

## **NABARD's roadmap for boosting agriculture in Ariyalur district**

*Lion's share of credit earmarked for agriculture, allied activities in PLP*

Even as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has earmarked a lion's share of credit for agriculture and allied activities in its Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLP) for Ariyalur district, one of the most backward districts in the State, it has suggested a number of steps to boost agriculture there.

The average rainfall of the district is 1,043 mm, according to the PLP. And Kollidam, Maruthayaru and Vellaru are the major rivers in the district. The major sources of irrigation are tube wells and wells.

The district has a total population of 7.52 lakh and almost 90 per cent of the households have registered for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme.

The document has observed that the district is continuously prone to drought, due to erratic and uneven distribution of rainfall.

It points out that the major crops raised in the district are paddy, maize, cholam, cumbu, cashew, blackgram, greengram and chillies. While sugarcane is the major commercial crop, cashew is the main horticultural crop. The other horticultural crops include mango, guava, amla and jackfruit.

The bank has identified dairy, goat-rearing, piggery and cashew processing as among the prominent economic activities for which there is ample scope in the district. It has suggested diversification

to high-yielding varieties and new technologies and wants the farmers to be supported on this score to increase productivity and income levels.

Productivity enhancement, especially in paddy and sugarcane, may be prioritised. System Rice Intensification method in paddy could be promoted by suitable demonstrations. Cultivation of sugarcane with drip irrigation, tie-up arrangements under contract farming and diversification may be encouraged for increasing productivity.

It has stressed the need for timely supply of certified seeds. For this, it has suggested introduction of a “mobile depot” to reach agriculture inputs, even in remote villages, during the cropping season. The NABARD has also mooted involving SHGs in production and distribution of certified seeds with the active involvement of Agriculture Department.

Besides, efforts should be made to propagate integrated farming system. It wants all the crop loans to be released through Kisan Credit Cards and cover all crop loans for notified crops in notified areas under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme.

Pointing out that that the Agriculture Department has helped SHGs in three blocks in producing bio inputs, the plan wants the process to be replicated in other blocks .

The bank has also suggested that the government take steps to create infrastructure facilities for value addition of agro products.

Besides, it has urged the government to ensure availability of farm implements to the farmers at the time of need, particularly combined harvesters and paddy transplanting machines.

With regard to water sources, the NABARD wants the bankers to encourage community irrigation borewells by water users’ associations, particularly in Thirumanur, T.Palur, Jayankondam, and Andimadam blocks. At the same time, it has suggested extension of credit for installing diesel pumpsets. It wants them to

accord priority to financing drip and sprinkler irrigation and “to prepare specific banking plans and finance more for water conserving structures.”

It has suggested that the government could take steps to construct check dams in Maruthayaru river for groundwater recharge and create infrastructure to divert the excess water to lakes and tanks during floods.

As investment for borewell\dugwell is very high and entails risk of failure, the State government may consider evolving insurance scheme\failed well compensation scheme, at least in hard rock areas where failure rate is high. To augment groundwater resources, construction of suitable artificial recharge structures could be undertaken.

Above all, the bank wants the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation to clear backlog in energisation of pumpsets at the earliest.

## **Weaving livelihood through cultivating organic cotton**



*Simple, effective: The farmers use their simple, naturally made bio-pesticides to control any pest problems.— photo: special arrangement*

Tentulipada, a small village in Kalahandi district in interior Odisha, is predominantly a dry area. Known for poverty and a harsh dry climate, the tillers there could hardly lead a comfortable livelihood.

Till some years back the entire village was cultivating cotton. The gamble on the crop was accompanied by a baggage of external, expensive, and often toxic inputs in the form of pesticides and fertilizers. But today this entire village is into organic cultivation.

### **Transformation**

“The transformation towards organic started sometime during 2007 when initially 39 farmers took to the sustainable practice. It took two more years for all the farmers to shift to organic. In 2001 American bollworm infestation was very high and even 15 sprays of toxic chemical pesticides wouldn’t help.

“Today, this village does not worry about pests on cotton. They use their simple, naturally made bio-pesticides to control any pest problems,” says Mr. Ananthoo, co- convener of ASHA —Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture — and coordinator of Safe Food Alliance, Tamil Nadu and an organisation called Restore in Chennai.

This was made possible by committed effort and intense dialogue with and amongst farmers by an organisation called Chetna organic. Based in Hyderabad, the organisation started a dialogue with the farmers and initiated the shift towards organic cultivation. Chetna Organic works with farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Odisha.

In Odisha alone, the company functions in five districts, having five co-operatives, operating in 132 villages, impacting more than 5,000 farmers who in turn are organized into 411 SHGs (self help groups).

While initially the focus was on cotton, today, all crops are cultivated only through organic methods.

## **Much more**

“Chetna Organic brought in much more than just sustainable agriculture. While mixed cropping, integrated approach, crop rotation, sustainable and biological practices and self-consumption-first were the focus, they also brought in very valuable principles like natural resources management, food and nutrition security, seed sovereignty, child welfare & education. Thus the whole idea of improving livelihoods with sustainable agriculture was approached in a holistic fashion,” says Mr. Ananthoo.

Their value chain development, for instance, is very impressive.

## **Different groups**

Farmers are federated into groups and involved in the whole process of the value chain. The local administration bought organic dhal from the farmers’ federation to feed safe food to school children. Safe food for the poorest happened so easily and meticulously.

Almost all of the farmers carried the same conviction and interest.

They were proud of the fact that their own local cooperatives and national level producer company employed management graduates by paying really good salaries.

“Their CEO, an employee, hired by the farmers’ cooperative, is paid on par with the private sector/ MNCs. The pay cheque is being signed by two farmers who are on the board of directors.

“It was very heartening to see the huge storage spaces and local processing units built by the farmers for their own use,” says Mr. Ananthoo.

The processing centres are specifically for the food crops (like dhal processing). Women play an active role in both manual and mechanical processing of the organic food produces.

## **Different areas**

Chetna Organic Agriculture Producer Company works on training, certifying and establishing sustainable market linkages for all their produce including cotton.

The latter is the backbone as it is essential to have a successful market to bring about sustained interest and encourage more farmers to join in. The produce goes into branded garments in India and abroad.

Mr. Arun Ambatipudi, one of the founders of Chetna says:  
“Collectivization is the key for improvement of livelihood for small farmers. The other major point demonstrated here is that sustainable agriculture is the only way out for small and marginal farmers.”

## **Good study model**

“While the Government of India is busy bringing green revolution to Eastern India, It can be a good lesson to learn from such models that leverage on its strengths than copying the mistakes of elsewhere,” says Mr. Ananthoo.

For more information on Chetna Organic readers can , visit <http://chetnaorganic.org.in>,

mobile: 9959300330 and Mr. Ananthoo, co- convener ASHA- Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture and coordinator of Safe Food Alliance, email: [restoreananthoo@gmail.com](mailto:restoreananthoo@gmail.com), Mobile: 9444166779.

# Tips to manage late blight in potato

Late blight is a fungal infestation. The first symptoms of the disease in the field are small light to dark green circular to irregular-shaped water-soaked lesions on the potato plant's leaves.

The circular or irregular leaf lesions are often surrounded by a pale yellowish-green border that merges with healthy tissues of the leaf. Lesions enlarge rapidly and turn dark brown to purplish-black. These lesions usually appear first on the lower leaves within 3-5 days of infection.

## **White mould**

During periods of high humidity and leaf wetness, a cottony, white mould growth is usually visible on lower leaf surfaces at the edges of lesions.

Spores formed on the mould spread to neighbouring fields by air, irrigation thus beginning a continuous cycle of the disease.

Good soil protection measures provide better protection for the crop against this infestation.

Harvest should not be started until all vines in the field are completely dry. Harvest should be done minimum two weeks after all the vines have dried up. In fields where late blight is confirmed, a minimum of two – three weeks should pass. Late blight will not survive on dead vegetation so tubers that are exposed after harvest are less likely to be infected.

## **Remove infected tubers**

Remove infected tubers before storage to reduce additional losses from soft rot. Tubers should be dry when placed in storage. The

fungus can only survive in living infected potatoes, including potatoes in storage.

There are several varieties that are resistant to late blight. These varieties will slow down, but not prevent, the disease.

The most widely used fungicide is Dithane M45 (mancozeb) at 3gm/lit. The systemic fungicide ridomil (metalaxyl) at 2gm/lit can also be used. Application of Ridomil (MZ 58), Ridomil once and Dithane M-45 (Mancozeb, 80 per cent WP) subsequently is recommended for this infestation.

(Utpal Dey, scholar and Dr. D.N. Dhutraj, Professor & Head, Department of Plant Pathology, Marathwada Agricultural University, Parbhani, Maharashtra, email: utpaldey86@gmail.com, Mobile No. 8275824103)

## **Centre to set up panel to study demands of agitating farmers**

*Decision comes after meeting between Ministers and farmers' representatives*

The Centre on Wednesday decided to form a panel which will look into the major demands of farmers with regard to FDI in retail affecting small farmers, keeping agriculture out of Free Trade Agreements and providing 'fair and remunerative' price for farm produce.

The decision came after a two hour-long meeting between a group of Ministers from related departments headed by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and representatives of the agitating farmers under the banner of Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers' Movements.





*BJP president Rajnath Singh interacting with Rakesh Tikait, son of the late BKU leader Mahender Singh Tikait, on the third day of farmers' stir in New Delhi on Wednesday. The agitation was later called off.— PHOTO: Shiv Kumar Pushpakar*

On the third day of the farmers' agitation here, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh formed a committee of concerned ministries headed by Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to meet farmers' representatives on their demands. Besides Mr. Pawar, the committee comprised Jairam Ramesh, K.V. Thomas, Srikant Jena, Namo Narain Meena and D. Purandeswari.

After the meeting Mr. Pawar told journalists that a "smaller panel" will look into their grievance that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail will be unfavourable for small and marginal farmers and hit livelihoods.

The Minister said that the committee, which will also have farmers' representatives, will also look into their demand for fair and remunerative price for farm produce as against the minimum support price set by the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices. It will also look at their demand that agriculture be taken out of the Free Trade Agreements that the government enters into with

other countries so that there is no dumping of farm produce in the country.

“For their concerns on the Land Acquisition Bill, they will separately meet Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh,” Mr. Pawar said.

Asked about their demand for a Farmers Income Guarantee Act to ensure a minimum income for farmers, Mr. Pawar said, “these are the three demands we have agreed to.”

### **Agitation called off**

“The meeting with the government is the first step in the process,” farmers leaders Rakesh Tikait and Yudhvir Singh said. They later called off the agitation.

Earlier, BJP leader Rajnath Singh addressed the farmers and assured them that if his party comes to power he will seriously look into their demand for assured minimum income and crop insurance.

Chairman of the Standing Committee on Agriculture Basudev Acharya while addressing farmers said that FDI in retail will not benefit either farmers or traders. He said there should be a separate budget on agriculture.

Thousands of farmers from all parts of the country were on dharna since Monday to press their demands.

## **Free power for farm sector at any cost, says Kiran**

*Kiran says will go to any extent to buy power at Rs.12 or Rs.12.50 per unit*

Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy has asserted that the State government would go all out to purchase RLNG and Naptha from

anywhere in the country to ensure that not even an acre of standing crop withers away.

“We will go to any extent to buy power at Rs.12 or Rs.12.50 per unit and see that free power is supplied to the farm sector,” Mr. Reddy told reporters in his chambers in the Assembly on Wednesday. “Due to high demand, there is a gap between generation and consumption,” he said adding that while earlier the demand stood between 210 million units and 220 million units, it has now shot up to 314 million units per day.

He went on to say that the government was willing to purchase from any corner of the State, if it was available. The Chief Minister pointed out that like allotment of gas from other wells, the same criterion should be applicable to D-6 as well in Krishna Godavari basin.

“We have written to the Centre for pro-rata allocation of gas by reversing its order. We want the Centre to review its earlier decision on D-6,” he remarked.

### **Solar power**

He said open bids for setting up solar power plants to generate 1,000 MW have been invited. “I plan to announce a new solar power policy, including encouraging house owners to install solar panels for power generation, during the next few days,” he said.

## **Chief Secretary asked to convene farmers’ meeting for water release**

The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed the Chief Secretary to convene a meeting of farmers associations of ayacut areas by

March 25 to evolve a consensus for releasing water for irrigation from the Bhavanisagar dam for third wetting from the available storage. The meeting should be held in the presence of PWD and electricity board officials. As the third wetting should be completed before March 31, the court said it was giving the direction.

In its order, the First Bench comprising Acting Chief Justice R.K.Agrawal and Justice N.Paul Vasanthakumar passed the order while disposing of writ petitions by the Lower Bhavani Farmers Federation and the Thandapalli Pasaneer Paramaripu Sangam. While the former petitioner sought a direction to the authorities to release water from the Bhavanisagar dam to the Lower Bhavani Project ayacut as per a G.O of December 4, 2012 by ensuring the required supply from the Kundah Hydro Reservoirs in strict compliance of a G.O. of February 1979, the latter association sought a direction for the release of one TMC from the dam to irrigate lands in Thandapalli ayacut tail-enders of about 3,000 acres for the present, expeditiously before March 31.

Counsel argued that irrigation should be given priority over electricity generation. In fact, the government issued directions to release water for irrigation on previous occasions.

Advocate-General A.L.Somayaji, on the basis of the report regarding storage position of major reservoirs of Kundah and Pykara basins of the Nilgiris group as on March 13, submitted that only 5.382 TMC was available, of which 0.538 TMC could not be released as it was dead storage. The water available for release was only 4.842 TMC. The water level in the reservoirs should be maintained at the maximum height so as to maintain security of the machines available in the power house and to operate the power house within a short period. Only about 30 per cent of the full capacity was available and the same should be used judiciously till the onset of monsoon on June 10 this year.

If hydro generation from the Kundah and Pykara was not maintained for operation, an additional two to three hours of load

shedding would be resorted to in the night, apart from the four hours load shedding, which would severely affect the public.

The Bench said considering the availability of water (4.842 TMC), it was directing the Chief Secretary to convene the meeting.

## **Farmers' conference on March 30**

Lower Bhavani Farmers Association will organise a conference at Velalar College in Thindal, near Erode, on March 30.

It will focus on river water rights and problems of farmers, said S. Nallasamy of the association. Nearly 3,000 tmcft of water was getting drained into Arabian Sea. This water should be diverted to Cauvery river, he said.

If 200 tmcft of water from the Netravathy basin was diverted to Hemavathy, it would help ease the Cauvery water sharing crisis. He said the Cauvery Management Authority and Regulatory Committee should be formed immediately.

## **Farmers seek waiver of crop loan**

*'Provide uninterrupted power supply for 15 hours daily for agriculture'*

To overcome the drought situation prevailing in the State due to the failure of monsoon, the Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam led by K. Venkatachalam has urged the State Government to extend compensation on a par with their counterparts in delta districts and also waiver of crops loans availed from co-operative and

commercial banks including agricultural jewel loan availed by the marginal, small and big farmers.



*Members of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam taking out a motorcycle rally in Krishnagiri on Wednesday. —Photo: N. Bashkaran*

Flagging off a motorcycle rally followed by a demonstration near the new bus stand in Krishnagiri on Wednesday, Mr. Venkatachalam urged the government to provide uninterrupted power supply for 15 hours daily for agriculture, confine wild elephants within reserve forests, permission to kill wild boars which destroy crops, allow Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam to fix procurement price for agriculture produce, announce minimum procurement price of Rs. 7,000 per quintal of sugarcane, Rs. 4,000 per quintal of paddy and also announce minimum procurement price for other farm produce such as vegetables and fruits.

### **Subsidy**

Other demands of the association were fix Rs. 25 per litre for cow milk and Rs. 30 per litre for buffalo milk and extend Rs. 3 as production subsidy per litre for milk produced by the farmers, procurement of milk by private diaries should not be banned, allow farmers to utilise manpower from Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, close TASMACH shops and allow farmers to tap toddy from palm trees, relocate the toll gate to 9 km away from Krishnagiri town and exempt lorries and tractors carrying agriculture produce from toll fee, and extend Rs. 5,000 per

month as pension to all the farmers who have crossed 60 years of age.

The association demanded that the government fulfil 25 issues including linking of national rivers and fixing five times the market value for lands acquired by the government for public purposes. Over 250 farmers, including 80 women, participated in the rally and also the demonstration.

The rally flagged off near a private marriage hall on Salem Main Road, and passed through five road junction, Mahatma Gandhi Road, T.B. Road and reached Anna statue near new bus stand where a demonstration was staged.

G.R. Logabiram, State Secretary, presided, over the demonstration and K.P. Periyannan, District Secretary, welcomed the gathering.

## **IRRI ropes in women for farm mechanisation**

*'Women are involved in 50 p.c. of agricultural operations'*



*SOWING SEEDS OF CHANGE: A farmwoman shows her tractor-driving skills at a programme organised by the International Rice Research Institute at Azhivaikkal village in Thanjavur on Wednesday.— PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ*

Krishna Veni and Seehtalakshmi are two farmwomen of Azhivaikkal village near Thanjavur. They can now drive a tractor with multi-

crop seeder fitted to it and sow seeds in fields thanks to the training given by International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

They demonstrated their skill at the International Women's Day organised by the IRRI, jointly with Thanjavur Janaseva Bhavan, a voluntary organisation which has credit linked hundreds of women's self-help groups in the area at a field at Azhivaikkal village near Thanjavur on Wednesday. They drove the tractor in front of a large number of farmwomen and farmers.

R. Ganeshmoorthy, Assistant Scientist, Extension Agronomy, Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia (CSISA), IRRI, India, explained the technology to farmwomen. Poornima Ravi Shankar, Specialist-Knowledge Management Co-ordination (CSISA), IRRI India; Sonya McGuinness, Corporate Services Manager, IRRI, India; Shyamala Seelan of Thanjavur Janaseva Bhavan, A. Soundarapandiyan, Assistant Director of Animal Husbandry, Cattle Breeding and Fodder Development Scheme; and Govindarajan, Vice-President of Azhivaikkal Panchayat, were present.

Mr. McGuinness said that IRRI had recognised the role of women farmers in food security and livelihood issues. More than 50 per cent of the agricultural operations like transplanting and harvest were carried out by women.

### **Higher productivity**

Women's empowerment and teaching them various technologies would help in increasing agriculture productivity, she said.



## **‘Check migration of farmworkers’**

Deputy Commissioner N.S. Prasanna Kumar has directed Panchayat Development Officers (PDOs) to keep vigil on migration of agricultural labourers to bigger cities.

He told presspersons here on Wednesday that PDOs had been told to check villages coming under their jurisdiction and report the situation regularly to the district administration.

He said there had been instances of people migrating from the district in search of employment.

However, details of the number of people who had migrated was not immediately available, he said.

Mr. Kumar said migration could be stopped by utilising funds available under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA).

With the decision of the government to increase daily wages to Rs. 174 a day, employment could be generated in rural areas, he said.

PDOs have been told to dissuade people from migrating to urban areas, Mr. Kumar said.

To a question, he said the fodder situation in the district was satisfactory and the existing stock would last for 14 weeks.

As precautionary measure, interstate movement of fodder has been banned. Check-posts in the borders of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have been told to ensure strict implementation of the ban, he added.

# Farmers stage protest against land acquisition



*Seeking action: Farmers from various villages in Mandya staging a protest on the Bangalore–Mysore Highway on Wednesday.*

Farmers from various villages in Mandya, under the banner of Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha, staged a protest on the Bangalore–Mysore Highway here on Wednesday, opposing acquisition of fertile agricultural lands for projects.

They also demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation probe into the alleged irregularities revealed by the Comptroller and Auditor-General in the farm loan waiver scheme.

“Thousands of farmers from different parts of the country are participating in the ‘mahapanchayat’ at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. We are expressing our support to the mahapanchayat,” KRRS leader Shambhunahalli told *The Hindu* here.

The Union and State governments have been diverting farmlands for other purposes, he said.

The protesters also demanded that the Centre announce a fair and remunerative price for their produce. Traffic on the busy highway was disrupted for a while owing to the protest.

Konasale Narasaraju, Ashok, Ramakrishnaiah, Hallegere Shivaram and Marilinge Gowda were present.

# Gaffe on farm budget ‘minor technical mistake’: Kiran

*Chief Minister tells critics to stop looking at the lapse with a magnifying glass*

## SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

- ▶ Government attributes goof-up to printing error
- ▶ Panel to be set up for implementation of agriculture action plan
- ▶ Farm budget next year in line with legislature procedures

Seeking to play down the controversy over presentation of agriculture budget, later altered as an action plan, Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy on Wednesday termed it a ‘minor technical mistake’.

“None can question our commitment to the welfare of farmers. Our critics should stop looking at the lapse with a magnifying glass,” he told reporters here in the Assembly.

### ‘No going back’

He said that in Karnataka, the Finance Minister reads the budget in two parts, including the agriculture action plan. “In our case, we have deviated from the procedure leading to confusion,” he said and added that there was no going back on the government’s commitment on extending all benefits to the needy.

The Chief Minister’s reaction came after the Opposition parties served privilege notices on the issue to presiding officers in the two Houses of the Legislature. The government on its part sent a letter to Speaker Nadendla Manohar explaining the sequence of events leading to the goof-up which it attributed to a printing error.

Mr. Reddy said that a committee headed by the Special Chief Secretary and comprising principal secretaries of the respective

departments would be constituted for effective implementation of the agriculture action plan.

### **Duplication to be avoided**

In future, the government would take steps to avoid duplication of (similar) work being executed by different departments. Once the agriculture action plan was successful, the government would introduce similar plans for education, health, industries and infrastructure.

Later in the Legislative Council, Mr. Kiran Kumar Reddy said in his reply to the Governor's address that next year they would follow due legislature procedures to present the agriculture budget for the focused monitoring of agriculture and allied sectors.

Responding to privilege notices, Finance Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy in a clarification said they had introduced the agriculture action plan along with the general budget and admitted that the term 'agriculture budget' was a printing mistake. The action plan was part of the budget speech but read out separately by the Agriculture Minister with the permission of the Chief Minister.

"We submitted a letter to you about the printing error and the error has been rectified," he told Council Chairman A. Chakrapani and requested the Chair that the corrected copies be given to the members.

## **Tribal women give a push to tasar farming**

*Sericulture Department providing working capital for setting up grainages*

The tasar grainages of the tribal women groups in the Bhadrachalam Agency have been playing a key role in promoting

tasar silk cultivation, the traditional occupation of Adivasis in the forest fringe areas of the Agency.

A considerable number of tribal families are dependent on the tasar farming as a source of livelihood in eight tribal sub-plan mandals in the Agency. However, indiscriminate felling of trees, including the terminalia tomentosa trees, has cast a shadow on the tasar farming in the Agency.



*Tribal women collecting tasar cocoons in Venkatapuram of Bhadrachalam Agency.— PHOTO: G.N. RAO*

### **Good harvest**

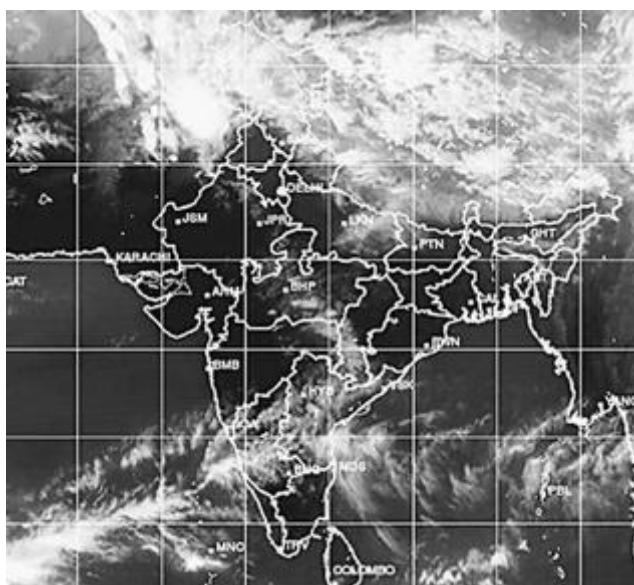
Undeterred by the vagaries of nature, as many as 1,374 tribal farmers harvested over 20 lakh tasar cocoons in the just-concluded season in the Agency, according to sources.

The 11 private grainages run by tribal women in the Agency have carved out a niche for themselves by excelling in the production of Disease Free Layings (DFLs). Apart from catering to the requirements of the tasar rearers in the district, the grainages have been supplying DFLs to other districts and the neighbouring States. The eleven private grainages along with two government grainages have produced more than 9.46 lakh seed cocoons during the third crop in the last season.

Of the total 1.94 lakh DFLs produced, the grainages have supplied 5500 DFLs to Warangal district, 72,865 DFLs to Maharashtra, and 11,775 DFLs to Chhattisgarh State.

The private grainages, headed by the tribal women in the Agency, have contributed their mite to the promotion of tasar farming, says M. Rammurthy, Assistant Director, Sericulture Department, Bhadrachalam. The department has provided working capital for establishment of the grainages by the tribal women, he says, adding that the grainages, equipped with the requisite infrastructure facilities, are not only treading the path of financial self-reliance but also giving a fillip to the tasar farming in the Agency. The department has initiated various measures to raise tasar food plantations, promote tasar silk worm rearing, tasar silk reeling, and market linkages.

## Weather



*INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on Mar. 20.*

<b>ANDHRA PRADESH</b>				
Anantapur	39	22	0	0
Arogyavaram	36	17	0	1
Bapatla	32	22	0	0
Calingapatnam	33	24	0	1
Gannavaram	34	22	0	0
Hanamkonda	37	22	0	0
Hyderabad AP	35	24	0	0

Kakinada	33	23	0	0
Khammam	—	—	—	—
Kavali	33	23	0	0
Kurnool	38	25	0	0
Mahabubnagar	37	24	0	0
Machilipatnam	33	23	0	0
Nandyal	37	21	0	0
Narasapur	33	24	0	0
Nellore	35	25	0	2
Nizamabad	37	23	0	1
Ongole	33	24	0	0
Ramagundam	35	25	0	0
Tirupathi AP	36	22	0	90
Tuni	35	24	0	0
Vizag AP	35	24	0	0
Vizag	31	24	0	3
<b>KARNATAKA</b>				
Agumbe	34	18	0	13
Bangalore AP	34	19	0	tr
Bangalore	35	20	0	1
Bagalkote	—	—	—	—
Belgaum AP	36	18	0	4
Bellary	39	21	0	0
Bijapur	37	22	0	1
Chitradurga	36	22	0	7
Chickmagalur	31	17	0	21
Chintamani	35	21	0	0
Gadag	35	21	0	7
Gulbarga	37	23	0	0
Hassan	32	20	0	39
Honavar	34	25	0	0
Karwar	35	24	0	0
Madikeri	29	17	0	110
Mangalore AP	34	26	0	0
Mysore	35	20	0	4
Mandya	36	20	0	4
Panambur	34	26	0	26
Raichur	38	22	0	0
Shirali	34	26	0	0
<b>KERALA</b>				
Alappuzha	33	25	0	53
Kannur	35	27	0	11
Kochi AP	33	25	tr	21
Kottayam	34	23	5	65
Kozhikode	35	27	0	16
Punalur	37	24	0	5
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	32	25	0	25
Thiruvanantha				
-puram City	33	24	0	75

Vellanikkara	35	25	0	15
<b>TAMIL NADU</b>				
Adiramapattinam	33	23	0	100
Coimbatore AP	35	22	0	2
Coonoor	24	13	0	126
Cuddalore	32	24	0	73
Chennai AP	33	23	0	32
Chennai	32	24	0	12
Dharmapuri	36	19	0	0
Kanyakumari	33	26	0	27
Karaikal	31	26	0	10
Kodaikanal	21	12	0	51
Madurai AP	37	24	0	18
Nagapattinam	32	26	0	27
Palayamkottai	35	25	0	71
Pamban	33	25	0	83
Parangipettai	33	24	0	40
Puducherry	33	24	0	8
Salem	37	22	0	0
Thanjavur	35	26	0	33
Tiruchi AP	37	23	0	15
Tirupattur	37	17	0	1
Tondi	31	27	0	56
Tuticorin	33	25	0	40
Ooty	24	10	0	11
Valparai	28	13	0	68
Vedaranyam	—	—	—	—
Vellore	35	22	0	45
<b>LAKSHADWEEP</b>				
Amini Divi	34	26	0	1
Minicoy	33	27	0	69
Kavarathi	30	27	0	64
<b>OTHER STATIONS</b>				
Kolkata (Alipore)	36	23	0	0
Mumbai	33	23	0	0
New Delhi	32	18	0	0

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall in mm since March 1, 2013.

## DRY WEATHER IN ANDHRA PRADESH

**CHENNAI:** Isolated rainfall occurred over Kerala and Telangana. Mainly dry weather prevailed over south interior Karnataka and dry weather prevailed over Tamil Nadu, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, Lakshadweep, coastal and north interior Karnataka.



The minimum temperature rose appreciably at one or two places over Tamil Nadu, coastal and south interior Karnataka, rose at one or two places over north interior Karnataka fell appreciably at one or two places over rest Tamil Nadu, fell at one or two places over rest north interior Karnataka and changed a little elsewhere over the region.

They were appreciably below normal at one or two places over Tamil Nadu, below normal at one or two places over Rayalaseema, above normal at many places over Telangana and coastal Karnataka, at one or two places over rest Tamil Nadu and remained normal over the rest of the region.

Tirupattur and Arogyavaram recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 17 degree Celsius in the plains of the region.

**Forecast (valid till Friday morning):** Isolated rain or thundershowers may occur over Kerala, Lakshadweep, Telangana and south interior Karnataka. Mainly dry weather will prevail over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, coastal and north interior Karnataka.

## Water level

: Water level in the Papanasam dam on Wednesday stood at 80.30 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 200.93 cusecs and no water is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 92.05 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 43 cusecs and no water is discharged.

### Nagercoil

Water level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 6.70 feet, 30.50 feet in Perunchani, 4.46 feet in Chittar I, 4.36 feet in Chittar II and 4.20 feet in the Poigai dam.

Water level in Periyar dam stood at 112.90 feet with nil inflow and a discharge of 100 cusecs on Wednesday. In Vaigai dam, the water level stood at 46.10 feet with nil inflow and a discharge of 60 cusecs. There was no rain in the region, according to PWD authorities.



## Weather

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Sunny

**Thursday, Mar 21**

**Max Min**

32° | 23°

**Rain:** 0

**Sunrise:** 06:12

**Humidity:** 94

**Sunset:** 06:19

**Wind:** normal

**Barometer:** 1009

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

**Friday, Mar 22**

**Max Min**

32° | 22°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

<b>Saturday Mar 23</b>	<b>Sunday Mar 24</b>	<b>Monday Mar 25</b>	<b>Tuesday Mar 26</b>	<b>Wednesday Mar 27</b>
33°   23°	32°   22°	32°   22°	32°   23°	33°   23°
Sunny	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast



# Agricultural university gets Rs 300 crore boost

LUDHIANA: Sanction of Rs 300 crore grant to [Punjab Agricultural University](#) (PAU) and advocacy of various projects suggested by the varsity in the Punjab budget 2013-14 have sent a wave of cheer in the campus. While the faculty and students feel the increase in budget would improve the standards of research at PAU, there are some experts at the varsity who believe Rs 300 crore would not be enough to meet the numerous expectations.

"PAU is a large institute that gets quite less money than it needs to facilitate research and infrastructure for faculty and students. Many representations have been made with the state government in the past and so, we were expecting a larger grant," said Gursharan Singh Narula, former administrative-cum-accounts officer of PAU. Besides, Punjab has shown keen interest in various projects suggested by PAU like making bio-energy from paddy straw and to promote crop diversification.

"We are happy that Punjab government has increased the budget of PAU. They have offered a subsidy of around 50% on reaper and barley machines that are very useful in modern agriculture," said a senior professor at PAU.

Sanction of Rs 300 crore grant to Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) and advocacy of various projects suggested by

the varsity in the Punjab budget 2013-14 have sent a wave of cheer in the campus. While the faculty and students feel the increase in budget would improve the standards of research at PAU, there are some experts at the varsity who believe Rs 300 crore would not be enough to meet the numerous expectations.

In 2011-12, PAU had received Rs 124 crore, which increased to Rs 270 crore in 2012-13 and to Rs 300 crore this year. Besides, it has been decided that arrears of pay commission for university employees will be settled in the first quarter of 2013-14.

## Chouhan to meet PM, ask for special package for farmers

BHOPAL: Chief minister [Shivraj Singh Chouhan](#) will be in New Delhi on Thursday to meet Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh](#) and Union minister for agriculture [Sharad Pawar](#) to ask for a special package as compensation to farmers affected by the recent hailstorms in the state. Since Monday, Chouhan has been travelling into the rural areas talking to affected farmers and inspecting the crop damage.

On Wednesday, he visited hailstorm-affected Chitoria village in Vidisha district where he announced that 50% crop damage and loss due to the hail will be considered as 100% damage and compensated. Relief at Rs 15,000 per hectare will be paid as compensation for damages to wheat and gram crops.

The chief minister told reporters in Bhopal: "There has been a recent natural calamity in state with three rounds of hailstorm

in quick succession. Prior to this, the frost caused damages too but the hail storms last week have left farmers badly affected." According to Chouhan, 6.2 lakh farmers have been affected in the survey conducted so far. The number is bound to increase further as the survey reports from the interior rural areas reach the government.

The chief minister said 32 persons have been killed in the hails which also left 240 domestic animals dead. "Our next step will be to insure crops and extend the facility to cover every farmer in the state," Chouhan said.

"Loan recovery from farmers has been suspended for now and the interest on the loans will be borne by the state till this crisis is over. The government will also pay half the principal amount of the loans taken for crop. Farmers have been provided facility to pay the remaining principal amount in 10 instalments through two years," he added. Surcharge on power bills will also be waived.

## Rs 126 cr spent, but irrigation project fails to benefit Haryana farmers

CHANDIGARH: An irrigation project in Haryana, costing about Rs 126 crore, to supply water to around one lakh hectares of land has proved unproductive, the comptroller and auditor general has pointed out.

According to [CAG](#) auditors, the Dadupur-Nalvi canal in Yamunanagar district was constructed without any survey of

the area and farmers have protested that water would be available to them through the project only during rainy season, when they don't require the same.

"The project was conceived without any survey of the area about the usefulness of the project or ascertaining the views of villagers," a CAG report has said.

Haryana government had approved the scheme in 2005, to provide irrigation to around one lakh hectares in 225 villages of Ambala, Yamunanagar and Kurukshetra districts, besides recharging of ground water.

Initiated in 2006, the project was formally inaugurated on August 1, 2009 at a function held in Dadupur in Yamunanagar district, after completion of the first phase of the three-phase project.

The work of phase III, including some works of phase I and II, was deferred due to protests by farmers over its utility for them.

The CAG report pointed out that in the absence of distributor channels, the main canal, constructed at a cost of over Rs 126 crore, remained non-functional and irrigation benefits could not be derived.

When pointed out by auditors, irrigation department officials stated that the project had helped in recharging ground water in the area. "The reply was not convincing as the primary objective of the project -- of providing canal irrigation to the land -- could not be achieved," the report has highlighted.

## Cashew kernel prices fall in wholesale markets

**Prices of kernels in retail markets have not seen a major decline; currently sold in the range of Rs 720 to Rs 900 a kg in various supermarkets and kirana stores across the country**



Cashew kernel prices are heading southwards in major wholesale markets in the country owing to subdued demand from stockists and retailers. Prices of all grades of cashew kernels and broken pieces have witnessed a drop in the range of 18-26 per cent, depending on the grades in the January-March quarter.

Prices for the W320 grade (the most preferred grade internationally) are hovering around Rs 445 per kg ex-factory, a decline of 18.3 per cent compared to Rs 545 in November last year. Prices of broken grades have slipped below the Rs 300 mark and are currently ruling at Rs 280 per kg, showing a decline of 26.3 per cent over the price of Rs 380 prevailing around Diwali last year.

"The confidence in the retail market is pretty low at the moment. Generally, the demand for kernels comes down in summer months as there are not many festivals and the wedding season is yet to catch up," Walter D'Souza, former chairman of the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI), and an exporter from Mangalore, said.

In Delhi, over the last 15 days, prices of the W320 grade have declined 6.25 per cent to Rs 450 per kg, while the prices of broken grades have slipped below Rs 300. Prices of all grades of cashew kernels (W180, 210, 240, 320 and 450) have declined in the last quarter.

"There has been a steady decline in both sales and consumption during the last few months. There is no support either from the export markets for the processing houses as the US economy and the Euro zone crisis have led to sluggish demand from overseas buyers. Overall, the market is erratic in the last quarter of this fiscal," D'Souza added.

However, prices of kernels in the retail markets have not seen a major decline and are currently sold in the range of Rs 720 to Rs 900 per kg in various supermarkets and kirana stores across the country.

"It takes a lag to reach the retail markets. Traditional shops cannot predict the price movements on a continuous basis, as they don't purchase cashew kernels very regularly. Hence, they are unable to pass on the benefit to consumers. Whereas supermarkets take into account the various costs like logistics, people cost and retail space cost, among others, and try to book profits in the volatile market," said G Giridhar Prabhu, managing director, Achal Cashews, a Mangalore-based exporter.

Over the last three years, these costs have gone up 30-40 per cent and the supermarkets normally prefer to offer other incentives to push their stocks rather than reduce the prices instantly, he added. A slight decline in the prices of raw cashew nuts has also led to the fall in prices of processed cashew. The raw nut prices have also declined to Rs 67 per kg compared to Rs 75-90 per



kg in the last season. Also, the imported raw nuts are available at Rs 55 per kg.

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## THE HINDU Business Line

### **Sell chilli on harvest, TN farmers told**

**Coimbatore, March 20:** The price of the red chilli may not move up in the near future. Farmers can consider offloading the produce upon harvest instead of storing it in anticipation of better rates, say Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) experts. Advising farmers to sell the produce on harvest, the DEMIC functioning at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University said 'the export order for the red chilli is limited. The possibility of any increase in the price would depend on fresh export orders.'

The produce is expected to rule at around Rs 62-65 a kg in April-May. This is better than last year's Rs 40-45, the DEMIC expert said. Trade sources said the area under red chilli had fallen drastically in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in the current year. The production is also expected to take a 40 per cent hit sources said adding the chillies produced in Tamil Nadu would hit markets in Kovilpatti, Sathur, Sankarankoil, Rajapalayam, Kamuthi, Muthukulathur and Virudhunagar by March end. In 2011-12, Tamil Nadu produced 30,298 tonnes from 58,603 hectares. Ramanathapuram (samba), Thoothukudi (mundu), Sivagangai (samba), Virudhunagar (samba), Tirunelveli (samba) and Sankarankovil (samba and mundu) are the major chilli producing regions in the State.

# Paddy continues to face rough weather in AP

**Hyderabad, March 20:** After losing out to cotton in the kharif season, paddy continues to face rough weather in the late rabi season too.

## **Reduced Acreage**

With major and minor reservoirs reporting very low water levels, farmers have reduced the acreage by a third. From the average 15 lakh hectares for the rabi season, the total rabi acreage of paddy fell down to just under 10 lakh hectares. As against the normal paddy area of 41 lakh ha (kharif and rabi), the Government targeted to add six lakh hectares more in 2012-13.

## **Production**

As against the average production of 129 lakh tonnes, Andhra Pradesh projected an output of 154 lakh tonnes.

Most of the rabi output goes to the mandatory FCI (Food Corporation of India) levy, with remaining 25 per cent goes for sales within the State and exports to neighbouring areas. Foreseeing a bleak irrigation picture, the Government officials had issued advisories, asking the farmers not to go for paddy.

“The paddy area came down as there was no water for crops under the Nagarjunasagar ayacut. This reservoir generally takes care of irrigation to 20 lakh acres. The situation is no different in areas irrigated by KC Canal and Sriramsagar projects. Those with good groundwater went ahead and sowed paddy,” Yerneni Nagendra Nath, President of AP Farmers’ Federation, told *Business Line*.

The woes of paddy farmers further aggravated as the crop in 50,000 hectares was damaged in unseasonal rains and hailstorms in February.

In the crucial kharif, the paddy area came down to 20 lakh ha from the average area of 26 lakh ha, yielding the top slot for the first time

to cotton. Farmers grew cotton in a record 22 lakh ha, far exceeding the average of 15 lakh ha.

The drop in the kharif area has already resulted in the sharp increase in the rice price in the open market.

The lower output, however, didn't immediate result in higher price for farmers.

“It is only those who grew BPT (sona masuri) got a better price. And only 25 per cent of all paddy is this most preferred variety,” he said.

Nagendranath, however, doesn't see any threat to availability of rice as the production of the commodity is far higher nationally.

## Cotton Corp to release stocks in domestic market soon

Volume of fibre to be released, timeframe yet to be specified



*For release soon: A file photo of farmer with his cotton in a market yard.*

**New Delhi, March 20:** Government-owned Cotton Corporation of India will release in the domestic market the cotton stock it holds, Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma has said. The Minister, however, did not specify the amount of cotton that will be released or a timeframe for the release.

“That will happen,” Sharma said on Wednesday answering questions from reporters on whether the Corporation would off-load its stocks in the open market.

The Corporation had built the stocks by buying cotton from the open market as part of the Government market intervention programme following a dropped in prices below the minimum support level.

For the current season to September, the Centre has fixed Rs 3,900 a quintal as the support price for long staple cotton and Rs 3,600 for medium staple cotton.

Prices fell despite a lower production this year at 325 lakh bales (170 kg each) against 354 lakh bales last year.

The fall was due to lack of demand from the textile sector and high carryover stocks.

The textile industry had been asking the Government to ask the Corporation to release the 22 lakh bales of cotton it had procured to cool the surging market.

In a representation earlier this month, textile body Confederation of Indian Textiles Industry said that cotton prices had increased about 15 per cent in the last few weeks and the Corporation should dispose of its stocks to curb the price rise.

Prices for Shankar-6 cotton that is in demand for export have increased to Rs 39,500 a candy of 356 kg currently from around Rs 34,000 at the end of January.

“It is essential that the Corporation and other procurement agencies release cotton in the market to ease price pressures,” CITI chairman S.V. Arumugam had said.

Cotton Corporation Chairman B.K. Mishra had said earlier this week that it expects to receive the Centre’s approval by next week to release the stocks.

Rising prices is forcing the Indian textile industry to import. Industry body Texprocil’s Chairman Manikam Ramaswami has warned that importing cotton at higher international prices would exacerbate the current account deficit.

The Government, therefore, should ensure that Indian cotton is made available at international prices or lower.

Mills have contracted to import 1,17,647 bales (each 170 kg) in the last one month from African countries, according to Manikam Ramaswami, chairman of the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council.

## **Govt steps in to provide link between farmers, retail chains**

To firm up retail back-end

**New Delhi, March 20:** After opening the doors to foreign retailers, the Government has moved in to strengthen back-end infrastructure by proposing to organise farmers into collectives – either a co-operative or a company.

The move is intended to establish a linkage between the farmers' organisations, which are emerging as major aggregators of farm produce, and the retail chains.

The Agriculture Ministry has come out with guidelines to encourage the creation of such farmer producer organisations by both the Central and the State agencies. "The idea is to organise about 1,000-1,200 farmers into a producer organisation or a company and focus on one or two commodities," said Pravesh Sharma, Managing Director, Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium.

### **FPOs**

Currently, there are 300 such producer organisations involving some five lakh farmers and another 200 are in the process of getting formed or registered either under the Companies Act or co-operative legislation.

By the next financial year, about 1,000 such organisations are expected to come into existence, covering more than 10 lakh farmers, Sharma said.

Farmer producer organisations found a mention in the Budget speech of Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, who earmarked Rs 50 crore for providing a matching equity grant of up to Rs 10 lakh for a registered organisations to enable them to leverage working capital from financial institutions.

### **credit guarantee fund**

“Besides, a credit guarantee fund will also be created in the Small Farmers’ Agri Business Corporation with an initial corpus of Rs 100 crore. I urge State Governments to support such FPOs through necessary amendments to the APMC Act and in other ways,” Chidambaram had said.

Apart from helping establish market linkages, the producers could also become a vehicle to foster technology penetration, improve productivity and enable improved access to inputs such as seeds and fertilisers and services such as financial and insurance among the farming communities.

### **High value farm products**

“While sourcing farm products, large companies and retail chains prefer to deal with farmers’ organisations rather than individuals,” Sharma said.

Currently, the creation of producer organisations is largely confined to high value farm products such as dairy, fisheries, vegetables, fruits, pulses and spices among others.

Recently, Tata Global Beverages Ltd tied up with the South Indian Green Cardamom Company Ltd, an FPO run by plantation owners in Kerala and Tamil Nadu to help brand and market cardamom grown by the member growers.

Besides enabling the farmers to leverage the market for better prices, the organisations also provide a window for channelising funds under various schemes such as the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana.

# Higher arrivals pare gain in castor



**Rajkot, March 20:** On the back of fresh buying, castor futures and spot price increased but higher arrivals limited the gains on Wednesday.

However, castor futures declined marginally on the Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX).

On the NCDEX, castor April contract rose to Rs 3,605 a quintal, with an open interest of 1,43,900 lots. May series was up by Rs 12 to Rs 3,708 with an open interest of 57,930 lots.

At Disa mandi, spot castor gained Rs 4 at Rs 3,605.

On the RCX, spot castor price improved by Rs 9.50 to Rs 3,508 . RCX castor June contract marginally declined by Rs 2 to Rs 3,858. Castor brokers said that fresh export inquiries are coming in the market since last two days but with this, higher arrivals limited the price rise.

About 80,000-82,000 bags of the oilseed arrived in Gujarat and price was quoted at Rs 690-700 for 20 kg.

Around 6,300-6,400 bags arrived in Saurashtra region at Rs 675-700.

# Sugar market left searching for direction



**Mumbai, March 20:** Sugar prices ruled steady at all levels on Wednesday as demand eased and there were no positive cues. On the Vashi wholesale market, stockists offloaded fair quality sugar at prices lower by Rs 2-5 to ease inventories. Naka and mill tender rates also ruled unchanged on routine demand and continuous supply from producers.

Sources said: “The physical market extended loses, taking cues from the domestic futures that fell by Rs 15-20 till noon. Overall, the loss this month is Rs 100 a quintal. Prices have constantly been under pressure on speculation of higher production. Supply is ample in the domestic market as prices in other producing centres are ruling at a par with Maharashtra. Actually, the market is in need of cues for further direction.” A retail broker said, “Despite Holi festival next week there is no sign of any improvement in retail offtake. Activities remained calm at market and mill level as local demand continued to be need-based due to month end.”

On the NCDEX, sugar April contracts declined further by Rs 15 to Rs 2,999 , May contracts dropped by Rs 18 to Rs 3,036 and June was lower by Rs 37 to Rs 3,083 till noon. In Vashi market, arrivals were 61-62 truckloads (each of 100 bags) and local dispatches were 58-59 loads. On Tuesday evening, merely 10-12 mills offered tenders and sold about 28,000-30,000 bags to local traders in the range of Rs 2,990-3,050 (Rs 2,995-3,050) for S-grade and Rs 3,090-3,200 (Rs 3,090-3,200) for M-grade.

**The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,136-3,221 (Rs 3,136-3,221) and M-grade Rs 3,226-3,391 (Rs 3,226- 3,391).



*Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,090-3,130 (Rs 3,090-3,130) and M-grade Rs 3,180-3,280 (Rs 3,180-3,280).*

## **Costlier inputs keep poultry feed firm**



**Karnal, March 20:** Following volatility in prices of key ingredients, prices of poultry feed remained unchanged this week. Despite a fall in the prices of a few ingredients, feed prices were unchanged because input cost is still ruling on the higher side, said trade experts.

A few ingredients have come down but it hasn't made any major impact on the cost of production. Feed prices may continue to rule around current levels for the next few days as we are waiting for the prices to stabilise, said experts.

Soyameal witnessed some correction as prices dropped by Rs 1,100 to Rs 32,500 a tonne. Bajra went up by Rs 10 and sold at Rs 1,450 a quintal, DCP was at 35.50 a kg while maize sold at Rs 1,560 a quintal. Prices of mustard de-oiled cake improved by Rs 600 to Rs 14,600 a tonne, rice bran oil quoted at Rs 54, while DRB sold at Rs 940 a kg, down Rs 80.

### **Feed Prices**

After witnessing an uptrend last weekend, feed prices were unchanged this week. “Layer concentrate 25 per cent” was sold at Rs 1,425 for a 50-kg bag, while layer concentrate 35 per cent quoted Rs 1,110 for a 50-kg bag.

Pre-lay mash quoted at Rs 1,010 for a 50-kg bag while layer grower mash ruled at Rs 950 for a 50-kg bag. Broiler concentrate was at Rs 1,780 for a 50-kg bag while broiler starter mash was at Rs 1,420.

### **Poultry Products**

Meanwhile, poultry items witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday. After witnessing a continuous fall in the recent past, egg prices improved by 17 paise to Rs 2.70. Broiler remained unchanged at Rs 80 a kg, while chick sold at Rs 17, Re 1 down.

## **Mixed trend in pepper**



**Kochi, March 20:** Pepper prices were mixed on Wednesday with two contracts declining, while another moved up on buying interest witnessed in the spot market.

The March contract fell due to maturity on Wednesday, while speculation pushed up April contract. May declined despite purchases on the exchange.

April contract opened at Rs 35,270 a quintal and then dropped to Rs 34,980 and in the closing hour moved up to close above the previous day closing.

Overall, the market was volatile, market sources told *Business Line*. They said on the spot only 10 tonnes of fresh pepper were traded and all were afloat.

There was good buying for spot pepper from Idukki. Tamil Nadu-based dealers were buying high bulk density pepper at terminal market price on cash and carry basis. Meanwhile, Wayanad and Kozhikode dealers were also buying high bulk density pepper from Idukki at terminal market price for mixing it with low bulk density Wayanad and Karnataka pepper and balancing it and to market it out, they alleged. These buying activities activated the April contract to move up today, they said.

March contract decreased by Rs 295 to Rs 36,000 a quintal. April increased by Rs 155 to Rs 35,445 while May declined by Rs 20 to Rs 35,310.

Total turnover dropped by 593 tonnes to 1,508 tonnes. Total open interest moved up by 41 tonnes to 2,489 tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged at previous levels on matching demand and supply at Rs 34,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 36,100 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$6,900 (c&f) March shipment while April and May shipments were at \$6,800 a tonne (c&f).

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