

## **Ariyalur Collector holds out hope for farmers in distress**

*14,031 farmers in 41 villages to get Rs.28-crore relief*



REACHING OUT:Collector M. Ravikumar speaking at the farmers' grievance meeting in Ariyalur on Friday.— PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

All farmers, other than those who have raised paddy, would get compensation in due course, Collector M. Ravikumar said at an agriculturists' grievances day meeting here on Friday.

The Collector was responding to the allegations of farmer leaders such as K. Ulaganathan who wondered why the Chief Minister had announced compensation only for farmers in delta districts. "What happens to lakhs of farmers who have raised various other crops, including cashew, corn, cotton, and so on? We in Ariyalur district depend on rains for water. Are we not farmers," he said. "We have been made to beg virtually," he said.

The Collector said 14,031 farmers in 41 villages in the district would get a compensation of Rs. 28 crore soon. Of them, 1,691 had insured their crop while the rest had failed to do so. "We will get an undertaking from all of them and start disbursing the compensation," he added.

Rajachidambaram, general secretary of the Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham, while thanking the Chief Minister for recognising Aiyalur as a delta district, wondered why the benefits given to delta farmers were not extended to those in the district.

He wanted to know why there was a separate group of farmers who were said to have not insured their crops while the State government had claimed that it had paid insurance premium for all farmers in the delta region.

The Collector said when the State government conceived a scheme under which all farmers in delta region were to get insurance cover, Ariyalur was not considered a part of the delta region.

Mr. Ravikumar said that insurance scheme might or might not help all farmers because the insurance company assessed the crop loss only in certain areas in each firkha. He said this method could be a double-edged sword. It could benefit even those who had not suffered losses while those who lost the crop could be left out. Mr. Rajachidambaram alleged several irregularities were found in the list of people eligible for compensation. "It is because of the village administrative officers who deserve condign punishment," he said and pleaded that these lists should be displayed in all the agricultural credit co-operative societies so that farmers who had genuinely suffered losses were identified. As compensation was yet to be disbursed, it was not too late for the administration to take corrective action, he said.

## **Heed farmers' demand, says Karunanidhi**

DMK president M. Karunanidhi on Friday urged Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to pay heed to the demands of the farmers in the delta

region and make announcement about full-fledged relief in the coming budget.

### **Nothing is known**

In a statement here, he said it was decided to send a team to study the crop failure in non-Delta district, nothing was known about it so far.

He said while the government had announced Rs. 15,000 per acre to farmers who had suffered more than 50 per cent loss, the fate of other farmers hanged in balance.

“There is no word about the demand for Rs. 10 lakh relief to the families of farmers who have committed suicide and job for their family members. The government is yet to respond to a demand for reassessing the crop loss,” he said.

## **Farmers asked to sell sunflower upon harvest**

The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has asked farmers to sell sunflower upon harvest without resorting to storage.

Based on the analysis made from studying the price of sunflower seeds at the Vellakoil Regulated Market for the last 12 years, DEMIC has forecast that the price of sunflower would be between Rs. 36 and Rs. 38 a kg during April-June.

The possibilities for increase in price are very limited.

### **Nearby areas**

Hence, farmers are asked to sell through regulated markets in nearby areas to get good price.

# **Farmers heave a sigh of relief**

There is no difference of opinion among people about the State Budget presented by Finance Minister K.M. Mani on Friday when it comes to farmers in the district finding some solace over the announcements in the Budget.

The waiver of interest for loans taken by small and marginal farmers and the promise to ensure interest free agricultural loans for farmers with one hectare or even less of agricultural land come at a time when the State recorded a negative growth of 1.3 per cent in agriculture.

A risk insurance scheme linked to agriculture loan repayment was also announced. The proper implementation of the decision to pay for the paddy at the procuring site itself will come as a huge relief for the farmers in the district. The inclusion of Alappuzha among the ten districts to have Neera production units will benefit the coconut farmers in the district. There is also an allocation of Rs. 5 crore for the Kuttanad heritage project.

However, the Budget fails to address the needs of industries in the district. There are no packages to assist the ailing Kerala State Drugs and Pharmaceuticals and there is no mention on Autocast and the Komalappuram Spinning mills.

The coir export processing park announced will open up new possibilities . The inclusion of Alappuzha in the water taxi project, which links railway stations and bus stations to nearby places , is a boost for water transport sector in the district. The introduction of chemical toilets in the boats of State Water Transport Department will satisfy the conservationists of the Vembanad lake .

The renovation of canals and the mega tourism project will open up new vistas for the development of tourism sector.

The lifting of value added tax on food served in houseboats will give new life to the houseboat industry in the district.

## **Neera brings hopes to coconut farmers**

*Budget proposal to promote Neera production hailed*

Various farmers' organisations here have hailed the Finance Minister K.M. Mani's decision to promote production of 'Neera' (palm juice) from coconut trees in ten districts.

The organisations said the decision announced in the State Budget on Friday would bring solace to the farmers who were facing crisis owing to the declining prices of coconut and coconut oil. The farmers demanded that the government set up a farmer-producer company or a corporation to promote Neera. It could be marketed as 'sports drink' and 'health drink,' they said.

According to Desheeya Karshaka Samajam general secretary Muthalamthode Mani, a Neera Development Corporation is a must to produce and market the soft drink. "Since Neera produced from coconut tree is a non-alcoholic health drink, the owner of coconut tree should be permitted to produce and sell it," he said.

The Kerala Agricultural University had developed the technology for the commercial production of Neera as a health drink.

The government should take up its production and marketing in partnership with coconut farmers. The Coconut Board and the Coconut Technology Mission had various schemes to finance such projects, Mr. Mani said.

A leading coconut farmer and former MLA of Chittur, K. Krishnankutty said the decision to promote Neera would impact the State's economy well. Neera from coconut would bring more income

to coconut farmers than what the rubber farmers were now getting from latex.

It is estimated that from one coconut tree, Neera worth Rs.1,500 could be produced a month. From a tree given for tapping toddy, the farmers get only Rs.350 a month now. A coconut farmer could get Rs.7.2 lakh from one acre of coconut grove if Neera is produced. This income is double that of the rubber farmers in the State, Mr. Krishnankutty said.

Canned and bottled Neera and tender coconut water could be marketed in and outside Kerala as well as exported to the Gulf.

Many toddy tappers and others had gone from Palakkad to Karnataka for taking up work there after the Karnataka government allowed the coconut farmers to produce and sell Neera, he said.

State president of the All India Kisan Sabha V. Chamunni also welcomed the decision. But he wanted the proposal to be implemented with a political will. It should not go the way of the coconut and copra procurement schemes, he said.

## **A fair mix of hi-tech and welfare in farm sector**

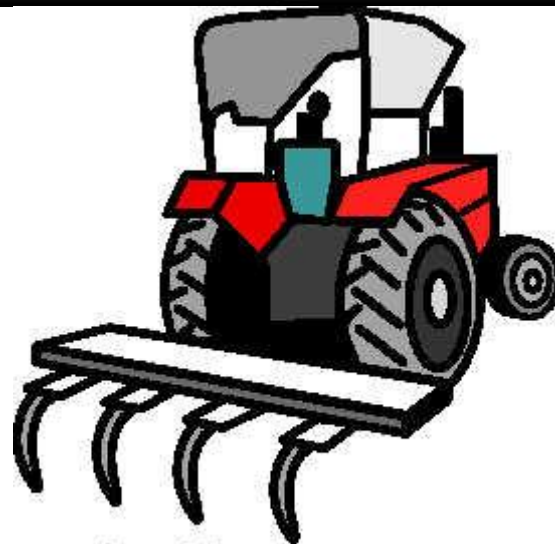
There is scope for fresh hope for farmers in the Budget presented on Friday in the Assembly, in which Finance Minister K.M. Mani has outlined a fair mix of technology-oriented projects and welfare programmes in the outlay for the Agriculture sector.

Model hi-tech green villages in all districts, integrated agricultural garden scheme for small holders, technology centre for fruits, vegetables and flowers, Kerala brand for organic farming, production of Neera from coconut, integrated crop insurance, exemption for individual farmers from paying agricultural income tax — these are some of the major proposals for the sector. A hi-tech



fodder unit and a genomic laboratory for early detection of good heifers have also been mooted in the allied sectors.

ON THE FARM FRONT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Genomic laboratory for early detection of good heifers <i>Rs.11 cr.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chicken meat processing unit <i>Rs.1 cr</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural complex for animal husbandry, dairy development and fisheries at Thrissur <i>Rs.10 cr</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soil Museum at Parottukonam, Thiruvananthapuram</li> <li><i>Pollen bank</i> for large- scale production of hybrid coconut saplings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central Technological Museum at Kerala Agricultural University <i>Rs.1 cr</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Rice breeding-cum- seed</i> production centre at College of Agriculture, Padannakad.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meat processing plant under MPI at Chalakudy <i>Rs.35 cr</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Hi- tech solar-powered fodder</i> manufacturing unit at Kudappanakunnu</li> </ul>



agriculture

Mr. Mani has earmarked Rs.50 crore to write-off the interest burden on Nabard loans availed of by small farmers. The offer will be extended under a one-time settlement for farmers remitting the loan capital.

Small and marginal farmers, having land below one hectare, will be eligible for interest-free farm loan. A risk insurance scheme will be introduced for loan repayment under which the loan need not be repaid if the head of the family dies or meets with an accident.

### **Farm garden scheme**

The integrated agricultural garden scheme for small holders envisages the creation of 10,000 viable economic units, bringing together hi-tech agriculture with chicken, duck, turkey, quail and rabbit farming, pisci culture, bee keeping, mushroom cultivation, or floriculture. The Budget has allocated Rs.70 crore for model hi-tech green villages in each district, adopting rainwater harvesting, waste processing at source, hi-tech agriculture, organic farming, water, energy, environmental, and food security.

A sum of Rs.21 crore has been set apart for paddy procurement and Rs.30 crore for farmers' societies and farmers' markets. Mr. Mani proposed a Rs.15-crore scheme to promote Kerala's own brand of organic farming through a pilot project for production of organic manure, pesticides and high yielding seeds, tissue culture seedlings, and production units, in selected districts. An integrated crop insurance scheme, covering all major crops, has also been mooted.

The Minister also proposed a chain of fair price restaurants named Trupthi where food would be available for Rs.20.

The restaurants would be opened in all taluk headquarters. He said the Civil Supplies Department would be the nodal agency for the restaurant chain that could be operated by women's units like Kudumbasree, Janasree and Grihasree.

The government, he explained, would provide grant upto Rs.500,000 per year to cover the rental, electricity, and water charge of each restaurant besides a managerial subsidy of Rs.50,000 and supply of grains, provisions, vegetables, and fish at fair price, and gas connection at concessional rate.



# Groundnut farmers demand compensation for crop loss

Farmers, who have heavily invested in groundnut crop in Jajpur district, have demanded compensation to the tune of Rs. 15,000 per acre following total crop failure.

More than 500 farmers from Badachana, Dharmasala and Bari block took out a rally under the banner of Navanirman Krushak Sangha (NKS) and staged a demonstration at the district magistrate's office at Jajpur town.

They submitted a memorandum addressed to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik alleging that groundnut crop loss had hit them badly. Besides, compensation for crop loss, farmers urged Chief Minister to make correction in relief code so that farmers could get proper compensation for crop loss.

According to NKS, about 31,105 hectares of land had been covered under the groundnut crop in Jajpur district this year. "In 10 panchayats such as Badabalikuda, Barapada, Saudia, Balikuda, Kolanagiri, Majhipada, Gopalpur, Charinagal, Balipadia and Mandukanduka of Badachana block, Kodampal, Areikana, Kotapur of Dharmasala block farmers will get 20 per cent of their usual production," NKS assessed.

Terming the failure of groundnut crop a unique incidence, the Sangathan said most of the farmers had taken seed on credit from the local private traders and were under obligation to give them back after the harvest. "Since, the crop has failed totally they cannot pay back the credit."

Sudhansu Sekhar Deo, an activist, said erratic weather and poor quality seed were principal reasons behind crop failures. The Jajpur

district administration has assured farmers to send a team to assess loss .

***Many farmers had taken seed on credit from private traders and were under obligation to give them back***

## **Collector advises farmers to set up more poultry units**

*50 per cent loan and 50 per cent subsidy available for project*



*Ready to hatch: Applications received so far for setting up the unit is less than the target set for the district.— File Photo: E. Lakshmi Narayanan*

Collector M.Ravikumar has advised farmers to set up more poultry units in the backward district as the number of applications received so far in this regard is less than the target set for the district.

At the agriculturists' grievances meeting here on Friday, he said the poultry farmers would be able to get 50 per cent loan and 50 per cent subsidy for the project. There would be buy-back arrangement too with big hatcheries. "We have so far received only 200 applications," he added.

(According to official sources, the district administration has already taken a number of steps for setting up poultry farms in the wake of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's announcement. In August, the administration had announced that about 230 poultry farms would

be set up in the district which fell under the Villupuram zone of poultry development scheme. The advantage of this subsidy-based programme is farmers, individual entrepreneurs, and members of self-help groups are eligible for the scheme. One of the members of the group should possess a piece of land for setting up the shed. Persons interested in expanding their existing farms could also benefit under the scheme.)

Mr.Ravikumar urged the farmers to take up fodder development for which the State government had come out with a major support scheme. Under the Drought Relief Fodder Development Programme, Tamil Nadu government had allocated Rs.15 crore for raising fodder in eight delta districts, including Ariyalur. Each district would have a target of 700 acres and the farmers could use borewell for irrigation.

The Collector said that it would be immensely profitable because they could raise the 55-60 day crop and have a number of cuttings. Each cutting could help them get at least Rs.6,000 an acre.

Mr.Ravikumar said that those interested in raising fodder in not less than 0.5 acre and supply the same to the government could apply to the veterinary doctors or the agriculture officers. A committee headed by the Collector would choose the beneficiaries.

These beneficiaries would be requested to sign an agreement with Tamil Nadu Milk Producers Associations that they would supply fodder. Then they would be provided with fodder seed. During the cultivation, they would get a subsidy of Rs.6,800 an acre in three instalments. As soon as the crop is harvested after 55 to 60 days, the farmer could sell the green fodder for Rs.2 a kg and the dry fodder for Rs.10 a kg. And the milk producers would get the fodder so received at 50-per cent subsidy. The farmers were informed by the Joint Director of Agriculture that the district recorded only 678 mm rainfall against normal 954 mm during 2012. And up to March this year, just 7.5 mm had been recorded.

Besides, against the normal paddy area of 25,000 hectares, only 18,400 hectares had been covered so far. And millets had been raised in 17,100 hectares, pulses 2,900 hectares, cotton 8,100 hectares, sugarcane 8,015 hectares, and oil seeds in 10,681 hectares.

As it would be difficult to raise long-term crops due to drought, the Joint Director said it would be ideal to go in for short-term black gram which would fetch high yield and good income. In order to promote black gram and pulse production, Ariyalur district had been set a target of 300 hectares under the National Food Security Programme. Under this scheme, inputs worth Rs.4,800 per hectare are given at subsidised rates.

## **5,000 farm ponds to overcome drought**

Farm ponds to ameliorate the drought situation in the delta were announced recently for implementation under the District Rural Development Agency.

This was in pursuance of the State government's announcement of increase in labour days from 100 to 150 under the MNREGS in the Delta. According to a release, the scheme envisages an expenditure of Rs. 181 crore towards setting up of 15,000 ponds in drought-hit districts. Under this, 5,000 farm ponds have been proposed for the district.

Small, marginal, Adidravidar and Scheduled Tribe farmers are eligible to avail a farm pond under MNREGS works. According to a release, interested farmers were required to contact the Panchayat Board president or block development officer along with land documents. The farm pond scheme envisages cent per cent manual labour, at a cost of Rs. 1.50 lakh, and retention of scooped silt within the village. Further, the Department of Fisheries should provide for subsidies for aquaculture for not exceeding one year,

along with inputs including fish, fish feed, and nourishment. The scheme entails subsidies of Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 17,500 for fish farming. Applications seeking subsidy may be sent to Assistant Director, Fisheries Department (Inland fishing), Sivan Nagar, Tiruvarur.

## **Financial aid under Farmers' Social Security Scheme given away**

Financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 98,00,500 was extended to 1,625 beneficiaries under the Farmers' Social Security Scheme. Minister for Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare A. Mohammed John handed over the financial assistance at Walajah on Saturday.

According to a press release, 846 beneficiaries received Rs. 17,50,000 towards educational assistance, 265 beneficiaries received Rs. 22,92,000 for marriage assistance and 125 persons received Rs. 12,32,500 as relief for death of farmers due to natural causes and for performing final rites. Besides this, Rs. 38,16,000 was given to 318 persons for elderly assistance and Rs. 7,10,000 for 71 beneficiaries towards the State Government's relief for poor families.

Collector P. Sankar was present on the occasion.

C. Muthukumaran, Revenue Divisional Officer, Ranipet; R. Mallika, Special Deputy Collector (Social Security Scheme); Murali, Tahsildar, Walajah; Rajasekaran, Tahsildar (Social Security Scheme); and local body representatives were present.

# Withdraw 'open delta' system: farmers

*They stage demonstration in front of Bescom office*

Farmers staged a demonstration in front of the office of the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) in Harihar seeking withdrawal of the 'open delta' connection introduced from March 1, all over the State.

The irrigation pumpsets could not be run with the power supplied under the open delta connection as it would only serve the purposes of domestic lighting, they said and questioned the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Ltd. why a discriminatory policy was being followed.

## **Demand**

The farmers demanded 18 hours of continuous power supply every day for irrigation pumpsets. More than 300 irrigation pumpsets had been damaged owing to erratic power supply, they said and urged the Becom to compensate the losses incurred by them.

## **Transformers**

The Bescom had not replaced the transformers that had become defunct. On the contrary, the Bescom officials had suggested that the farmers change the transformers on their own by sharing the cost. It was the duty of the Bescom to replace defunct transformers, the farmers said.

K. Bevinahalli Mahesh, Puttaveerappa, Kuberappa, Parusharamappa, Mahantesh, Hanume Gowda, Guttururu Manjappa, Kokanur Lokesh and Bannikod Hanumanthappa led the agitation.

Meanwhile, the Bescom officials told *The Hindu* that the government had introduced the open delta connection from March 1 for the benefit of students appearing for SSLC and PU



examinations. There would be continuous power supply from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. under this system, they said and conceded that it would not be possible to operate irrigation pumpsets with the quality of power supplied under open delta system.

## **Man trampled to death in Tumkur farm**

A man was killed by an elephant at an arecanut farm in Kumkumnahalli in Tumkur taluk on Sunday.

Forest Department officials gave the name of the dead as Balaiah (35) of Hettappanahatti in Sira taluk. He was sleeping along with his friends at the farm belonging to Basavaraju.

The group of shepherds had been camping there with their sheep to offer manure. Around 4 a.m. on Sunday, three elephants, including a tusker, came to the farm.

As some of the shepherds who were guarding the sheep were awake, they tried to shoo them away.

### **Tragic**

In the melee, the panicked elephants ran away, but one of them trampled upon Balaiah, who died on the spot.

The elephants had come from the Bannerghatta forests and were staying near the Mallasandra tank.

S. Shivanna, district in-charge Minister; R.K. Raju, Deputy Commissioner; B.P. Karunakar, Deputy Conservator of Forests; and Narasimhamurthy, Range Forest Officer, visited the spot. The Minister handed over a cheque for Rs. 2 lakh to the relatives of Balaiah.

The Forest Department would recommend to the government to pay an additional compensation of Rs. 3 lakh to the family, officials said.

## Rain offers little hope for areca farmers

*Large amounts of nuts kept in the sun got drenched*



Cloudy prospects: Areca nuts kept in the open for drying at a farmer's house at Kottodi near Kanhangad on Sunday. They are kept in heaps anticipating sudden rain that can spoil the produce. —Photo: by special arrangement

The brief spell of rain provided the much-needed respite from the scorching heat and partial relief to people in water-scanty localities in the State. But the summer showers this season and the overcast skies during most part of the day are giving nightmares to farmers busy drying areca nuts and awaiting better cashew nut yields.

The district had experienced good spells of summer showers, but they resulted in drenching large quantities of areca nuts kept for drying in the open. But, with the skies remaining overcast over the last few days, especially in the hilly hamlets of the district with sizeable cultivation area, the farmers are an agonised lot.

“We always have to remain in constant vigil and cover up the semi-dried areca nuts in the event of unexpected rains,” K. Balaraman Nair, a farmer in Parappa block panchayat, said.

Some farmers had to rely on labourers to collect the areca nuts spread out for drying and to cover the heaped up nuts with plastic sheets over, he said.

“With the old stocks of areca nut fetching market prices in the range of Rs.180 a kg and the fresh produce priced at just Rs.120 a kg, we will have to remain vigilant against the possibility of the rain spoiling the quality of the produce further,” M. Ranjith Nambiar, another areca nut grower in the district, said.

The northernmost district of Kerala is known for its top-quality areca nut, but cultivation has turned expensive owing to the rising cost of production coupled with acute shortage of traditional labourers.

The wages of all categories of semi-skilled labourers have increased leaps and bounds. For instance, the charge paid for dehusking areca nuts is put at Rs.10 a kg against Rs.6 a kg last season.

The prolonged rain spell was not good for the cashew nut crop either, Mr. Nambiar said.

## **Farm ponds quench the thirst for jobs**

*It helps in recharging groundwater and facilitate fish farming*



Farm ponds are being dug throughout Thanjavur district under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Besides providing livelihood to a large number of people by way of employment, the ponds, when completed, will recharge groundwater, irrigate agricultural land, and help in taking up agriculture and allied activities such as fishing.

Twenty four persons were employed to build a farm pond of 30 metres x 28 metres at Gopalapuram in Marunkulam panchayat in Thanjavur block on Saturday.

The workers had been given a mandate to dig up to a depth of five feet. They were paid based on their work.

Chinnatha, 64, said that she had been working for two weeks in the pond. She is paid Rs 124 a day. The maximum wage is Rs. 132 a day. Jayalakshmi, another worker, said she had completed 100 days of employment under MGNREGS already. But as the State government had now extended the time of employment to 150 days under the scheme, she was getting this employment. Lashmanan, a farmer for whom the pond is being built, is working under the scheme.

He said he would take up fish farming in the pond besides using the water for irrigation.

## **Water level**

Water level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 113 feet (136 feet) with an inflow of 285 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 46.29 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 5 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 2,209 mcft.

Periyar recorded 6.4 mm of rainfall followed by Thekkady 5.6 mm, Uthamapalayam 2 mm and Kodaikanal 0.6 mm.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 79.25 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 449.77 cusecs and no water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 91.90 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 6.71 cusecs and no water was discharged.

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**hindustantimes**

## Weather

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Sunny

**Monday, Mar 18**

**Max Min**

31° | 23°

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 79

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 06:14

**Sunset:** 06:19

**Barometer:** 1012

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

**Tuesday, Mar 19**

**Max Min**

33° | 23°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

<b>Wednesday Mar 20</b>	<b>Thursday Mar 21</b>	<b>Friday Mar 22</b>	<b>Saturday Mar 23</b>	<b>Sunday Mar 24</b>
33°   23°	33°   23°	34°   22°	33°   22°	34°   23°
Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast

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## Market pulse for various agro commodities: Mangal Keshav

**The overall import of vegetable oils during Nov'12-Feb'13 is reported at 37.35lakh tons compared to 30.61lakh tons in the same period last year, i.e. up by 21.99%,**

Arrivals of chilli crop were steady above 50,000 bags; however off-take has declined on dull demand at auctions held at Guntur market. Spot rates were down by '80-'100 per quintal while futures too were down by 1.5-2%.

Arrivals of jeera crop increased to 38,000 bags while demand was reported steady ~35,000 bags at auctions held at Unjha market. Spot rates are trading firm at '133-'134 per kg with strong demand seen among exporters & stockist, as per local traders.

Spot rates of pepper garbled were steady at '366 per kg and that of un-garbled was unchanged at '351 per kg. Arrivals stood at 67 tons, but trades decline to 65 tons at auctions held at Kochi market, as per IPSTA.

Arrivals of turmeric crop increased to about 15,000 bags at Nizamabad market and ~5,800-6,000 bags across mandis of Erode. Spot rates traded firmly & were quoted in the range of '64-'66 per kg across different locations, as per local traders.

Average price of small cardamom declined to '651 per kg while maximum price offered was down at '918 per kg, as per spice board. Total inflow of small cardamom crop increased to 53.9 tons from which ~53 tons were sold at auction held at Nedumkandam. Arrivals of Soya bean crop stood steady



~1lakh bags across MP market & about 4,000 bags at mandis of Indore while supply of 0.3lakh bags stood at Maharashtra & about 0.2-0.22lakh bags at Rajasthan, as per trade reports.

Spot rates of soya bean crop offered by planters declined to '35-'35.5 per kg while rates across mandis of Indore were down at '34-'34.5 per kg.

India's import of vegetable oils during Feb'13, has increased by 10.6% at 9.69lakh tons compared to 8.76lakh tons in Feb'12 and consists of 9.54lakh tons of edible oils & 0.14lakh tons of non-edible oils. The overall import of vegetable oils during Nov'12-Feb'13 is reported at 37.35lakh tons compared to 30.61lakh tons in the same period last year, i.e. up by 21.99%, as per Solvent Extractors' Association of India.

Total arrivals of mustard seed crop increased to more than 5lakh bags across major trading center while spot rates were down & quoted in the range of '34-'36 per kg based on location, as per market reports.

India's sugar output in the crop year Sept-Oct. 2011-12 stood at 26mn tons while the output of the current year is expected to decline to 24.5-25mn tons & next year is estimated at 24mn tons, mainly due to decline in output at Maharashtra, as per Union Minister of Agriculture.

## Crude palm oil rebounds on spot demand

### **Fresh positions created by speculators supported the trade**

Crude palm oil futures for April rebounded by Rs 3.50, or 0.77%, to Rs 457.70 per 10 kg i 631 lots.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the March contract gained Rs 3.40, or 0.75%, to Rs 451.50 per 10 kg in 669 lots.

Fresh positions created by speculators, driven by rising spot market demand mainly influenced crude palm oil futures market.

## Chana up 0.3% on pick-up in demand

**Rising spot market demands supported the trade**



Chana futures for April rose by Rs 9, or 0.27%, to Rs 3,395 per quintal in 73,590 lots.

At the National Commodity Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the May contract traded higher by Rs 8, or 0.24%, to Rs 3,384 per quintal in 65,300 lots.

Rising spot market demands supported the trade.

However, expectations of higher output and rising arrivals from the new season crop in the physical market restricted the gains.

## Cardamom marginally up on pick-up in demand

**Prices went up as speculators enlarged their positions**



Cardamom futures for March traded marginally higher by Re 1, or 0.11%, to Rs 931.80 per kg i 76 lots.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the April contract edged up by 90 paise, or 0.10% to Rs 915 per kg in 842 lots.

Prices went up as speculators enlarged their positions, driven by pick-up in spot market demand.

Tight supplies positions following less arrivals from producing belts further supported the uptrend.

## Chilli extends losses on sluggish demand

**Increased arrivals from producing belts further fuelled the downtrend**



Chilli futures for April continued to slide by Rs 88, or 1.27%, to Rs 6,830 per quintal in 9,585 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the March contract lost Rs 52, or 0.78%, to Rs 6,620 per quintal in 795 lots.

Chilli continued to extend losses for the third consecutive day.

Prices further dropped as speculators trimmed positions due to sluggish spot demand.

Increased arrivals from producing belts further fuelled the downtrend.

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## THE HINDU Business Line

### **Bengal potato prices gain as cold storages open doors**

#### **Kolkata, March 17:**

Potato prices in West Bengal have inched up by nearly nine per cent, with the tuber finding its way into the 400-odd cold storages across the State.

Wholesale price of potatoes (Jyoti variety) is ruling at Rs 500 a quintal this week, compared with Rs 460 a quintal during a week ago period.

According to Patit Paban De, member, West Bengal Cold Storage Association, a majority of cold storages in the State have opened their doors for storing the tuber. Nearly 55 per cent of the potatoes have already made their way into cold storages.

“Barring 20-22 storage units, which have been running at cash loss, others have commenced the process of loading potatoes following assurances from the State Government on the rental issue,” De told *Business Line*.

Nearly two-fifth of the 400-plus cold storages in the State had kept their doors shut for entry of potatoes till about ten days back, demanding a hike in rentals. The State had last raised the rentals for storage three years ago. This is even while storage costs, particularly for energy, witnessed a spike of almost 50 per cent, during the period.

While cold storages spend nearly Rs 150 for storing one quintal of potatoes during the storage season extending between mid-February and end-November, they get Rs 101 a quintal for storing those during the season.

### **Government buying**

Potato production is estimated to be up by 12 per cent at nearly 95-98 lakh tonnes this year. According to De, the Government is likely to purchase nearly 50,000 tonnes of potatoes through Benfed this year.

“The Government has recently announced that they will spend nearly Rs 27 crore for procuring potatoes through Benfed. This will instill confidence in the market and will help keep the prices firm,” he said.

The traders and stockists who were till so far away from the market, in anticipation of a price crash due to supply glut, have also stepped in to stock the tuber.

### **Steady Demand**

There has been a good demand for Bengal potatoes in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand.

“Bengal potatoes are comparatively cheaper compared with potatoes of other States such as Uttar Pradesh and the quality is also good. So they are finding acceptance in these markets,” he pointed out.

# A global initiative to protect your daily bread

Programme to develop rust-resistant wheat varieties



Saving the crop: Nirmal Bhandari, a wheat farmer, inspects her field for the presence of fungal pathogens. — R. Balaji

**Recently in Kathmandu:** Nirmala Bhandari, is a wheat farmer in Jithpurphedi, a small village nestled in the hills near Kathmandu, Nepal. Is she just another farmer, in another village? Not really. She and other farmers in the region are an important component in a fight that has brought together scientists, several Governments' agricultural systems and field staff including those in the SAARC region.

## **stem rust fungus**

The fight is to stave off invasion by a fungus, which causes a disease called stem rust, with potential to spread across the globe and decimate wheat crops.

The pathogen, dubbed UG99 because it was first identified in Uganda in 1999, has spread across wheat growing regions of Africa and up to Iran, according to scientists.

The visitors to the farm are part of a training programme on surveillance and tracking of rust pathogens as part of Borlaug Global Rust Initiative, an international effort funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the UK Department for International Development.



The programme, Durable Rust Resistance in Wheat Project, is the Secretariat for the Rust Initiative managed by Cornell University. The Hyderabad-based Sathguru Management Consultants is the regional coordination office for South Asia.

### **'virulent' fungus**

According to Dave Hodson, Senior Scientist, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), though stem rust of various forms has been identified and have caused limited damage, the UG99 has been found to be particularly virulent.

Hodson, who is also the coordinator for the rust resistance effort, says, “There is good evidence that the fungal spores can spread with the wind” across continents and can be carried on other materials including clothing of people visiting an infected area. The only option to stop the fungus is to release wheat varieties that are resistant to it.

### **globally hit**

Stem rust has spread across Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania and has been identified in Iran and in Iraq.

This is why it is critical for India and wheat growing countries to keep a close watch on wheat fields in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal and deploy wheat varieties resistant to UG99 and related genetic races of stem rust. Nepal is on the doorstep of two of the largest wheat producing countries in the world – India and China. Farmers like Nirmala Bhandari need to be taught to keep a keen look out for initial symptoms of Stem Rust and distinguish it from other types of Rust fungus.

Sarala Sharma, a scientist with the Nepal Agricultural Research Council, says over the last one year nearly 6 per cent of the wheat growing area of 7.67 lakh hectares in Nepal has been brought under resistant varieties. In the next one year over 15-16 per cent will be covered. The Council is working on 4-5 varieties of resistant varieties of wheat, she said.

### **india's action plan**

Closer home, at the Directorate of Wheat Research in Karnal, Project Director Indu Sharma, told the journalists that India has strong rust-resistant variety development regime and over the last four decades no type of wheat rust has reached epidemic proportions.

India has over 29 million hectares under wheat with a production estimated at about 90 million tonnes. There are diverse varieties of wheat under cultivation and resistant varieties are under development, she said.

## Tea prices gather steam on demand at Kochi auction



**Kochi, March 17:** A good demand perked up prices of almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi auction. In Sale No.11 in the dust CTC grades, the demand was strong and the quantity on offer was 8,46,500 kg.

The market for good liquoring teas was higher by margins of Rs 5-10 and more. Mediums were also higher by similar margins, while plainer varieties were dearer by Rs 2-4 .

The orthodox varieties registered a good demand and the quantity on offer was 5,000 kg. The market for Highgrowns was higher while for mediums it was dearer. Bulk of the offerings was absorbed by upcountry buyers and exporters.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs 115/123, while RD grades fetched Rs 131/158, SRD stood at Rs 128/158 and SFD at Rs 127/158.

The leaf sale also witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer in Orthodox grades was 77,000 kg. The market for good liquoring Nilgiri Brokens, whole leaf and fannings were fully firm to dearer.

Others were irregular and sometimes dearer. Medium bolder brokens, tippy grades and fannings were firm to dearer. Whole leaf witnessed strong feature and moved up in value.

Of the 75,000 kg on offer in the CTC grades, the market was generally firm to dearer by Rs 3-5 and sometimes more.

In the dust category, both Injipara (Prm) and Jayshree (Prm) SRD quoted the best prices of Rs 159 each followed by Injipara (Prm) SFD/SRD at Rs 158. In the leaf grades Chamraj Green FOP (S) fetched the best prices of Rs 446 followed by Chamraj OP at Rs 376.

## Heavy arrivals squeeze tomato

**Karnal, March 17:** An increase in arrivals dragged tomato prices by Rs 100-400 a quintal on Sunday.

Around 850 crates (of 25 kg each) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted between Rs 600 and Rs 2,000 a quintal.

Around 3,500 crates of varieties such as 524, Anoop, Himsona, Trishul, Himshikhar and Ahmedabad were received in the markets of Karnal district.

Out of total arrivals, about 30 per cent stock was of low quality; around 40 per cent stock was of medium quality while about 30 per cent stock was of superior quality.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that easy availability of stocks mainly pulled tomato prices down. Arrivals

have improved over the last one week and it may increase gradually in the coming weeks.

Traders expect arrivals to be in full swing within the next 20-25 days, he added.

Prices of superior quality decreased further by Rs 400 a quintal and quoted at Rs 1,700-2,000 . The prices of Medium quality were down by Rs 300 and quoted at 1,000-1,400 while Low quality produce was at Rs 600-1,000 , Rs 100 down from previous levels.

On Sunday, some 3-5 per cent the total arrival remained unsold.

## Pepper rebounds on bullish activities

**Kochi, March 17:** The pepper market bounced back last week on bullish activities following the convergence of the March delivery with the spot and then moving up to above the latter. This phenomenon has influenced the nearby contracts and consequently all the active contracts showed substantial rise last week.

Selling pressure in Karnataka of the new crop continued and that had depressed the market the week before last significantly. They were offering their produce at Rs 330 a kg delivered anywhere in India. There was liquidation in March and over all open interest showed a decline and in spite of that the prices moved up. “It is only because of squeezing in March the prices moved up,” market sources told *Business Line*.

Long position holders, who are having hedge, wanted to take delivery but they are allegedly apprehensive of getting delivery of the material on the exchange, they claimed. As the March delivery was trading above spot people were liquidating and getting out of the market, they said. Karnataka pepper was reportedly arrived at the upcountry destinations delivered at prices ranging between Rs 330 and Rs 370 a kg depending upon the quality, such as moisture content, bulk density, etc.

In Kerala, the farmers were not showing interest to sell at the current levels, they said. The market was highly volatile. The turnover dropped across the board. Leading Indian exporters and international players were active in the markets in Karnataka and Kerala and that had activated the speculators to push up the prices.

Much of the upcountry demand was met by supplies from Karnataka from those areas which preferred low bulk density bolder looking pepper while demand from areas like Maharashtra and some parts of Tamil Nadu for bulk density material is coming to Kerala, they said.

The trade is of the opinion that in order to avoid evasion of sales tax that the state government should reduce the VAT on pepper from 5 per cent to 2 per cent so that the revenue of the State will not be affected while the genuine dealers will be active and therefore the farmer will get high returns.

Pepper production in Kerala is claimed to be less due to drought conditions in Idukki and other districts coupled with diseases in some of the districts.

Demand supply situation, according to the International Pepper Community (IPC), is likely to be matching this year and hence the prices are expected to rule steady. At the same time, the domestic demand is expected to remain at good levels and hence the domestic prices are likely to rule firmer.

On the exchange all the active contracts increased substantially last week. March, April and May went up by Rs 1,570, Rs 1,535 and Rs 1,535 respectively to close at Rs 37,300, Rs 35,765 and Rs 35,725 a quintal. Total turnover increased by 1,650 tonnes to 12,805 tonnes. Total open interest decreased by 1,049 to close at 12,593 tonnes. Spot prices increased by Rs 500 to close at Rs 35,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,500 (MG 1) a quintal from that of the previous weekend closing.

# Bangladesh accounts for 84% of arecanut imports

Total imports during the first 9 months touch 62,056 t

Arecanut imports		
	April-Dec 2012-13	
Country	Quantity (in tonnes)	Value (in Rs cr)
Bangladesh	52,263	278.00
Indonesia	1,853	12.99
Myanmar	3,374	14.52
Nepal	834	3.11
Sri Lanka	1,989	18.73
Thailand	528	4.37

(Source: Answer to Mangalore MP in Lok Sabha)

**Mangalore, March 15:** Arecanut imports from Bangladesh constituted 84 per cent of the total imports during the first nine months of 2012-13.

## **Total imports**

India imported 52,263 tonnes of arecanut from Bangladesh valued Rs 278 crore during the period.

However, the total import during that period was 62,056 tonnes valued Rs 333.82 crore.

These figures were furnished by the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry to Nalin Kumar Kateel, Member of Parliament of Mangalore, in the Lok Sabha, recently.

In a question, he wanted to know the details of arecanut imports from various countries.

## **Major producer**

In fact, the share of Bangladesh in the total import of arecanut has increased significantly over the years.

The share was around 18 per cent in 2009-10, and it increased to 43 per cent in 2010-11. In 2011-12, it reached 74 per cent.



The figure went up to 84 per cent in the first nine months of the current financial year.

In a media meet last month, President of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) K. Padmanabha had expressed concern over the increase in arecanut imports from Bangladesh.

He had then stated that Bangladesh is not a major producer of arecanuts, and those from Indonesia and other countries are routed through Bangladesh to India.

### **customs duty**

He said the arecanut import from Bangladesh is exempt from customs duty as it comes under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

In a notification dated August 14, 2012, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade had fixed the minimum price for import of arecanut at Rs 75 a kg.

Added to this, the importers have to pay a customs duty of 108 per cent over the import price.

Since Bangladesh comes under SAFTA, it is exempted from the payment of customs duty of 108 per cent, he had stated then.

According to the answers given in the Lok Sabha, Indonesia's share in total imports came down drastically in the first nine months of the current fiscal.

Indonesia exported 23,232 tonnes of arecanut in 2009-10, and 23,292 tonnes in 2010-11.

The figures came down to 6,467 tonnes in 2011-12.

In the first nine months of the current fiscal, it further came down to 1,853 tonnes.

# New turmeric complex



Doors open: Turmeric samples placed at the new premises of the private market run by the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, Tamil Nadu, on Friday. The turmeric complex constructed at Semmampalayam, 7 km from Erode, is operational from Friday. Hereafter, turmeric sale would be conducted at this complex. — M. Govarthan

**Erode, March 15:** The turmeric complex constructed at Semmampalayam, 7 km away from Erode, has started functioning from Friday.

R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, said, "Turmeric auction for the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association was conducted from Friday at their newly built Turmeric Complex at Semmampalayam.

They have purchased 13 lakh sq feet of land in the Semmampalayam where they have allotted reasonable space for the Regulated Market committee for auction.

They have already granted sites for the traders for construction of their godowns.

Most of the Traders have constructed their godowns and started stocking their turmeric. The Regulated Market Committee has demanded more space for them.

Now after getting proper written permission from the Agricultural Secretary they have started the complex and also started the turmeric auction in their own premises. Hereafter, the turmeric sale

for their Association (private market) would be conducted in the Semmampalayam.

Already the labourers and headload workers also attended the new premises. The farmers also happy over the starting of sale in the new premises.

## Spot rubber prices improve

**Kottayam, March 15:** Physical rubber prices improved on Friday. The market seemed to be moving with the hope that the steps taken by the Government to increase the import duty would help the commodity to recover from the current declines. There were enquiries from certain major consuming industries, an observer said.

Sheet rubber firmed up to Rs 162.50 (Rs 162.00) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi according to traders and the Rubber Board. The trend was partially mixed as ISNR 20 finished unchanged on comparatively dull volumes.

The March series closed at Rs 161.90 (Rs 161.00), April at Rs 163.68 (Rs 163.97), May at Rs 166.85 (Rs 167.36), June at Rs 169.75 (Rs 169.90), July at Rs 170.71 (Rs 170.71) and August at Rs 173.00 (Rs 172.88) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

RSS 3 (spot) inched up to Rs 158.96 (Rs 158.14) a kg at Bangkok.

The March futures increased to ¥269.0 (Rs 151.19) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM).

The spot rubber rates in Rs/kg were: RSS-4: 162.50 (162.00); RSS-5: 160.00 (159.00); Ungraded: 156.50 (156.00); ISNR 20: 160.00 (160.00) and Latex 60%: 108.00 (107.00).

# Karnataka coffee belt gets good blossom showers

March rains have been well distributed



Bright outlook: Ripened coffee berries at a plantation in Karnataka. (a file picture. )

**Bangalore, March 15:** Coffee-growing regions of Kodagu, Chikmagalur and Hassan in Karnataka have received good blossom showers.

“Blossom shower in the coffee belt in Karnataka is very good this year. Very good for Arabica as compared to poor to patchy rains last year,” Bose Mandana, a senior coffee planter from Suntikoppa in Kodagu told *Business Line*.

## March showers

“Rain in February, especially during mid-harvest, was worrisome, but March shower has been heavy and this has made us comfortable for the next three to four weeks,” he added.

In Kodagu rains have been good in Napoklu zone comprising Murnad, Madikeri and Napoklu whereas Gonikoppal zone, which comprises Virajpet, Gonikoppal, Kutta and Balale, needs additional showers.

For robusta, south Kodagu got early showers in February and now has received moderate March showers.

In Chikmagalur and Hassan districts, March rains have been well distributed. “Due to timely showers and moisture status being good,

many planters have begun applying manure in their estates. This year, they have been able to save on irrigation,” said Mandana.

According to Nishant Gurjer, Chairman, Karnataka Planters’ Association and a grower from Chikmagalur said “Early rains in February and subsequent rains in March have been good for overall crop production.”

“Rains in the last two months have been good for robusta. Stressed period for Arabica was cut short and there was initial apprehension among the growers over early rains. But March rains, however, have been beneficial,” he added.

Last crop year (2012-13), the Coffee Board had estimated the post-blossom estimate at 3,25,300 tonnes (arabica 1.04 tonnes and robusta at 2.21 tonnes).

As for the final crop forecast, the Board has estimated 3,15,500 tonnes, of which Arabica is 1,00,225 tonnes and robusta at 2,15,275 tonnes.

## **No sales in N. Indian centres due to non-availability of teas**

**Kolkata, March 15:** There were no sales this week at any of the three North Indian tea auction centres at Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri due to non-availability of tea.

As a result, Sale Number 11 due this week could not be held at any of these centres and there were no auctions of either CTC/dust or orthodox or Darjeeling.

“There is nothing unusual about it”, a spokesman for J. Thomas & Company Pvt Ltd, the tea auctioneers, told *Business Line*.

“Every year during this time one or two sales would get dropped due to non-availability of tea this being the closure of the season”.

He indicated that Sale Number 13, due to take place in the last week of this month, too might be dropped for the same reason.

Limited quantities of Dooars variety of first flush new tea are expected to hit the auction in the first week of April, most probably from Sale Number 14 and it will be another two weeks or so before the Assam variety starts arriving (Sale Numbers 15, 16).

“The drought this year has hit the early crops but there have been some rains in the past few days”, observed the spokesman. “Let’s us see”. santanu.sanyal@thehindu.co.in

## Tea delegation hopeful of 25 mkg export to Iran

**Coonoor, March 15:** Arising from the positive response Iranian tea importers showed to last week’s visit of Indian tea delegation, the Tea Board is hopeful of raising the country’s shipment to Iran to 25 million kg (mkg) by 2015.

Iran is an important market for Indian tea but because of political uncertainties in the Gulf region, India’s overall shipment to West Asia and North Africa (WANA), including to Iran, suffered in the last few years.

Tea exports to Iran dropped from 13.92 mkg in 2008-09 to 13.28 mkg in 2009-10 but managed to rise to 15.89 mkg in 2010-11 before dropping to 11.05 mkg in 2011-12.

“The official data for 2012-13 is awaited but the Tea Board has targeted to export 25 mkg by 2015. Arising from our present delegation to Iran, we are hopeful of reaching this”, V. George Jenner, Tea Board’s Director of Tea Promotion for WANA, told *Business Line*.

The 19-member delegation led by Tea Board Chairman M.G.V.K. Bhanu had diplomatic, official and trade level deliberations.

“We held meetings with Indian Ambassador to Iran D.P. Srivastava, members of the Iranian Association of Tea led by its Chairman Hamid Reza, President of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Ale



Eshagh, Director General of Iran Customs Administration Koushestani and M.H. Baghenayat and many importers. Our Dubai office is following up”, Jenner said.

“The Government of Iran has assured to consider positively our demands to keep tea high in the priority categorisation and to simplify procedures relating to certification and renewal. It has agreed to reduce the custom valuation for south Indian tea”, he disclosed.

## Masoor up with arrivals down to a trickle



**Indore, March 15:** Higher demand and weak arrivals have perked up masoor prices by almost Rs 200 a quintal in the past one week.

On Friday, masoor (bold) rose to Rs 3,850-3,900 a quintal, while masoor (medium) ruled at Rs 3,400-3,500. Future of masoor appears to be bullish on poor domestic crop prospect.

Besides, weaker rupee has made masoor import costlier leading to rise in its prices in the physical market. Masoor may witness bearish sentiment temporarily as new crop hits local mandis in the coming days but it is unlikely to stay for long, given lower crop output this year.

Rise in spot masoor also perked up its dal almost by Rs 75 to Rs 100 a quintal as masoor dal (average) prices soared to Rs 4,200-25 (Rs 4,150-55), masoor dal (medium) ruled at Rs 4,275-4,300 ((Rs 4,250-75), while masoor dal (bold) rose to Rs 4,325-4,425 (Rs 4,325-50).

Weak arrival and improved demand also lifted urad and its dal by almost Rs 100 a quintal. Urad (bold) ruled at Rs 3,500-3,600, while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 3,200-3,300.

Urad dal (medium) was quoted at Rs 4,000-4,100, urad dal (bold) rose to Rs 4,600-4,700, while urad mongar ruled at Rs 5,700-6,000 a quintal.

Moong and its dal ruled stable with moong (bold) being quoted at Rs 5,100-5,500, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs 4,500-4,800.

Similarly moong dal ruled steady with moong dal (medium) being quoted at Rs 6,100-6,200, moong dal (bold) at Rs 6,500-6,600, while moong mongar ruled at Rs 7,000-7,300 a quintal.

## **Stockists' purchases support edible oils**



**Mumbai, March 15:** Soya oil futures prices rose Rs 10 on Friday tracking a rebound in foreign markets while in spot it ruled unchanged on slack demand. Firm Malaysian palm oil futures lifted palmolein volumes in domestic market.

Considering lower price level, stockists entered the market with fresh buying orders for current month and April. About 3,400-

3,500 tonnes of palmolein were traded, said a broker. In Mumbai market, groundnut oil and rapeseed oil dropped by Rs 10 and Rs 5 each for 10 kg. Cotton refined oil declined Rs 3. Palmolein, soyabean refined oil and sunflower oil ruled steady.

New mustard seeds arrivals were 5.10 lakh bags nationally and soyabean arrivals were 75,000-80,000 bags in Madhya Pradesh. At producing centres, mustard seeds prices were Rs 3,200-3,350 while that of soyabeans were Rs 3,400-3,500 at mandi level and Rs 3,530-3,600 at plant level.

Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 511-512 ex Shahpur – Mumbai and Rs 505 ex-JNPT up to April 15. Super palmolein was Rs 550 and sunflower refined oil Rs 780. Ruchi was quoting palmolein at Rs 510 for April 15 and Rs 508 for March 15-31 ex-JNPT, soyabean refined oil Rs 641 for March and Rs 645 for April 1-10. Sunflower refined oil was Rs 771.

Allana quoted super palmolein at Rs 545. In Saurashtra – Rajkot, groundnut oil was Rs 1,885 (Rs 1,885) for *telia* tin and Rs 1,225 (Rs 1,225) for loose (10 kg).

**On the NCDEX**, soyabean refined oil's April futures was higher by Rs 10.55 to Rs 678.20, May by Rs 8.95 to Rs 670.60 and June by Rs 7.70 to Rs 669.30. **Malaysian BMD crude palm oil's** April contracts closed higher at MYR 2,401 (MYR 2,352), May at MYR 2,415 (MYR 2,364) and June at MYR 2,419 (MYR 2,370) a tonne.

**The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg):** groundnut oil 1,210 (1,220), soya refined oil 641 (641), sunflower exp. ref. 685 (690), sunflower ref. 770 (770), rapeseed ref. oil 690 (695), rapeseed expeller ref. 660 (665) cottonseed ref. oil 609 (612) and palmolein 505 (505).

**Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai**, has quoted for Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 548 ex-Chennai. Also quoted \$926 for CIF JNPT and \$933 for CIF Kandla.

# Pepper moves up



**Kochi, March 15:** Pepper prices moved up on Friday as the running contract moved up above the spot prices leading to a squeeze in March delivery. Consequently, all the active contracts ended higher.

There was heavy liquidation in March and over all open interest showed a sharp fall and in spite of that the prices moved up. “It is only because of squeezing in Mar the prices moved up,” market sources told *Business Line*.

Long position holders having hedge wanted to take delivery but they are allegedly apprehensive of getting delivery of the material on the exchange, they claimed.

As the March delivery was trading above spot people were liquidating and getting out of the market, they said.

Karnataka pepper reportedly arrived at the upcountry destinations delivered at prices ranging between Rs 330 and Rs 370 a kg depending upon the quality, such as moisture content, bulk density, etc.

On the spot, 50 tonnes of fresh pepper arrived and that were traded at the average price of Rs 350 all afloat, they said.

In Kerala, the farmers were not showing interest to sell at the current levels, they said.



March contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 180 to Rs 37,335 a quintal. April and May went up by Rs 295 and Rs 360 respectively to Rs 36,175 and Rs 36,080.

Total turn over increased by 445 tonnes to 2,472 tonnes. Total open interest decreased by 305 tonnes to 2,746 tonnes.

Spot prices, on limited activities, remained unchanged at Rs 35,100 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,600 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market moved up to \$7,200 (c&f) for March shipment. April was at \$7,150 and May at \$7,100 a tonne (c&f).

## **N. Indian orders boost turmeric**



**Erode, March 15:** Spot turmeric prices gained Rs 200 a quintal on Friday on increasing upcountry orders. “Traders have received good demand from North India, so they quoted higher prices and purchased both the varieties of turmeric. The price of the yellow spice also increased by two per cent in the futures trade and the North Indian merchants placed good number of orders for quality turmeric. They purchased 80 per cent of the arrived turmeric,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said till end-April they will get good orders and also due to higher prices, the farmers have started bringing in 6,000 and odd

bags for sale . Turmeric price increased Rs 1,000 a quintal in the Regulated Market Committee and the highest amount of the sold turmeric reached at Rs 8,777. Aarrival increased to 1008 bags in the Regulated Market Committee and the sales also rose to 946 bags.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard (Private Market), the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,899-8,106; the root variety Rs 5,557-6,909.

**Salem Hybrid Crop:** The finger variety fetched Rs 7,788-8,668; the root variety Rs 6,700-7,026. At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 7,109-8,777 and the root variety Rs 6,389-7,099. Of the 1,008 bags arrived, 946 bags were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety quoted Rs 5,981-8,189; the root variety Rs 5,286-7,111. All the 480 bags were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger verity was sold at Rs 6,659-7,599; the root variety Rs 6,569-6,794. All the 38 bags found takers.

## Mixed trend in sugar



**Mumbai, March 15:** Sugar prices on the Vashi market witnessed mixed trend on Friday on routine activities as mills continued selling due to year ending in March. Spot rates dropped by Rs 10-15 on limited retailers' demand.

Naka rates improved by Rs 5-10 while on the higher side dropped by same margin.



Mill tender rates ruled steady for seventh consecutive day.

Need-based buying kept morale calm, said sources.

A wholesaler said, "In local market, ample dispatches from producers led to huge stocks .

Due to the year-ending in March bulk business remained subdued. Consumer – retailer's demand also eased."

On the NCDEX, sugar April futures declined to Rs 3,034 (Rs 3,050), May contracts dropped to Rs 3,085 (Rs 3,103) and June was lower at Rs 3,173 (Rs 3,193) till noon.

In Vashi market, arrivals were 62-63 truck loads (each of 100 bags) and local dispatches were 61-62 truck loads.

On Thursday evening, about 16-17 mills sold 57,000-58,000 bags to local traders at Rs 3,000-3,060 (Rs 3,000-3,060) for S-grade and Rs 3,100-3,200 (Rs 3,100 - 3,200) for M-grade.

**Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates:** S-grade Rs 3,142-3,221 (Rs 3,142-3,236) and M-grade Rs 3,226-3,411 (Rs 3,236- 3,421). **Naka delivery rates:** S-grade Rs 3,100-3,140 (Rs 3,095-3,150) and M-grade Rs 3,180-3,300 (Rs 3,160-3,305).

# Wheat rules firm on domestic demand



**Karnal, March 15:** Good domestic demand for flour kept dara wheat and flour prices firm on Friday.

Sewa Ram, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that demand for flour is keeping dara wheat firm and prices are unlikely to change much even in the next few days.

After registering a fall earlier this week, dara wheat prices have been ruling unchanged since then.

Arrivals from Uttar Pradesh have also dropped over the last couple of days. Low arrivals are also giving some support to the market, he added.

Flour mills and small atta chakkis are depending on Food Corporation of India to meet their demand. In the physical market, dara quoted at Rs 1,545-1,550 a quintal.

Around 200 quintals of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and the stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,545 while delivery at the chakki was Rs 1,550 .

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat futures and spot market remained bearish on lack of buying

interest. Wheat for March contracts decreased by Rs 3 and traded at 1,540 with an open interest of 3,460 lots.

April contracts traded at Rs 1,427 . While, wheat spot prices on the exchange decreased by Rs 2.5 and traded at Rs 1,510 a quintal.

### **Flour Prices**

Good domestic demand kept flour firm and quoted at Rs 1,760-1,770.

Similarly, Chokar remained unchanged and sold at Rs 1,360-1400 a quintal.

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