

Women floriculturists turn entrepreneurs



Women farmers collecting 'Kanakambaralu' from the fields in their village in Machilipatnam. Photo: T. Appala Naidu

Defying illiteracy, 420 women floriculturists from Kotha Reddypalem and Patha Reddypalem villages in Machilipatnam have proved that they can be successful entrepreneurs

Flower sellers from two villages have turned successful women entrepreneurs-cum-farmers by engaging in floriculture - right from growing flower-bearing plants to marketing the flowers.

About 420 women from Kotha Reddypalem and Patha Reddypalem villages in Machilipatnam mandal to grow different kinds of flowers in their backyards. Finding a way to tap the market, they started growing flower-bearing plants in every available piece of land in their villages. "Middlemen in the market try to cheat us. So, we sell the flowers on the streets and roadsides in Machilipatnam," says B. Padmavathi, an illiterate woman who grows half-a-dozen varieties of flowering plants in her seven cents of the land. "The lowest profit on a field of five cents is Rs. 6,000 to 7,000 per month, irrespective of the season," Ms. Padmavathi tells *The Hindu*. Flowers such as firecrackers, Arabian Nights and plump varieties of jasmine and other winter varieties, are grown in the fields less than 15 cents."

The entrepreneurs' day starts with plucking of flowers, making garlands, and receiving new orders. "We often have to wait till 10 p.m. in the market till all the flowers are sold out," says B. Venkateswaramma, who earns Rs. 1,200 on any given day, whether summer or winter. There are several tenant farmers and most of them experiment with growing new varieties of plants on their sandy soil. Men are only asked to dig puddles for water accumulation in the field. These puddles are the only source of water to irrigate the plants, even in mid-summer.

The first generation flower seller-turned-entrepreneur M. Nagamalleswaramma has her single-day transaction touching Rs. 60,000 even when the marketing is dull. She says: "I import decorative flowers and rose varieties from Bangalore to meet the demand."

“The successful rural folks are now adopting new marketing strategies as they have learnt a few technical aspects in floriculture and yield management” says V. Suresh, director of Nestham, an NGO.

Panel seeks more time for repayment of loans by farmers

The District Consultative Committee (DCC) of bankers on Tuesday resolved to seek a few changes in the terms of availing of zero interest crop loans by the farmers, the directions for which have been sent to the bankers recently.

At the standing committee meeting of the DCC of bankers, which had at the top of its agenda a discussion on the zero interest crop loans, all the bankers argued for increasing the time for repayment of crop loans which clocked the one-year period until June, so that they also are enabled to claim the benefit.

It was argued at the meeting citing field-level reports, that many a farmer in the district was not aware of the incentive being given by the State government – the State government has decided to bear the interest on crop loans provided they are repaid within a period of one year, as an incentive – and have since long stuck to the deadline usually set by the insurance agency for last date of paying the insurance premium and renewal of crop loan.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the Assistant General Manager for NABARD told that the DCC would send the minutes of the meeting along with their recommendations such as improving the publicity of the new scheme so that farmers in the district become aware of the same.

Dry Bhima leaves Bijapur farmers a worried lot

State urged to check illegal sand extraction from the river



Dire situation: The Bhima has gone dry at the barrage at Devanagaon village in Bijapur district.

A crisis looms large for people of Sindgi and Indi taluks as the Bhima, considered their lifeline, has dried up in the summer sun.

People and livestock have been facing acute water scarcity, and crops are withering away. Farmers who have land near the river laid a 5-km-long pipeline to draw water to their fields, but their efforts have been in vain as the water has dried up.

“Most sugarcane farmers, like me, depend on the Bhima, but water-level has depleted to such an extent that even drilling borewells near the river is yielding no water,” laments Yamanappa Savalagi.

Competition

As many as 24 villages of Karnataka and 22 in Maharashtra, located along an 89-km stretch of the border between the two States, benefit from the Bhima. Some water has been stored at the barrage near Shiranal village, but this is reserved for supply to Solapur of Maharashtra.

In fact, of the eight barrages built across the Bhima, four are built and maintained by Maharashtra. Of these four, two are used by Maharashtra to supply drinking water to Solapur and Akkalkot. The Maharashtra government deploys security personnel to ensure the safety of their share of water.

Farmers of Karnataka complain that Maharashtra uses up most of the river water. That State did not release water to the Bhima from Ujani dam, causing them further problems, they charge.

Besides, they wonder why the Karnataka government has not taken steps to ensure the safety of its share.

For instance, Panchappa Kalburgi, president of the Bhima Nadi Neeru Horata Samiti, alleges that sand extraction is taking place along the river. The sand mafia breaches parts of barrages, allowing the water to run out and the barrage to dry up, before extracting sand from there, he claims. Holding Karnataka officials responsible for the water scarcity, Mr. Kalburgi says the government should ensure proper upkeep of the barrages, check illegal sand extraction and urge Maharashtra to release water from Ujani dam.

Training

Farmers will be given training in ginger cultivation at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Bidar on May 17 at 11 a.m., according to a release. — Special Correspondent

SHGs urged to cultivate biofuel plants

'With oil resources being depleted, alternative sources are needed'

Members of self-help groups can earn good income by growing biofuel plants under various government schemes, S.B. Shivakumar, faculty member, Sri Jagadguru Murugarajendra Technical College, has said.

Inaugurating a training programme for self-help group (SHG) members on cultivation of biofuel plants organised by the district Biofuel Information and Demonstration Centre and Sri Jagadguru Murugarajendra Technical College here on Tuesday, Mr.

Shivakumar said oil resources across the world were depleting owing to high demand. If the same trend were to continue for another four decades, there was every possibility of

all the oil resources getting exhausted, which would adversely affect several industries that were dependant on petroleum products. Therefore, it was time to think of alternative sources such as biofuel, which were less harmful compared with others, he said.

In order to encourage people to cultivate biofuel plants, the State government had launched 'Baradu Bangara' and 'Hasiru Honnu' schemes. Under the Baradu Bangara scheme, biofuel saplings would be planted on government wasteland, degraded forest land, and along highways by the Forest Department. In addition, block plantation was being taken up under this scheme with the involvement of village forest committees. Plantations along canals and in tank-bed areas were also taken up under this scheme, he said.

Funds available under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and the Special Development Programme (SDP) were being utilised for this scheme, he said. Under the Hasiru Honnu programme, saplings were being planted on bunds of farmland with MNREGA funds with active participation of non-governmental organisations. “

Drought pushes up vegetable prices



PRICEY: Consumers in Tiruchi have turned cautious while purchasing their weekly or daily quota of vegetables because of the steep rise in prices.—

PHOTO : R.M. RAJARATHINAM

Officials say slump in output in the region is one of the reasons for price rise

With serious slump in production because of water scarcity, the price of vegetables is spiking in Tiruchi region. Prices of most of the vegetables are ruling high. Beans leads the pack commanding a price of Rs. 100 a kg in wholesale market and Rs. 110 in retail (see chart). Prices of a few vegetables are ruling four times what was prevalent in the beginning of the year and twice that of last month.

According to official sources, the production was just 50 per cent of the normal times. “While there have been no rains for quite some time, even the well irrigation has become a question mark with water table depleting,” they said.

While small onion is raised on 3,000 hectares of land, other vegetables including brinjal, tomato, snake gourd, and drum sticks are raised on 500 hectares, lime on 1,000 hectares, and chillies on 2,000 hectares.

Several belts in the district, including Vaiyampatti, Uppiliapuram (Botherpettai), Thuraiyur, Thottiyam, Andanallur, and Manigandam are vegetable growing areas. Of them, Vaiyampatty is the leading producer.

Against the normal rainfall of 800 mm, this region recorded only around 500 mm last year. In the past four months also, there has been any rain there. This region is home to brinjal and tomato. Besides, it raises ladies finger, snake gourd, bottle gourd, hyacinth beans, ridge gourd, and bitter gourd.

In January, the commission mandis at Vaiyampatty were selling snake gourd at Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 a kg, brinjal Rs. 15 to 18 a kg, ladies finger Rs. 10 to 12, and hyacinth beans Rs. 20 to 22. Tomato, which is sold in boxes of 15 kg, was Rs. 18 to Rs. 22 a kg

Even then the production was said to be poor but the prices remained normal thanks to good arrivals at the Tiruchi market from various other places, including Karnataka and the Nilgiris. The situation is now bad, says U.S. Karuppiyah, president, Tiruchi Gandhi Market Merchants’ Unity Association.

He points out that beans was ruling around Rs. 30 a kg last month. Tomato was quoted around Rs. 20 a kg, snake gourd Rs. 15 to Rs. 20, ladies finger Rs. 20, small onion Rs. 40, ridge gourd Rs. 15 to Rs. 20, and brinjal Rs. 20.

In just a matter of a month, prices have shot up because the production has plummeted everywhere.

“Beans is the worst hit. We used to get this from Pannakkadu (Kodaikanal) and Oddanchattiram. At present, Tiruchi market gets only 10 per cent of what it has been getting all along. That is why its price has shot up at least by 300 per cent,” he says.

How about the other markets that have been feeding the Tiruchi market? “We get vegetables from Oddanchattiram, Aandipatti, and Theni markets also. But drought has impacted each and every market. Apart from poor rains, power scarcity has hurt pumping and hence farmers are unable to save the crops that they have raised,” he says.

V.N. Kannadasan, president, English Vegetables Commission Mandis Association, says that the price of almost every “English vegetable” like beans, carrot, beetroot, cabbage, and so on has shot up by 100 per cent in a month. “It is because of production shortage which is the direct result of poor rains,” he said.

Mr. Karupiah however strikes a note of optimism. “Even if there are a couple of spells of showers, all the standing crops would survive and the production would go up thus bringing down the prices,” he added.

Popularise traditional food, collector tells people

“It is imperative that we identify our traditional agricultural produces, take special care to popularise them and ensure that they are handed over to the next generation for the benefits to continue uninterrupted,” District Collector S. Jayandhi said here on Tuesday.

Addressing an awareness workshop on traditional agricultural products, Ms. Jayandhi pointed out that every region had its own unique agricultural practices and products that suited the area's climate conditions, soil, and so on.

Heritage

The produce usually were intertwined with the lives and culture of the region's people and found their way into the rituals and cultural heritage.

Ruing that the people had forgotten traditional agricultural products such as soap nut, cotton, and tender coconut leading to a fall in health standards, the Collector urged the public to prioritise use of those traditional products. She said the State government had directed that two rallies and a seminar be conducted to popularise traditional agricultural products at the block-level and at the district level an awareness workshop was conducted. The block level workshops were twinned with the ongoing farmers festivals in many panchayats.

Speakers at the workshop stressed that many had forgotten the use of traditional agricultural products and it was time their utility and usage was popularised. Their medicinal qualities were more relevant now than before.

Joint Director of Agriculture M. Deivendran, Deputy Directors G. Soundaram, R.M. Subramanian and P. Madanagopal as also Assistant Director of Agriculture P. Sivanandam spoke.

A large number of farmers participated in the workshop.

Training on value addition to the king of fruits

Farmers get the taste of technologies used in preparing commercial products from mango



Training programme for the mango farmers at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Vamban, Pudukottai district on Tuesday.

The farmers of the district underwent a day-long training in manufacturing value-added products from mango at a special programme organised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Vamban, near here on Tuesday.

Mango is one of the major crops grown in Pudukottai district, where it is raised in over 2,252 hectares, but the awareness on producing value-added products from the fruit has been limited. The district produces over 45,000 tonnes of fruit every year of which five per cent is exported and the rest is marketed within the country.

Since the harvesting period is too short, about 30 per cent of the fruit goes waste. The KVK workshop aims to address this lacunae by creating awareness and teaching the different methods of preparing commercial products from mango to the farmers.

K. Vairavan, Professor and Head, KVK, Vamban, in his inaugural address explained the important role played by fruit in improving rural economy and the various technologies used in the preparation of value-added products. Value-added products

K. Geetha, assistant professor, Food Science and Nutrition, resource person, spoke on the different mango products available in the market, and the possible value-added products that could be launched. She demonstrated the production of ready-to-serve

beverages such as quash, nectar, cordial juice, and preservation of mango pulp, mango powder, jam, and jelly . Answering the query of one of the participants, she said that they could receive advanced training in handling latest equipment in the preparation of mango products from the Institute of Crop Processing Technology, Thanjavur.

Incentive for dairy farmers hailed

The Karnataka State Milk Producers' Cooperative Society Employees' Federation, Mysore, has hailed the decision of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to provide an incentive of Rs. 4 a litre of milk to dairy farmers in the State.

It will go a long way in helping farmers involved in dairying deal with various crises related to the sector, office-bearers of the federation said in a statement here on Tuesday. The federation's representative S. Shivanagappa and others said dairying was gaining popularity among farmers.

The drought has forced many farmers to take up dairying, he said.

However, farmers have to face the burden of increased operational costs. Many are now selling their cows because the business has become unremunerative.

The federation had earlier asked the State government seeking a subsidy of Rs. 5 a litre; but the government had agreed to provide Rs. 2 for each litre.

Mr. Siddaramaiah's announcement has come as a boon to dairy farmers, federation members noted.

Paddy farmers win plant genome award



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(from left) Ciby George Kallingal and N. Vasavan, who won the individual awards for plant genome conservation; and B. Pradeesh, who was selected for the Community Award for Plant Genome.



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• Palakkad paddy farmers have won the Plant Genome Saviour Community Award for 2012.

The individual awards for plant genome conservation were won by Ciby George Kallingal of Pattikkad, Thrissur and N. Vasavan of Pachapoika in Kannur.

The Kerala Agricultural University has sponsored and recommended the awardees. The awards have been instituted through Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Right (PPV&F R) Authority.

The first community award, instituted in 2011, was won by pokkali farmers, sponsored by the KAU.

The community award carries Rs.10 lakh, a memento and a citation. The individual awards carry a cash prize of Rs.1 lakh, a memento and citation.

Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar will present the awards at a function to be held in New Delhi on May 22.

KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran; Director of Research T.R. Gopalakrishnan; and IPR cell convenor C.R.Elsy; are scheduled to attend the function.

The Akampadam–Chimpanchia Padasekhara Samithy led by B. Pradeesh has been selected for the Community Award for Plant Genome on the basis of services for protection of traditional varieties and conservation of germplasm.

The samithy also partnered with KAU to produce the first ever varieties developed through participatory research, Kunjukunju Varna and Kunjukunju Priya, as part of the innovative GALASA (Group Approach on Locally Adaptable and Sustainable Agriculture) programme introduced by KAU in 1999-2000.

The germplasm conserved by Palakkad farmers have also been the gene source for many high yielding varieties developed by major research institutions.

Ciby George, a role model for young agriculture entrepreneurs, has been selected for the award based on his excellence in farming practices.

His 20-acre farm is a model one. He grows plantation crops, exotic fruit trees, and keeps domestic animals, pets, ornamental birds and horses in his yard.

N. Vasavan of Kannur is a traditional farmer whose 7-acre farm houses rare collections of germplasms of coconut, cashew, pepper and medicinal plants.

He also cultivates tubers and plantains. Some of his innovative practices such as growing ants to destroy mosquito eggs have inspired scientists to pursue research in such modes of biological control.

Towards providing a green cover

Major afforestation programme to provide livelihood to landless poor

The State Government has given its nod for a major programme aimed at afforestation of vacant lands which also provides sustainable livelihood for rural poor.

Christened as 'Indiramma Pachatoranam,' the ambitious programme aims to raise horticultural plantations on large tracts of vacant Government lands. The beneficiaries,

small and marginal farmers belonging to SC/ST communities, would be provided with 'Chettu Patta,' a hereditary, inalienable and usufruct rights to raise and reap the produce of the trees.

The programme is to be implemented as a convergence project of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) along with other nodal departments of the State Government.

With the programme, vast tracts of land lying on road margins, irrigation tanks, drain/canal bunds etc could be put to good use and provide a sustainable livelihood to the marginalised and landless sections.

"We have identified about 65,000 beneficiaries in the district and shortly, we will identify the extent of land available.

The scheme is on a saturation basis and we are hoping to cover as many beneficiaries as possible," said Anil Kumar, Project Director, DWAMA told The Hindu on Tuesday.

The beneficiaries would be identified by the village organisation of SHG by the end of May and placed in the Grama Sabha as per the MNREGS guidelines.

They are expected to perform all operations for raising, protecting, watering the trees as per the estimates.

The estimates would have to be cover cost of the pitting, planting and cost of the planting, fertilizer. A water conservation trench would be built between the plants.

The plantations to be covered are drought resistant grafted fruit trees like Mango, Guava, Sapota, Jamun, Coconut, Tamarind etc.

The modalities for finalizing the programme would be finalized shortly at a meeting to be chaired by Collector.

Rs. 500 cr. allotted for farm mechanisation

Minister says Rs. 1,662 crore released as input subsidy for cyclone-hit farmers



Minister Thota Narasimham trying his hand on a farm tool exhibited in Rythu Chaitanya Sadassu at Krishnuniapalem in Korukonda mandal in East Godavari district on Tuesday.

—PHOTO: S. RAMBABU

Minister for Registration and Stamps Thota Narasimham has said that the State government allotted Rs. 500 crore for farm mechanisation to promote modern methods of farming in the State. He attended as chief guest for the Rythu Sadassu held at Krishnuniapalem in Gokhavaram mandal in East Godavari district on Tuesday.

The Minister stressed the need for adopting modern agriculture to increase output and minimise expenditure.

He further said that the State government released Rs. 1,662 crore as input subsidy for recent Neelam cyclone-affected farmers and steps have been taken for disbursement of this money.

Highlighting the farmer-welfare activities being taken up in the State, Mr. Narasimham said that the input subsidy has been increased from Rs. 1,250 to Rs. 10,000 per hectare.

Efforts were made to increase minimum support price for normal variety of paddy to Rs. 1,250 and Rs.1,580 per fine variety (per quintal), the Minister said.

Chairman DCCB, East Godavari district, Varupula Raja said that the DCCB has plans to provide Rs. 100 crore crop loans, Rs.130 crore as long term loans and Rs. 30 crore for tenant farmers this year in the district. Joint Director of agriculture, B. Prameela said that Rs 167 crore was allotted to the district as input subsidy to the Neelam-affected farmers and the money would be transferred to the bank accounts of farmers in a week. She said that only 80 per cent of farmers have opened the bank accounts and requested others to do so.

K. Guravappa , State observer on Rythu sadassulu, K. Setharama raju, PD , ATMA , A. Gopala Krishna , progressive farmer, Robert paul , Kiran Jyothi , ADs of Agriculture department, agriculture experts and farmers from various mandals in the division attended the programme.

50 per cent subsidy for raising sorghum

Interested farmers asked to apply for it

As per the State government's drought mitigation scheme, Vellore district has been set a target of raising green fodder in 1,700 acres with the subsidy component fixed at Rs. 115 lakh. Announcing a drought mitigation scheme for animal husbandry in non-delta regions, the Government of Tamil Nadu has allotted a package of Rs. 22.65 crore. This is primarily to provide subsidy to the farmers cultivating sorghum (chulam), a green fodder, as irrigated crop. Sorghum is preferred in this scheme because of its short duration (55 to 60 days).

This scheme aims to prevent distress selling of farm animals and milk animals due to non availability of green fodder during present drought scenario.

According to a release from the District Collector P. Sankar, cultivating an acre of sorghum would require Rs. 13,600 and 50 per cent of this amount would be given as subsidy to farmers. Nearby Milk Producers Cooperative Societies would procure the fodder from the farmers at a price to be fixed by the government.

Rs. 115.6 lakh has been allotted to Vellore district as subsidy component. Farmers interested in raising fodder under this scheme can contact their nearest veterinary pharmacy or assistant veterinarian or agriculture officer of their block and get the application form.

They should return the filled in forms within a week. Mr. Sankar convened a meeting of officials and farmers to discuss about the programme here on Monday.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rise in minimum temperatures due to loss of green cover, says Tamil Nadu Agricultural University report

An analysis of the data of temperatures of the last 60 years by the [Agro-Climate Research Centre](#) at the [Tamil Nadu Agricultural University](#) (TNAU) says that there has been a gradual increase in the minimum temperatures in the last decades. Though this increase is gradual its effect is being felt, experts say. The loss of [green cover](#) including de-forestation and the decrease of agriculture has contributed to this effect.

Though the maximum [temperature](#) has remained relatively the same throughout the six

decades, there has been a slight but gradual increase in the minimum temperatures. The analysis which was based on the minimum temperatures from the year 1953 to 2012 shows the increase.

N Maragatham, the head of the department of the Agro-Climate Research Centre said that the average minimum temperatures in 1953 during the months of March, April and May were 21.7 0C, 22.9 0C and 23.40C respectively. This had increased to 22.5 0C, 24.0 0C and 24.0 0C respectively in 2012. "Though the increase is around 10C, this coupled with other factors, has caused an increase in the night temperature in the region,' she said.

Though at present, it may be difficult to assess the exact amount of loss of green cover, it is being observed that there is a drastic loss in the green cover. This is expected to have contributed to the increase in temperatures. This along with the increase of smoke content in the region due to vehicle's smoke emissions and the rise of the general pollution in the region is causing the increase in the atmospheric heat making our [summer](#) nights hotter than usual, she said.

Experts say the increase in night temperatures will affect agricultural production. "When night temperatures are up, the plants will have to perspire more for oxygen. This reduces their productivity levels which affects agriculture," said T N Balasubramanian a researcher at the centre.

Minimum temperatures down the years

March April May

1953 21.7 22.9 23.4

2012 22.5 24.0 24.0

Bangalore Blue Grapes gets Geographical Indication status

Bangalore Blue Grapes, exclusively grown in districts around the city, has been given the Geographical Indication (GI) status.

The move comes three years after Karnataka's horticulture department submitted its first detailed proposals to the office of the Controller-General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks seeking GI tag.

Bangalore Blue, characterized by its 'foxy flavour', is exclusively grown in Bangalore Urban, Chikkaballapur and Kolar districts. Its cultivation has been going on for the past 150 years in about 5,000 hectares. The livelihood of over 15,000 farmers in the Nandi Valley depends on their cultivation.

The Bangalore Blue got the GI tag (no 211) for its specific geographic and indigenous variety.

"If the grapes are grown in any other area it will be devoid of its characteristic flavour and colour," said P Sampath Kumar, principal scientist (horticulture), Division of Fruit Crops, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Hessaraghatta.

Authentic Bangalore Blue grapes need to be grown in red sandy loam soil at a day temperature of about 35-37 degrees Celsius and night temperature of 12-15 degree Celsius which is unique to Bangalore and its surrounding areas.

"The grapes develop their typical colour and slip skin nature (thin skin) at this

temperature,"

Kumar

said.

While more than 4.5 lakh tonnes of Bangalore Blue grapes are produced annually, most of it is used for table purposes - raw consumption, making jams and jellies etc. About 4,000 tonnes are purchased by the wine industry.

Wine prepared by this variety of grape isn't classified as classical variety but falls under the fortified grade.

"Bangalore Blue [grape wine](#) is not considered grape wine in the international market as they consist of a maximum of only 10-12 percent of alcohol. Often ethanol is added to increase the alcohol content," Kumar added.

As a result, the state's wine policy doesn't extend exclusive subsidies to this variety of grapes like it does for French variety of grapes, which is a bone of contention among the cultivators. Wine companies have also consistently decreased their purchase of Bangalore Blue over the years, switching over to French variety of grapes, say officials of [Karnataka State Grape Growers Association](#).

Officials of the horticulture department say that despite the GI status on the fruit, it's unlikely that cultivators will get any subsidies from the government.

"The GI status was conferred for the sole reason that the Bangalore Blue grapes are grown particularly in and around the city area. This should not force government to issue subsidies for wine-making using the variety of fruit," said an official of the horticulture department.

Coastal farmers warm up to pepper cultivation

Some like it hot. Farmers here are showing enthusiasm in cultivating commercial crops, especially pepper. In Udipi, Karkala and Kundapur taluks, farmers are cultivating pepper

in about 345 hectares. In 2009, pepper was cultivated in 267 hectares and it rose to 268 hectares the next year. In 2011, pepper was cultivated in 282 hectares.

Sources in the horticulture department told TOI that pepper grown in these three taluks is expected to cross 400 hectares in 2013.

All this was possible by way of support by the horticulture department as it has taken a mission of promoting [pepper cultivation](#) under its [National Horticulture Mission](#) (NHM) project, which aims at area expansion of this crop. The department supplied planting materials in areas like Shivalli, Karkala and Kundapur. Subsidy amount of Rs 20,000 was provided to farmers per hectare of pepper crop which constitutes 50% of the production cost.

Naveenchandra Jain of Nitte in Karkala taluk said that the department of horticulture provided him with 1,000 pepper plants in August last year. Pepper yield fetched him supplementary income, Naveenchandra said, opining that those who are interested in pepper cultivation can avail the required information from the horticulture department, which has made arrangements to distribute 2 lakh pepper plants during the upcoming rainy season in the three taluks.

B P Sathish, deputy director of horticulture department, said that the enthusiasm among farmers for cash crops like pepper is growing in the district. It is an intercrop grown amidst arecanut plantation. Apart from pepper cultivation, farmers' zeal for 'protected cultivation' in way of poly house, shade net system through which flowers, vegetables are also increased in recent years, he added. The department provides good quality of seeds to farmers.

The department also provides pesticides to treat quick wilt disease that eats away the pepper plants within 10 days. Awareness on this is created among people by announcing these initiatives during the taluk and zilla panchayat meetings, he said.

Another official from the department added that two lakh pepper plants are ready to be distributed during the rainy season in these three taluks of the district.

Arecanut, however, which lists in the commercial crop category, could not make it better in the district as far as area of expansion of crop is concerned. Cultivation land of arecanut stood unchanged at 5,762 hectares from the past few years in the district.

Mangoes rule world of 'chutneys'

Mangoes, in all forms, make the scorching [summer](#) that much sweeter. Even green [mangoes](#) enjoy as much popularity as their yellow, succulent counterparts. Known as "Kairi," these raw mangoes are used to make a variety of mouthwatering pickles and [chutneys](#). TOI talks to Tricity residents about recipes.

Nisha Bohat, a homemaker from Sector 28, Chandigarh, swears by the green chutney. "It is very simple to make especially for those who know how to make Pudina chutney. Instead of adding lemon water, add raw mangoes while blending Pudina (mint leaves). You would need onions, green chillies, salt, three to four green mangoes and pudina," she said.

Besides spicy chutney, Nisha also recommends a sweet variant. "Take a kairi and cut it into small pieces along with onions and tomatoes (optional). Heat oil in a pan. When hot, add 'jeera' (cumin) and saunf (fennel). Stir until they turn brown. Then add onions and kairi and tomatoes. Cook on a low flame for 10 minutes and add sugar. It tastes best with paranthas," she said. Rabita Sharma, a Zirakpur resident and boutique owner, explained how to make a spicy sweet chutney. "Take three to four mangoes and boil them. Once boiled, take them out and peel them. In a pan add some oil, saunf, dhaniya, onion, tomatoes, salt and sugar as per taste. Once the masala is ready add boiled kairi. Add water and steam it for five to 10 minutes. It can be eaten as chutney or as one of the food items instead of pulses or green vegetables," she said.

Soumya Singh, an animator from Manimajra (Chandigarh), is all for Khatti meethi chutney. "It takes 15 minutes to make this chutney. Peel and cut kairi, onion and chillies into pieces and add them to the mixer. Add sugar for sweet chutney and salt for sour and both for a 'chutputa' flavour," she said.

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Naveenchandra Jain of Nitte in Karkala taluk said that the department of horticulture provided him with 1,000 pepper plants in August last year. Pepper yield fetched him supplementary income, Naveenchandra said, opining that those who are interested in

pepper cultivation can avail the required information from the horticulture department, which has made arrangements to distribute 2 lakh pepper plants during the upcoming rainy season in the three taluks.

B P Sathish, deputy director of horticulture department, said that the enthusiasm among farmers for cash crops like pepper is growing in the district. It is an intercrop grown amidst arecanut plantation. Apart from pepper cultivation, farmers' zeal for 'protected cultivation' in way of poly house, shade net system through which flowers, vegetables are also increased in recent years, he added. The department provides good quality of seeds to farmers.

The department also provides pesticides to treat quick wilt disease that eats away the pepper plants within 10 days. Awareness on this is created among people by announcing these initiatives during the taluk and zilla panchayat meetings, he said. Another official from the department added that two lakh pepper plants are ready to be distributed during the rainy season in these three taluks of the district.

Arecanut, however, which lists in the commercial crop category, could not make it better in the district as far as area of expansion of crop is concerned. Cultivation land of arecanut stood unchanged at 5,762 hectares from the past few years in the district.



City anchor: In drought-hit areas, mid-day meals to keep kids in school

In a move to ensure children living in drought-hit areas don't drop out of school and migrate to cities, the state education department has decided to continue mid-day meal scheme even during vacations.

"We have seen that in times of drought, children are made to work in fields during vacations. When school reopens, these students do not return, but continue to work. So the drop-out rates increase during such times," said Mahavir Mane, director of Primary Education. "So we decided to continue midday meals even during the vacation in the drought-hit areas," added Mane.

Children from Classes I to VIII are provided with afternoon meals everyday except for Sundays on their school campus even during the holidays. "This way, children will remain connected to school even during vacation. Since these kids get nutritious food at least once a day, parents will also tend to send their kids to school. This will help check drop-out rates to a great extent," said Mane.

"I will be getting the official figures of drop-outs from various regions. A collective summary of figures as well as a gender-wise figure will be available only after studying all the data," he added.

As per official records, Maharashtra has the total of around one lakh primary and secondary schools, run by local self-governing bodies and private managements. Of these, 32,573 are private, including 20,455 aided and 12,018 unaided schools.

Datta Surve, Gram Panchayat member from Solapur's Modnimb village, also agreed with Mane when he opined that introduction of mid-day meals during vacations will definitely help students stay connected to the school and prevent migration. "The government has introduced several measures in the villages to help people make a living. This scheme is good as it helps students get a full meal a day and encourages parents to send their children to school," said Surve.

- See more at: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/city-anchor-in-droughthit-areas-midday-meals-to-keep-kids-in-school/1115943/#sthash.TsRYAVJm.dpuf>

hindustantimes

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, May 15

Max Min
37° | 28°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:43

Humidity: 71

Sunset: 06:27

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, May 16

Max Min
36° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday May 17	Saturday May 18	Sunday May 19	Monday May 20	Tuesday May 21
38° 26°	34° 25°	34° 25°	34° 25°	35° 25°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:30

Humidity: 28

Sunset: 07:04



Wind: normal Barometer: 1004

THE HINDU Business Line

Vegoil imports fall 29% in April on sluggish demand

Vegetable oil imports declined by over 29 per cent to 6.54 lakh tonnes in April as inventories piled up on sluggish local demand.

The country had imported 9.25 lakh tonnes (lt) in the same month last year, according to the Solvent Extractors' Association of India. The decline was led by the drop in palm oil imports.

Imports slowed down in April as inventory was huge due to excessive purchase of vegetable oils from the global market in the last five months, the association Executive Director B.V. Mehta said in a statement.

Normally, the surplus stock is kept to meet the demand for 30 days, but the inventory was for 45 days, he said.

Currently, 18.20 lt of vegetable oils are lying at ports and in pipelines, according to the data.

In April, refined palm oil imports doubled to 2.5 lt from 1.37 lt in March .

Of total imports in April this year, edible oil comprised 6.41 lt, while 13,500 tonnes were non-edible oil.

However, overall import of vegetable oils in the first half of the 2012-13 oil year (November-October) rose by 12 per cent to 52 lt (47 lt), data showed.

Groundnut oil unchanged on dull demand

Groundnut oil and cotton oil remained unchanged on Tuesday as demand was poor from repackers after recent price rise in the past few days.

Groundnut oil for 15 kg was traded at Rs 2,005-10 while groundnut oil telia tin stood at Rs 1,752-1,753 and loose groundnut oil was quoted at Rs 1,140-45 for 10 kg.

About 3-5 tankers of groundnut oil were traded in Saurashtra.

Cotton oil wash price was steady at Rs 607-610 for 10 kg and cotton oil new tin price stood at 1,080-1,090 for 15 kg. About 15-20 tankers of cotton oil were traded.

According to market sources, repackers demand was huge last week and because of this prices rose.

On the other side, oil millers are not willing to sell at current prices. They are aiming for Rs 1,200 for 10 kg.

HPS Saurashtra origin bold 50-60 count was Rs 76,000 a tonne and Rajasthan origin 50-60 count Rs 72,000 (ex mill).

Tamil Nadu origin 80-90 count HPS was Rs 70,000 (Chennai and Mumbai port delivery).

Spices Board to set up mint park at Rae Bareli

Spices Board is setting up a new mint spices park at Rae Bareli in Uttar Pradesh at an initial investment of Rs 19 crore.

The foundation stone for the project will be laid by Union Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi on Wednesday.

According to Spices Board Chairman A. Jayathilak, 36,500 tonnes of mint is produced in the country and of this, 35,500 tonnes are from Uttar Pradesh.

Mint and mint products from the variety *Mentha Arvensis* (Japanese mint) will get priority for processing and value addition at the park.

He said that out that exports of mint and mint products contribute to 23 per cent in value terms of the total spices exports, earning a revenue of Rs 2,224 crore in 2011-12.

Boon to mint farmers

As the new spice park is being set up in Rae Bareli, it is expected that high end processing and value-addition of mint will shoot up and this would play a vital part in the total spice exports, he said.

The park, to be set up in an area of 11.79 acres in Sadar Tehsil, will boost the production, processing, value addition and exports of mint and mint products and will be a boon to the mint farmers of the country, he added.

Spices Board has already set up crop-specific Spices Parks at Chindwara, Madhya Pradesh for garlic and spice extracts; Puttady, Kerala for cardamom and pepper; Jodhpur, Rajasthan for cumin and corriander and Guna, Madhya Pradesh for seed spices.

He said that spices parks at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh for chillies and Sivaganga, Tamil Nadu for turmeric and chillies are nearing completion.

The Board is also establishing a Spice Park at Kota, Rajasthan for coriander and cumin.

Govt hikes floor price for arecanut import by Rs 35/kg



The Government has increased the minimum price for the import of arecanut by Rs 35 a kg.

A notification by the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) on Monday said that the minimum price for import of arecanuts is enhanced from the existing Rs 75 to Rs 110 a kg.

(In a notification on August 14, 2012, the DGFT had increased the minimum price for arecanut import from Rs 35 to Rs 75.)

Seeking strict measures to curb the import of arecanut into the country, around 50 Parliamentarians had submitted a memorandum to the Government in March this year. They had demanded that keeping in mind the cost of cultivation the minimum price for the import of arecanut be fixed at Rs 125 a kg.

Thanking the Government, MPs and the DGFT for increasing the minimum price for import, K. Padmanabha, President of Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and

Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd, told *Business Line* that this move would help boost the market sentiments.

Manchi Srinivasa Achar, President of All-India Areca Growers' Association, said that strict measures should be taken to implement the DGFT notification at all levels as the imported quantities of arecanut are affecting the prospects of domestic growers.

Ramesh Kaintaje, an arecanut grower from Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, said that the production cost of the commodity has gone up significantly over the past few years. The cost of fertiliser has more than doubled in the last three years, and the wages for unskilled labour have also seen a steep hike.

In such a situation, the imported arecanut is affecting the domestic growers.

On Tuesday, the old stocks of white arecanut were commanding a maximum price of Rs 194, Rs 195 and Rs 198 a kg at the Mangalore, Puttur and Bantwal agriculture produce marketing committees, respectively.

Kaintaje hoped that the DGFT move would help retain the prices of the commodity in the higher range in the coming days.

With futures trade resuming, area under guar may rise



The resumption of futures trade in guar complex may help boost guarseed acreage. It is seen rising this year as farmers in Rajasthan and Haryana, lured by higher returns, could be planting more.

Trade sources expect guarseed acreage to at least double this year since the returns, even at the current price levels, were still attractive compared with other competing crops such as cotton and pulses.

Guarseed is trading at around Rs 9,000 a quintal in the spot market, while guar gum is being traded at Rs 27,500.

multiuse

Guar gum, derived from guar seeds, is used as a thickening agent and additive in food products such as instant soups, ketch ups, ice creams and processed meat products.

Guar gum is also used for applications in paper, textiles, ore floatation, explosives and fracking of oil and natural gas formations, with demand mainly coming from the US, Canada and China among others.

On Tuesday, after a gap of 14 months, futures contracts in guar complex were re-launched on commodity exchanges - NCDEX and MCX.

Lifting the ban late on Monday, the Forward Market Commission allowed trading in June, July and October contracts.

poor response

However, the response on the first day was poor as prices were volatile and analysts feel it would take some time for volumes to pick up.

On the NCDEX, the contract for June delivery was last traded at Rs 28,150 after opening at a high of Rs 30,700.

The average traded price was Rs 28,773. Similarly, the average traded price for guar seed June 20 contract was Rs 9,581.

“The re-launch of futures trade has nothing to do with acreage. Farmers will plant more guar seed because the returns are higher compared to cotton and pulses,” said Ravinder Kedia, Director at Jai Bharat Gum and Chemicals Ltd, one of the exporters.

Guar seed is currently fetching about Rs 9,500 in the spot market at Jodhpur, while the average returns from cotton hovered around Rs 4,000 and pulses at around Rs 5,000.

“Guar acreage is bound to go up as realisations are fantastic and, moreover, the cost of cultivation is much lower than other crops” said S.N. Dhoot, Managing Director, Rajasthan Gum Pvt Ltd, an exporter in Jodhpur.

Industrial demand

“The demand for industrial use continues to be there. However, the demand from food segment, especially from Europe is seen coming down,” Kedia said.

About 85 per cent of the guar gum exported is used for industrial use, while the rest finds application for edible purpose.

Guar seed is mainly grown in Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and even Andhra Pradesh.

The area under guar is estimated at over three million hectares.

Trade sources in Punjab said that cotton farmers in Abohar and Muktsar districts are seen interested in cultivating guar, but the trend will be clear once the monsoon sets in.

seed output

According to trade sources, companies such as Vikas WSP Ltd were said to be distributing free seeds to farmers in districts such as Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan.

Trade estimates guarseed output at around two million tonnes in 2012-13, up from 1.3 mt in the previous year. "This year the production could go up to 3-3.5 mt," Kedia added.

Spot rubber rules steady in dull market

Physical rubber prices were mostly steady on Tuesday. Major counters remained unchanged on buyer resistance as the reports from the domestic futures were not so impressive.

But ISNR 20 and latex posted marginal gains on comparatively better demand. The overall volumes were dull.

Meanwhile, the key Tokyo rubber futures fell on profit taking after gaining consistently for five sessions to a two-month high while a halt in the yen's decline against the dollar also weighed on.

Sheet rubber finished flat at Rs 171 a kg, according to traders.

The grade improved to Rs 171 (Rs 170.50) a kg, as reported by the Rubber Board.

In the futures market, May contracts inched up to Rs 170.10 (Rs 169.24), June to Rs.169.36 (Rs 169.17), July to Rs.168.40 (Rs 168.22) and August to Rs 166.97 (Rs 166.87) while the September futures dropped to Rs 163.70 (Rs 166.16) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) slipped to Rs 166.08 (Rs 166.90) at Bangkok.

The May futures were at ¥274.2 (Rs.147.70) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange

Physical rubber rates/kg were: RSS-4: 171 (171); RSS-5: 167 (167); Ungraded: 162 (162); ISNR 20: 162 (161); and Latex 60%: 110 (108).

Mahasen to retain cyclone strength until landfall on Thursday

Tropical cyclone Mahasen is at least two full days away from landfall over the Bangladesh coast and is expected to undergo one last round of intensification.

India Met Department retained watch for monsoon onset over Andaman Sea, churned up by Mahasen before leaving it to North, helping facilitate the likely onset in a couple of days.

Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre, Delhi, located Mahasen 800 km north-west of Port Blair; 460 km south-east of Visakhapatnam; 650 km south-south-west of Paradip; and 1,060 km south-west of Chittagong (Bangladesh) on Tuesday afternoon.

Headed to Bangladesh

It is expected to move north-eastwards and cross Bangladesh coast between Khepupara and Teknaff, close to Chittagong during Thursday evening/night, the forecasting centre said.

But it will retain cyclone strength until just ahead of landfall, it added.

Joint Typhoon Warning Centre of US Navy more or less agreed with the forecast outlook and estimated that the cyclone lurked approximately 972 km south-south-westward of Kolkata.

CHANGES TRACK

But the US agency said that the cyclone had been tracking in a north-east direction, putting itself on course for a landfall over Bangladesh.

It would remain on a general north-easterly track, the US agency added.

Favourable sea surface temperatures (29-30 degrees Celsius) along the track and improving upper level support will help to support a steady intensification through next two days.

But increasing track speeds and vertical wind shear (sudden change in wind direction with height) would catch up with Mahasen as it moves closer to landfall, weakening it.

HEAVY WEATHER

Meanwhile, cyclone Mahasen combined with a prevailing western disturbance over North-West and East India to set up some volatile weather over many parts of the country.

The Met Department said in a warning that fishermen of Andaman and Nicobar Islands should not venture into the sea during the next two days.

Fishermen along north coastal Tamil Nadu and coastal Andhra Pradesh need to be careful while venturing into the sea along and off these coasts on Wednesday.

Thunder squall has been forecast over Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura during next two days and over coastal Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday.

Poor demand from millers pounds chana



Chana continued to rule sluggish in Indore mandis amid poor demand for pulses and 'besan' from the millers. In Indore mandis, chana (Kanta) ruled steady at Rs 3,350-75 a quintal, while chana (desi) ruled at Rs 3,150-75. Chana (Annagiri) ruled at Rs 3,100-50, chana (masumi) at Rs 3,300, chana (kaktu) at Rs 2,700-3,000, chana (vishal) at Rs 3,100-50, while Kabuli Bitki ruled at Rs 3,000-3,100 a quintal.

Besides poor demand in pulses from millers and lack of demand for chana besan from millers, over 50 per cent of chana has gone into stocks and NCDEX delivery centres, leading to decline in prices in the physical market, said a wholesale pulse trader Prakash Vora. Chana dal (average) was Rs 3,900-3,925, chana dal (medium) at Rs 4,000-25, while chana dal (bold) ruled at Rs 4,150-75 a quintal.

Dollar chana ruled at Rs 3,800-4,500 (Rs 4,200-4,800). Dollar chana(42/44 count) was at Rs 5,550-75 a quintal (Rs 5,775-5,800), 44/46 count was quoted at Rs 5,325-50, 46/48 count at Rs 5,350-75, 58/60 count at Rs 4,025, while dollar chana (60/62 count) ruled at Rs 3,900 a quintal respectively.

Demand likely to improve for sugar



Expectation of higher physical demand held sugar market steady on Tuesday.

Sugar prices in the futures market were range-bound after rising by Rs 80-90 last week. There were no activities on the Vashi wholesale sugar market as traders are on indefinite strike against Local Body Tax since May 1, said sources.

Sources said, "A future course of action will be decided in the meeting to be held at Bombay sugar Merchants Association's office late evening. There is possibility of re-opening of wholesale markets."

The Vashi sugar market currently carries more than 100-110 truckloads of inventory.

On Monday evening, 11-12 mills offered tenders and sold 28,000-30,000 bags at Rs 2,960-3,040 (Rs 2,950-3,040) for S-grade and Rs 3,040-3,100 (Rs 3,030-3,090) for M-grade.

On the NCDEX, sugar June futures was up Rs 2 to Rs 3,041 , July contracts was down Rs 3 to Rs 3,069 and August by Rs 3 to Rs 3,129.

Growers await monsoon for turmeric to gain colour



Turmeric farmers and traders are eagerly waiting for rainfall, so that prices of their produce may increase .

“For the past one month, turmeric prices are declining and exporters have not received good upcountry orders. This is due to the severe summer in North India and other places. Contrast to the traditional practice of getting North Indian orders during the month of May, this year only negligible number of orders were received by the exporters for the yellow spice,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said that if it begins to rain, farmers will start sowing .

This year for want of rain, no farmer has raised turmeric crop so far.

This will result the price hike only during the next year.

But this year the farmers will bring their accumulated stock with them to the market for sale.

The turmeric farmers said that the present price of Rs 7,000/quintal is not feasible for them. They said only few quantity of their stock would be sold and the remaining would be kept stock for next year, when the farmers feel the price may touch Rs 15,000 a quintal.

On Tuesday, only 3,998 bags of turmeric arrived for sale. Some 60 per cent of this was sold.

Major buyers were stockists, who procured 1,500 and odd bags with an intention to stock the produce.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,619-7,175; the root variety Rs 4,116-6,019 a quintal.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 6,266-8,007 root variety Rs 6,011-6,311.

Of the arrival of 885 bags, only 30 per cent stocks were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety quoted Rs 6,199-7,137; the root variety Rs 5,341-6,484.

Of the 252 bags arrived, 225 found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,651-7,297; the root variety Rs 5,330-6,260.

All the 628 bags were traded.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 6,500-7,585; the root variety Rs 5,867-6,797.

All the 93 bags were sold.

Wheat trading set to be range-bound



A range-bound movement is likely to be witnessed in the coming days while dara wheat in physical market may continue to rule flat, according to traders.

Around 5,000 bags of wheat arrived at the Karnal Grain Market Terminal on Tuesday.

Quality of the stock was medium and procurement was done by the Government agencies at the minimum support price.

Wheat arrivals have been low this year in the market and arrivals are likely to remain sluggish, said market sources.

Radhey Sham, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that ample stocks coupled with steady domestic demand kept dara wheat and flour prices unchanged.

It is unlikely to see any major alteration even in the coming days, he said.

In the physical market, Dara wheat continued to rule flat and quoted at Rs 1,400-1,405 a quintal.

Mill delivery was at Rs 1,400 while delivery at the chakki was at Rs 1,405 .

In Delhi's Lawrence road market, a benchmark for the country, wheat mill quality was traded at Rs 1,440-1,470 .

On the NCDEX, May contracts decreased by Rs 8 to Rs 1,489 a quintal with an open interest of 2,810 lots. June contracts were positive and went up by Rs 7 and traded at Rs 1,513.

According to the market experts, inactive participation by buyers affected the futures market sentiments.

Traders expect that market may rule range-bound in coming days.

While, wheat spot prices on the exchange improved by Rs 2.5 and traded at Rs 1,385.

Flour Prices

Following a steady trend in wheat, flour too remained unchanged and quoted at Rs 1,670.

Similarly, Chokar ruled flat and sold at Rs 1,250-1,275 a quintal.

Cheaper palm oil may put pressure on coconut oil



Coconut oil may attract upcountry orders and corporate interest only after its prices stabilise.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), said that upcountry buyers and corporates may not enter the market until coconut oil prices stabilise.

However, it seems that imported edible oils that are available cheaper have taken over coconut oil market for the time being, he said.

Coconut oil prices remained more or less steady both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu this week.

The prices are ruling at last week's level.

In Kerala, prices are Rs 61.50 a kg, whereas in Tamil Nadu they are flat at Rs 58.

Prakash B. Rao, Vice-President, COMA, said that majority of the buyers are not active in the market at this level.

Besides, there is no major enquiry from corporate buyers.

The cheaper availability of palm oil and palm kernel oil and the delay in copra procurement by Government agencies has also contributed to the market sluggishness.

There is a possibility that lower palm oil prices tend to put pressure on coconut oil prices and consumption may shift to lower priced oil, he said.

Palm oil prices are now trading at Rs 48/kg while palm kernel oil is at Rs 51/kg.

Copra prices in Kerala and Tamil Nadu ruled at the last week level of Rs 4,450 a quintal and Rs 4,300 respectively.

Compared to Kerala, Tamil Nadu is having a good season both in production of nuts and copra arrivals, he said, adding that the productivity level is declining in Kerala.



Edible oil imports fall 29% in April



India's edible oil imports fell in April, snapping a three-month rising trend. Analysts said the fall was primarily on account of increased stocks due to excessive imports since December 2012.

Edible oil imports fell from about 9,00,000 tonnes in April 2012 to about 6,41,000 tonnes in April this year, a fall of 29 per cent. During the same period, non-edible oil imports fell from 28,000 tonnes to about 13,500 tonnes. According to data compiled by the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA), vegetable oil imports fell to 6,54,827 tonnes in April, against 9,25,334 tonnes in the corresponding month last year, a fall of 29.2 per cent.

Vegetable oil imports had risen between December 2012 and March 2013. These grew 35 per cent, 75 per cent, 10 per cent and 23 per cent in December, January, February and March, respectively. "India had imported excessive quantities during the last three months. Also, there was disparity in imports last month. Therefore, imports fell in April," said Govindbhai Patel, an expert on edible oils.

"The overall import of vegetable oils during November 2012 to April 2013 is reported at 52,79,505 tonnes, compared with 47,14,963 tonnes (in the year-ago period), up 11.97 per cent," SEA said in its report.

Industry players said from this month, imports might increase, as stocks had fallen due to lower imports in April. "We will see imports pick up from this month, as previous stocks have already fallen," Patel said.

According to SEA data, as of May 1, edible oil stocks at various ports and pipelines stood at 18,20,000 tonnes, against 21,00,000 tonnes a month ago.

Owing to the fall in imports, prices have fallen. Crude sunflower and crude soybean oil prices have fallen since January; prices have recorded five to 10 per cent correction.

MONTH-WISE IMPORT OF VEGETABLE OILS (in tonnes)			
Month	Quantity	YoY change (%)	
November	700,371	-18.12	
December	908,587	35.63	
January	1,157,130	75.33	
February	969,175	10.55	
March	889,415	22.22	
April	654,827	-29.33	

Source: SEA Note: Oil year 2012-13 (November-October)

Private buyers crowd out government in wheat procurement process

The projected fall in the yield of wheat in Punjab and Haryana has led to private traders purchasing substantial quantities of the commodity from producers across India. In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, too, private traders are buying huge quantities of wheat, despite a bonus on the prices. Owing to this, the government procurement target for this year has been scaled down from 44 million tonnes (mt) to 34 mt.

Sources in the Food Corporation of India (FCI) said procurement might decline to 30 mt.

Last year, state agencies procured 38.1 mt of wheat. Private traders didn't procure any wheat last year.

As wheat prices might rise due to low arrivals and demand from exporters, it is prudent to purchase now, at a price slightly higher than the minimum support price, says Naresh Ghai, president of Punjab Roller Flour Millers' Association. Adi Narayan Gupta, president of Roller Flour Millers' Association of Uttar Pradesh, said this year, private traders were aggressive, as low procurement might affect the release of wheat through the open market sales scheme (OMSS).

Though government warehouses are overflowing, due to the impending food security Bill, the buffer requirements might increase.

Last year, flip-flops in the government policy on OMSS wheat price had driven mills in the South to buy more from the open market. K S Kamla Kannam, president of the Roller Flour Millers Association of Tamil Nadu, said the wheat price, through OMSS, was reduced from Rs 1,525 a quintal to Rs 1,170 a quintal, before being revised to Rs 1,750 a quintal. Mills in the South had preferred to buy from private traders, rather than from FCI.

An Ahmedabad-based wheat broker confirmed exporters were lifting wheat, as they had to complete the shipments between May 15 and May 30. At this point, exporters don't stand to gain, as wheat from Ukraine is available at prices lower than that of Indian wheat in the international markets. As Indian exporters cannot default on their commitments, they are selling at a loss.

WHEAT PROCUREMENT

In million tonnes

Year	Production	Procurement	
2009-10	80.7	25.4	██████████
2010-11	86.9	28.3	██████████
2011-12	93.9	38.1	██████████
2012-13P	93.6	33.0	██████████

P= Projection

Source: Ministry of Food, Gol

Though the dwindling yield might result in losses for farmers, government storage agencies, under pressure to arrange additional storage space, could get a breather. A 10-mt fall in procurement may do away with the requirement

of additional covered storage space, said an official.

According to sources in the food ministry, Punjab and Haryana could record a 15-20 per cent fall in the yield of wheat. Since the two states contribute about 50 per cent to the central wheat pool, total wheat procurement may be hit. The sources said there might be a marginal decline in total production, as procurement might be affected. "In 2011-12, India registered an eight per cent increase in wheat production over 2010-11. This year, it may remain stagnant or drop marginally," he added.

Indu Verma, director at the Directorate of Wheat Research, Karnal, said, "Rain in March and the consequent-water logging in the fields have hit wheat productivity in the two states (Punjab and Haryana), but because of better seed quality and growing awareness among farmers in eastern states, total wheat production may be about 92 mt."

Earlier, Planning Commission member Abhijit Sen had said this year, the wheat crop might be about 90 mt.

Futures trade in guar begins under vigil

In March 2012, FMC had banned futures trade in these commodities, owing to a sharp rise in prices

After being delisted for about 13 months, futures trade in guar seeds and gum got underway on Tuesday, under the vigil of the Forward Markets Commission (FMC) and exchanges.

In March 2012, FMC had banned futures trade in these commodities, owing to a sharp rise in prices.

Guar seed trading volume on NCDEX stood at 5,664 tonnes, with open interest of 2,137 tonnes and traded value of Rs 53.76 crore; guar gum saw trading volume of 1,014 tonnes, open interest of 237 tonnes and traded value of Rs 28.6 crore, the exchange said in a press release. However, as all the farmers came to sell their seeds on the exchange, anticipating better prices, prices fell four per cent, leading to trading being frozen.

FMC Chairman Ramesh Aabhishek said, "We are vigilant for guar trading and we have asked exchanges to get information of physical stocks of clients when their position limits exceed 75 per cent. Members would also have to ensure their clients provide the source of funds used in guar trading, whenever asked by exchanges."

Meanwhile, shares of BSE-listed Vikas WSP, a listed guar gum powder manufacturer, rose 20 per cent to Rs 29 a share on Tuesday, owing to the relaunch of futures trading of guar gum and seeds on commodity exchanges. An industry veteran said Vikas WSP was a major guar company, with sizable stocks of guar seeds.

FMC has proposed stringent conditions for futures trade in guar gum and seeds. The initial margin would be 10 per cent; it would increase with an increase in the price. FMC has allowed only staggered delivery on expiry. It said exchanges had commissioned studies by independent agencies. According to these studies, 50-60 per cent of guar seed stocks were with the farmers, who were waiting for futures trade to begin so that they could get better prices for their produce.

Last year, total guar seed production stood at about 180 million bags (of 100 kg each). At the Jodhpur spot market, guar gum is currently priced at Rs 28,000 a quintal, while guar seed is priced at Rs 9,500 a quintal.

On Tuesday, on MCX, guar seed for June delivery fell two per cent to Rs 9,505 a quintal, while guar gum for June delivery declined 2.6 per cent to Rs 28,050 a quintal. On NCDEX, guar seed for June delivery closed at Rs 9,460 a quintal, while guar gum for June delivery closed at Rs 28,150 a quintal.

FMC has allowed guar trading in June and July, after which it would resume in October. Trading would not be allowed in the lean months of August and September, owing to a shortage during that period.