Vaishnav College, had the opportunity to visit their manufacturing unit to see how things work from the initial baking of bread to the final product of a rich creamy cake. We could see the raw material used, storage, types of utensils used, ventilation and hygienic practices followed in the unit. This was part of a four-day residential training organised by Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and Consumer Association of India (CAI). This training-cum-workshop was aimed at creating an awareness on Food Safety and Standards Act 2006.

FSSAI, in association with CAI, has partnered with Consumer Club of D.G. Vaishnav College to train 20 students into Food Safety Champions (FSC). They will in turn conduct a mass awareness campaign in Chennai in February, 2013.

This residential training gave students an all-round exposure about the Act. This major responsibility of sensitising the masses about this new Act is now shouldered upon FSC, and the training is the first of its kind initiated by Government of India. As part of the training programme, we also visited Food Business Operators at the Elliot Beach and conveyed the importance of the Act.

The writer is a second-year

M.Com D.G. Vaishnav College

weather

INDIAN CITIES

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Delhi

Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Mar 4

Max 28° | Min 13°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:43

Sunset: 06:22

Barometer: 1016

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Mar 5

Max 27° | Min 12°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Mar 6	Thursday Mar 7	Friday Mar 8	Saturday Mar 9	Sunday Mar 10
28° 13° Sunny	28° 16° Sunny	29° 15° Sunny	31° 17° Sunny	33° 18° Sunny

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:43

Humidity: 100

Sunset: 06:22

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1016



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Cocoa Drops to 9-month low on Europe concern

CHICAGO | NEW YORK: [Cocoa](#) futures dropped to a nine-month low on mounting concern that a recession is weakening demand in Europe, the world's biggest consumer. Orange juice and sugar also fell, while coffee and cotton gained.

[European stocks](#) declined on Friday and the pound weakened through \$1.50 for the first time

since July 2010, after an industry report showed UK manufacturing unexpectedly shrank in February. The economies of the 17 countries that use the euro will shrink 0.1% this year, after contracting 0.5% in 2012, according to the median of 54 estimates in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

"We always have to look at the idea of a poor [global economy](#) leeching away demand from commodities, cocoa included," Hector Galvan, a senior commodities broker at RJO Futures in Chicago, said on Friday in an e-mail.

Cocoa for May delivery fell 2.5% to \$2,082 a tonne at 2 pm on ICE Futures the US in New York, the biggest drop for a most-active contract since January 22 and the lowest closing price since June 1. In London, cocoa for May delivery fell 1.6% to 1,406 pounds (\$2,112) a tonne on [NYSE](#) Liffe, marking a 19% drop from a closing high on September 6.

Also in New York, orange-juice futures for May delivery tumbled 5.4% to \$1.2095 a pound on ICE, the biggest loss since December 31. "There are no weather concerns, so people are getting out," after money managers boosted their bets on a rally during the past two weeks, [John Ortelle](#), a vice-president for McKeany- Flavell , a broker in California, said in a telephone interview.

While a cold snap approaching, the northern sections of Florida's citrus belt will drop temperatures to the upper 3.3 degrees Celsius on March 3, it will not pose a threat to orange groves, Joel Widenor, the director of agricultural services for Maryland-based [Commodity Weather Group](#), said on Friday. Raw-sugar futures for May delivery retreated 2.6% to 17.91 cents a pound in New York. Coffee futures for May delivery gained 0.1% to \$1.4335 a pound on ICE. Cotton futures for delivery in May advanced 0.1% to 85.4 cents a pound.

Groundnut oil slides on weak demand



Groundnut oil prices slid further at the oils and oilseeds market due to weak demand from stockist and retailers.

MUMBAI: Groundnut [oil prices](#) slid further at the oils and oilseeds market here today due to weak demand from stockist and retailers amidst ample supply.

Meanwhile, refined palmolein and linseed oil ruled stable in the absence of any worthwhile

buying activity.

In non-edible section, [castorseeds](#) bold and castoroil commercial recovered smartly following renewed offtake from shippers and soap industries.

In the [futures market](#), castorseeds regained on rising speculative demand following higher export enquiries.

In edible section, groundnut oil dipped by Rs 15 per 10 kg to Rs 1,215 from Friday's closing level of Rs 1,230. However, refined palmolein closed unchanged at Rs 511 per 10kg.

In the non-edible section, castorseeds bold climbed by Rs 25 per 100kg to Rs 3,625 from overnight closing level of Rs 3,600 and castoroil commercial also looked-up by Rs 5 per 10kg to Rs 755 from Rs 750. Linseed oil ended unaltered at Rs 875 per 10kg.

Turning to futures, castorseed March contract resumed higher at Rs 3,835 and later moved in the range of Rs 3,840 and 3,820 before ending at Rs 3,825 from Rs 3,820 yesterday, showing a mere gain of Rs 5 per tonne.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Kerala's organic revolutionary



Hashique Kambarth in his farm (Photo: K Shijith)

University students are usually known for their carefree attitude, last-minute cramming and sleeping late. While a majority of them derive pleasures from all this, Hashique Kambarth, a third-year computer hardware student of Government

Polytechnic College, Meppadi, has been reaping rich dividends by rearing farm animals and cultivating organic crops on his 1.5 acres of land.

Hailing from Pozhuthana, a hilly area in Wayanad district, Kerala, which is surrounded by picturesque tea plantations, the 22-year-old, with his dedication and self-belief, has set an example for the farming community in his district, where 33 debt-ridden farmers have committed suicide during the past one and a half years.

Being an organic farmer, Hashique grows a mixture of crops in the same field as coffee and banana, including types of beans that replenish the soil so that he does not have to apply fertilisers. Growing a variety of crops also helps him attract insects, which replaces synthetic pesticides.

Hashique, who started farming at the age of 12, says his decision to abandon synthetic fertilisers and pesticides has been the turning point in his career as a farmer. "When I started off, I did not know any other model other than chemical farming," he says. "But, fortunately, after a couple of years, I shunned the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides after learning about organic farming. When we can cultivate high-quality and

nutritious vegetables in the natural way, why should we use fertilisers and pesticides that have adverse health effects?" says Hashique.

Hashique's day starts at 4 am with the cleaning of the cowshed and milking the two cows that give about 30 litres of milk everyday. Afterwards, he feeds the hundred-odd rabbits kept in the large hutches in the backyard of his home. In the meantime, Hashique's mother Rukkiya joins him to feed the goats, chickens, turkeys, geese and flying ducks housed in separate compartments across their courtyard.

Before getting ready to go to college, Hashique waters the vegetable garden where he cultivates a variety of plants, including cabbage, spinach, beans, chillies, different types of yams, bananas and ferny azolla, a water plant that is used as cattle feed.

After returning from the college in the evening, the young farmer is busy monitoring the crops of coffee, pepper and cardamom, that contribute a major chunk of his annual income of about ` 4.2 lakh via farming and animal husbandry.

Also, Hashique's interest in ornamental fish farming and cultivation of medicinal plants adds colour and variety to the pleasingly congested farmland on the banks of Aaneth river, a tributary of the Kabani river.

"Of course, it is a tight schedule," he says. "But I have to find the time to study before going to sleep by 11 p.m." Hashique is planning to do a diploma course in computer networking after completing his degree.

The Department of Animal Husbandary has set up a field-level farm school at Hashique's home and has appointed him as the training director. As per the three-year contract worth ` 2.5 lakh, he will impart training to as many as 300 farmers from across Wayanad on innovative farming techniques.

Meanwhile, the Gandhiji Study Centre (GSC), a Thodupuzha-based voluntary organisation that promotes Gandhian values and thoughts, has recently chosen Hashique as the best organic farmer in Kerala.

"The award came as a surprise to me," he says. "I think my achievement will encourage more youngsters to take up agriculture as a profession." Incidentally, Hashique is the youngest farmer to win the award in GSC's 30-year-old history.

Though the award carries a cash prize of ` 2 lakh, Hashique is more excited about the larger prize that came with it: a 10-day trip to New Zealand in April. "I have read a lot about the country that gives priority in conserving its agricultural biodiversity," says a beaming Hashique. "It will be a great opportunity for me to learn about the people, environment and the farming practices there."

THE HINDU Business Line

Rice market to see good levels in coming days

KARNAL, MARCH 3: Some buying support coupled with limited arrivals in the market kept rice and wheat prices in positive territory while a drop in demand at higher rate pulled poultry items down last week.

WHEAT

In the physical market, after ruling flat for almost 10 days, dara wheat and flour prices improved by Rs 10 and Rs 5 a quintal, respectively, on account of limited arrivals and good consumer demand. Dara wheat ruled firm at Rs 1,540-1,545 a quintal while flour was at Rs 1,750-1,760 a quintal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, there was too much volatility in the futures and spot market throughout the week. Wheat contracts from March to June ended on a negative note.

Similarly, spot market remained bearish and went down by Rs 5, last week.

Wheat futures may trade rangebound with upside getting capped. According to market experts, bulk buyers have reduced their purchases from government stocks under the OMSS. In the second half of this month, offtake may fall further as new crop is round the corner.

Rice

Restricted arrivals in the market coupled with steady domestic demand kept aromatic and non-basmati rice prices firm.

Rice millers are not showing much interest in selling at current levels and have started to hold onto their stocks. According to the experts, the market is already ruling around the highest levels of the season and it may witness some good levels in the coming days.

Poultry

Higher supplies in the market and decline in buying support at higher rates dragged poultry items down last week.

Egg prices decreased by 47 paise over the last one week and settled at Rs 3.30.

Broiler prices went down by Rs 27 to Rs 85 a kg while chick dropped by Rs 9 to Rs 24. Poultry items may witness some recovery in the coming days, said trade experts.

Rising arrivals, slack demand drag pepper



KOCHI, MARCH 3: The pepper market – both futures and spot – headed south last week as supply outstripped demand following an increase in arrivals in Karnataka and some parts of Kerala, such as Wayanad.

In Karnataka the new crop started hitting the markets and the material with high moisture content and of low bulk density was being reportedly offered at as low as Rs 360 a kg. A similar trend was said to be in existence in Kerala's Wayanad district and it could be attributed to the price fall, market sources told *Business Line*.

Apart from these factors, growers and traders expressed doubts about the entry of part of the pepper imported cheap from Vietnam earlier for value addition and re-export in the domestic market. Meanwhile, some of the buyers who were attending the 'Gulfood exhibition 2013' in Dubai were reportedly spreading bearish propaganda that Vietnam was offering 550 GL pepper at \$6,325-6,350 a tonne March shipment (c&f) Kochi. However, market sources in Vietnam were quoted as claiming that more sellers were offering the material only at \$6,450.

SLACK DEMAND

On the other hand, the domestic demand has slowed down, of late, as the pipelines in the north Indian markets which were completely empty have got some fillers through the recent suppliers. And at the same time, they are said to be not interested in creating any inventory because of the financial year ending on March 31. Nobody would prefer also to buy from a declining market. There has been no overseas demand as the Indian parity was ruling above other origins.

Thus, the demand supply mismatch with the latter outstripping the former has aided the price fall. Spot prices plunged by Rs 3,000 a quintal within a week to Rs 36,400 (ungarbled) and Rs 37,900 (MG 1) at the weekend closing.

The situation would have worsened further had the stocks of an estimated 6,800 tonnes of pepper locked up in warehouses awaiting drawing of samples and checking for adulterants also entered the market at this juncture. Cued by the reported rise in supply, the bear operators worked overtime to pull the prices down, some times even by circular trading, trade sources alleged.

HIGH VOLATILITY

In fact, the market has witnessed high volatility. Given this high fluctuations in the trading of the small commodity pepper, the farmers, dealers, traders and most of the stakeholders have urged the Regulator to bring down the daily fluctuation price band to 2 per cent from the present 4 per cent.

The huge difference between March and April, and April and May has led to the long position holders switching over because of the “good badla” available, they said.

All the active contracts on the NCDEX decreased substantially last week. Mar, Apr and May fell by Rs 1,270, Rs 675 and Rs 285 respectively to close at Rs 36,565, Rs 35,030 and Rs 34,130 a quintal.

Total turn over fell by 3,077 tonnes to close at 9,615 tonnes. Total open interest decreased by 264 tonnes to 3,262 tonnes.

Indian parity in the international market dropped to nearly competitive levels. March prompt shipment was available at \$7,250 a tonne (c&f) March was at \$7,100 (c&f) and April at \$6,700 (c&f). But, nobody would be able to guarantee whether at this price the material would be available tomorrow.

GM crop lobbies irked by Ministry's 'inaction'



NEW DELHI, MARCH 3: They have opposite views on genetically modified (GM) crops but are united on one issue — the inaction/silence of the Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) on various issues.

For instance, the pro-GM lobby, led by multinational and domestic seed-makers, wants the Ministry to reconstitute the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) so that the trial process can move on.

Technically, there is no regulator for GM products now; the GEAC met last in April 2012.

“We want the GEAC to be reconstituted and a meeting held soon as the sowing window for kharif plantings is approaching fast,” said Ram Kaundinya, Chairman of the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (Agriculture Group) and CEO of UPL Advanta Seeds.

Some 50 applications relating to new crop biotech products are pending assessment and approval by the regulator.

UPPER HAND TO FARM MINISTRY

On the other side, the greens want Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan to take a proactive stance. Although Natarajan is privately seen to be hawkish on commercialisation of GM crops, her not taking an open stance has allowed the Agriculture Ministry to steal the thunder by linking GM crops with food security.

Thus, by default, the Agriculture Ministry's position has now become the official view of the Government in the debate on GM crops.

The recent 'rhetoric' of Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on allowing GM crop field trials has rattled the anti-GM lobby, which believes that his argument on linking food security to genetically modified technology will mislead the debate.

Making a case for GM technology to boost farm output, Pawar recently said that scientists should not be denied the right to conduct the field trials of such crops.

"Civil society wants the Environment Minister to respond publicly so that the Agriculture Minister does not mislead the debate on GM and food security in the country," said Neha Saigal, Campaigner, Sustainable Agriculture, Greenpeace.

Food rights organisations, under the Right to Food Campaign (RFC), recently wrote to Pawar, urging him to tackle food security in more fundamental ways than linking it with genetically modified crops.

The RFC urged the Agriculture Ministry not to come in the way of much-needed changes in the transgenics scene in India, reminding it of the recommendations of the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) appointed by the Supreme Court.

EXPERT PANEL

In its interim report last October, the TEC had called for a 10-year moratorium on field trials of GM crops. The Committee is expected to submit its final recommendations to the Supreme Court later this month.

Pakistan refrains from buying Coonoor tea for third week

COONOOR, MARCH 3: For the third consecutive week, Pakistan has refrained from purchasing at the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association.

"We do not have encouraging orders from our Pakistan importers yet. Pakistan traders hold sufficient stocks from previous purchases," an auctioneer told *Business Line*.

However, international market reports show that this week, Pakistan had bought at Mombasa auction for Kenya and Malawi teas and Jakarta auction for Indonesian teas. This is regarded as to cover up the short supplies from India.

Enquiry from most other exporters was limited to medium and plain grades at this week's sale No: 9. The CIS bought for Rs 88-107 a kg. There was some purchase for other ports at Rs 82-96.

Internal buyers were, however, fairly active because of low supplies in North India where some Kolkata auctions for this month have been listed for dropping. Upcountry buyers picked up brighter-liquoring teas.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 83-87 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 110-150 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 87-90 for plain dusts and Rs 110-150 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Limited inflow to keep rice prices firm

KARNAL, MARCH 3: Some buying support coupled with limited arrivals in the market kept rice and wheat prices in a positive territory while a drop in demand at higher rate pulled poultry items down last week.

RICE

Restricted arrivals in the market coupled with steady domestic demand kept aromatic and non-basmati rice prices firm.

Rice millers are not showing much interest in selling at current levels and have started to hold onto their stocks. According to experts, the market is already ruling around the highest levels of the season and it may witness some good levels in the coming days.

WHEAT

In the physical market, after ruling flat for almost 10 days, dara wheat and flour prices improved by Rs 10 and Rs 5 a quintal, respectively, on account of limited arrivals and good consumer demand.

Dara wheat ruled firm at Rs 1,540-1,545 a quintal while flour was at Rs 1,750-1,760 .

Spot market remained bearish and went down by Rs 5, last week.

Wheat futures may trade range-bound with upside getting capped.

POULTRY

Higher supplies and decline in buying support at higher rates dragged poultry items down last week.

Egg prices decreased by 47 paise over the last one week and settled at Rs 3.30.

Broiler prices went down by Rs 27 to Rs 85 a kg while chick dropped by Rs 9 to Rs 24.

Higher chana crop may help curb import of pulses



Record forecast: The output of pulses in the current year is expected to be around 17.58 million tonnes with chana harvest pegged at record 8.57 mt.

NEW DELHI, MARCH 3: Import of pulses may drop by about a tenth to around 3 million tonnes (mt) next fiscal on a larger chana (gram) crop this year. “The current chana crop is higher by about 15 per cent over last year. This may lead to lower imports at around 3 mt in 2013-14,” said Pravin Dongre, President, India Pulses and Grains Association.

He estimates the current year imports at around 3.3 mt, about 10 per cent higher than the previous year. India, the largest producer, consumer and importer of pulses mainly sources from countries such as Canada, Australia, Myanmar and the US.

The output of pulses in the current year is expected to be around 17.58 mt, about half a million tonne more than last year, according to the Agriculture Ministry’s 2nd Advance Estimates.

The increase in output, despite drought affecting parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra, is largely on account of projected record chana harvest pegged at 8.57 mt. Last year, chana output stood at 7.7 mt.

IMPORTS

India still relies on imports to meet the growing demand as pulses account for a major source of proteins for a large populace. Rising income levels coupled with the adequate availability and lower prices of pulses are seen aiding the consumption trend.

Though the daily per capita consumption has declined to 25-30 gm from around 70 gm in the 1960s, the total quantity of pulses consumed by the country has gone up.

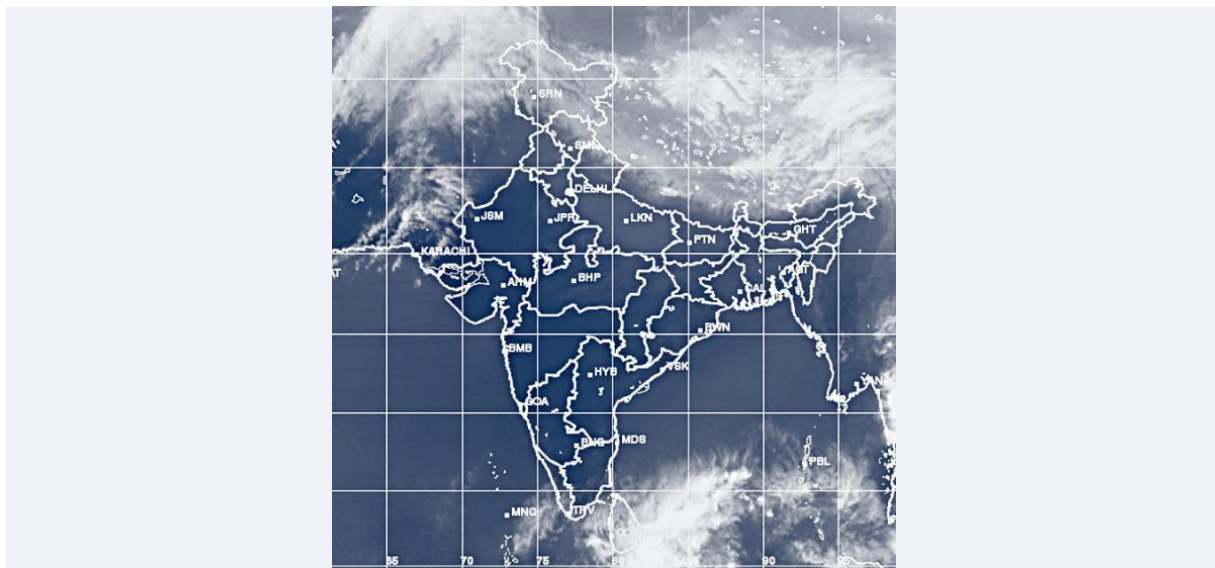
The growing demand for pulses is also a cause of rising food inflation, a fact acknowledged by Finance Minister P.Chidambaram in his Budget speech. India imported pulses worth Rs 8,767 crore (\$1.8 billion) in 2011-12, a 16.4 per cent rise over previous year.

IMPORT DUTY

The Government has been trying to encourage production of pulses, but the efforts have not paid off significantly. The Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP) has suggested to the Government to levy 10 per cent import duty on pulses and open up exports to encourage domestic production.

Presently, there is no import duty on pulses, while exports of many varieties are banned. CACP believes that imposing 10 per cent duty on imports would enhance domestic output by attracting more irrigated areas under pulses. Indirectly, such a move would result in saving on fertiliser subsidy as pulses are nitrogen fixing and help towards stabilising production.

West starts to warm up as North stays cool



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 3: Western parts of peninsula and North-West India have started warming up even as northern parts of plains remained cool. US agency forecast says Central and adjoining western peninsula may witness sustained heating from next week.

NO CHANGE

This would bring Nagpur and adjoining west Maharashtra and south Madhya Pradesh under direct battering from the sun. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) expects no significant change in minimum temperatures over North-West and central India during next two days. They would increase by 2-3 deg Celsius thereafter. This would be followed by a gradual rise in maximum temperature, too.

Heating trend would be crucial for standing rabi crops in North-West during the month of March. Shoot-up of maximum temperatures beyond 30 deg Celsius before mid-March is not seen ideal.

BELOW NORMAL

Some international models had suggested peninsular west would witness maximum heating during the summer. An IMD update said that night temperatures were below normal over parts of Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Odisha during 24 hours ending Sunday morning.

They fell by a slightly less degree in Rajasthan, rest Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, rest Odisha, Telangana, north interior Karnataka and North Tamil Nadu.

Cooler northwesterly winds are blowing across North-West border and into adjoining plains. Anti-cyclonic circulation over North and Central India during winter gets the winds to blow south-southwest into peninsular India.

RAIN SURPLUS

Meanwhile, rainfall trend during the first two months of the New Year have returned an all-India surplus of 26 per cent. Twenty-nine out of 35 meteorological subdivisions posted excess or normal rainfall while two had deficient rain and five, scanty. This was a massive improvement over comparable period last year of only 10 excess or normal, 12 deficient and 11 scanty.

Deficits this year are confined to East India (percentage figures)- Odisha (-62); Gangetic West Bengal (-63); Jharkhand (-42). North-East India too posted chronic deficits, after rain-producing western disturbances dried up as they passed into the east.

Tomato prices rise on lower arrivals



After witnessing a fall earlier on Wednesday, tomato prices have regained their upper levels on account of lower availability of stocks.

KARNAL, MARCH 3: Lower arrivals in the market pushed up tomato prices on Sunday by Rs 100-150 a quintal for the different varieties. Around 750 crates (a crate is 25 kg) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted Rs 350-1,850 a quintal. Around 4,000 crates of varieties such as 592, Abhilash, Nasik, Trishul and 524 were received in the markets of Karnal district.

Out of total arrivals, about 35 per cent stock was of low quality; around 50 per cent stock was of medium quality while just about 15 per cent stock of total arrivals was of superior quality.

After witnessing a fall earlier on Wednesday, tomato prices have regained their upper levels on account of lower availability of stocks.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line*, that there was no particular reason behind the fall in arrivals and it may pick up to around one thousand crates a day in the coming days.

Prices of superior quality increased by Rs 150 a quintal and quoted at Rs 1,650-1,850 a quintal. The prices of Medium quality produce went up by Rs 100 and quoted at Rs 750-1,100 a quintal while Low quality produce was at Rs 350-600 a quintal, Rs 100 up from previous levels.

On Sunday, about 100 crates remained unsold due to lower quality.

Absence of bulk-buying is putting some pressure on the market, said Vikas Sachdeva. Traders expect that tomato prices may continue to rule around current levels for the next few days.

With the weather turning favourable, quality of the stock is expected to be good by mid-March, he added.

Poultry feed unchanged despite dearer inputs



KARNAL, MARCH 2: Poultry feed remained unchanged on Saturday even as prices of key ingredients were volatile.

Feed prices were not affected as the market is awaiting movement in soyameal, a key ingredient, to stabilise, said commodity analyst Aditya Mishra. They may increase next week, he added.

After dropping earlier this week, soyameal recovered to Rs 29,400 a tonne, up Rs 420.

Bajra was up Rs 35 at Rs 1,465 a quintal, while maize was unchanged at Rs 1,560.

Mustard de-oiled cake rose by Rs 40 at Rs 1,460 a quintal, meat and bone meal sold at Rs 33 a kg, and defatted rice bran increased further by Rs 40 at Rs 850 a kg.

Broiler concentrate quoted at Rs 1,780 for a 50-kg bag, while broiler starter mash was at Rs 1,420. Layer concentrate 25 per cent sold at Rs 1,385 for a 50-kg bag, while 35 per cent quoted at Rs 1,070 for a 50-kg bag. Pre-lay mash quoted at Rs 990 for a 50-kg bag and broiler finisher at Rs 1,400 for a 50-kg bag.

POULTRY PRODUCTS

Reduced offtake and ample stocks pulled down egg, chick and broiler prices down on Saturday.

Egg was down 20 paise to Rs 3.30, broiler Rs 5 to Rs 85 a kg, and chick by Rs 4 to Rs 24.

Almond declines on reduced offtake



NEW DELHI, MARCH 2: New Delhi, March 2 Almond prices fell by Rs 100 per 40 kg in the national capital on Saturday due to reduced offtake by retailers and stockists. Adequate stocks following increased arrivals from overseas markets also weighed on the prices.

Almond (California) prices fell by Rs 100 to Rs 13,700 per 40 kg and its kernel rates also eased by Rs 5 to Rs 475-515 per kg.

Traders attributed the fall in almond prices to reduced offtake by retailers and stockists against fresh arrivals from overseas markets.

The following are today's quotations (per 40 kg): Almond (California) Rs 13,700 Almond (Gurbandi-new) Rs 7,100-7,600; Almond (Girdhi) Rs 3,100-3,400; Abjosh Afghani Rs 8,000-20,000.

Almond Kernel (California-new) Rs 475-515 per kg, Almond Kernel (Gurbandi-new) Rs 350-450 per kg.

Two-day Grape Harvest Festival at Nashik

NASHIK, MAR 2: Maharashtra PWD Minister Chhagan Bhujbal today inaugurated India Grape Harvest Festival, organised by Indian Grape Processing Board (IGPB) and All India Wine Producers Association (AWPA) with the support of MIDC and state tourism department, here.

The two-day event has attracted leading wine manufacturers and connoisseurs, and features wine-and cheese-tasting sessions, seminars, grape stomping, a farmers' market, etc.

Over five thousand people are expected to visit, said Jagdish Holkar, chairman, IGPB.

Nashik accounts for half the grape production of Maharashtra.
