

Sugarcane farmers urged to adopt new technologies to boost production

COIMBATORE, November 4, 2013 - India's sugar mills are yet to adopt the Diffusion Plant Technology to produce sugar like Brazil — the world's largest sugar producer — does. Using this technology can ensure extraction of sugar efficiently, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K.

Ramasamy said recently.

Though TNAU had released more than 16 varieties, only a few had been adopted by sugarcane growers and prescribed by sugar mills in Tamil Nadu, the Vice-Chancellor said, while speaking at farmers' seminar on 'Hi-tech Cultivation of Sugarcane and Tissue Culture Banana' held at TNAU.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Department of Agronomy of TNAU and Nagarjuna Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited, Hyderabad.

It was attended by over 100 farmers from the State.

"Sugarcane raised by farmers serves as a source of raw material for producing sugar and also leads to the production of other by-products, namely pressmud, molasses, compost, granular fertilizers, etc. Considering the multiple benefits of sugarcane, its price can be increased in the present situation," Mr. Ramasamy said.

He urged farmers and sugar mill owners to work in collaboration to achieve a higher productivity in sugarcane using technology effectively, and also improve the standard of living of growers in the State.

R. Ananthi, Joint Registrar and Managing Director, Amaravathi Co-operative Sugar Mills Limited, Krishnapuram, said that the average sugarcane yield obtained by farmers was less than 30 tonnes an acre.

With the use of drip irrigation technologies, an additional yield of 10 tonnes an acre could be achieved.

Other speakers focused on the need to practice suitable agronomic and drip fertigation technologies, to enhance productivity in sugarcane.

They made a mention of the reasons that led to stagnation in sugarcane yield over the years. Farmers were taken on a field trip to take a look at some hi-tech practices followed by sugarcane and banana growers.

Farmers and sugar mill owners urged to work in collaboration to achieve higher productivity in sugarcane

Training programme on pig farming

SHIMOGA, November 4, 2013 - A one-day training programme on scientific pig rearing will be held at Veterinary College, Shimoga on November 7.

Farmers and unemployed youths can attend the training programme. Those interested can register their names with K.C. Veeranna, Extension Centre, Veterinary College, Vinobha Nagar, Shimoga, by November 6. For details, call 08182651002 and 9448224595.

Farmers favour FDI in tobacco sector

'Farmers unable to fully benefit from international market conditions'



UTGA leaders addressing the media in Ongole on Sunday.-

Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

ONGOLE, November 4, 2013 - In the wake of the weakening rupee,

farmers under the banner of the United Association of Tobacco Growers (UATG) on Sunday urged the Union government to allow Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the tobacco sector to be able to realise a remunerative price for their produce.

After a visit to Surabaya in Indonesia for a meeting of the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA), UATG Secretary C. Yashwant Kumar said that with a few domestic players monopolising the market, farmers in the country were unable to fully benefit out of the favourable international market condition.

“As a result, farmers in the country got only \$ 2.2 per kg on an average last year as against \$ 4 received by their counterparts in other countries including Brazil, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Kenya,” he lamented.

“Foreign players look at India only as opportunity market now. It is high time the Centre opens up the sector to global players to turn India into a definite market in the larger interest of growers,” felt UATG president, P. Bhadri Reddy.

“There can be no valid reason to deny entry to foreign players at a time when FDI is allowed even in the retail and defence sectors,” he added while highlighting the discussions at the ITGA meeting from October 16 to 18, on various issues of common concern for ryots. They highlighted the need for continuing tobacco cultivation on which 3.20 crore people were dependent, directly and indirectly, till a viable economic alternative was shown to them. Presently, the Centre is losing over Rs. 1,800 crore revenue due to smuggling of international brand of cigarettes, UTGA vice-president Pamidi Veeraraghava Rao said.

“It will be wise to allow them to start industries, ending the monopoly of few domestic players to ensure a fair price to farmers,” he added.

The Centre, which earned foreign exchange worth about Rs. 5,000 crore and excise revenue of Rs. 17,417 crore, should invest at least one per cent of its earnings on research to explore medicinal properties of tobacco and its other uses, while restricting smoking in public interest, they added.

Seminar on increasing attacks on farm sector

HYDERABAD, November 4, 2013- The All India Agriculture Workers' Association has alleged that the upcoming meeting of the World Agricultural Congress in the city was aimed at mortgaging the interests of the farming community and agricultural labour to multinational companies.

Association president Paturi Ramaiah told reporters here on Sunday that the proposed Congress, being sponsored by MNCs, would deliberate on the methods for mechanisation of farming and reducing the number of small holdings. Such moves would harm farmers and agriculture workers and could result in suicides by those dependent on agriculture.

The CPI (M)-backed association had decided to conduct seminars and a symposium on the increasing frequency of attacks on the farming sector involving experts in the sector. A national seminar will be held on November 6 in which agriculture economist Prof. Utsa Patnaik of JNU and *The Hindu* rural affairs editor P. Sainath will deliver the keynote address on issues facing the farm sector.

The meeting will witness the participation of Tripura Minister Bhanulal Saha, trade union leader from Kerala, Govindan Master, retired IAS Kaki Madhava Rao and other experts in the field. The three-day deliberations will be preceded by a seminar on the current social, economic and political situation and its impact on the agriculture sector with CPI (M) State secretary B.V. Raghavulu delivering the keynote address.

Farmers to stage protest from tomorrow

BELGAUM, November 4, 2013 - Sugarcane growers, traders and workers of various Kannada organisations, will organise an indefinite rasta-roko from Tuesday to put pressure on the State government to announce State Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane.

Announcing this at a press meet convened here on Saturday, P. Rajeev, MLA (BSR Congress), said the farmers would organise a rasta-roko from Tuesday on all national highways, State highways and major roads in Belgaum, Bagalkot, Bijapur and Dharwad, which fall under the sugarcane belts of North Karnataka region.

He said the State government had adopted “delaying tactics” to assuage farmers, who were agitated over the delay in announcement of SAP for sugarcane.

The farmers were upset with the failure of the government to ensure payment of arrears for the preceding crushing year 2012-13 from sugar factories in the State.

Though Minister for Sugar, Small Scale Industries and Muzrai Prakash B. Hukkeri had assured to announce SAP for sugarcane after Dasara, his assurance was yet to be implemented. Mr. Rajeev said the government should immediately announce SAP on the basis of sugar recovery and not common price.

Representatives of the government, farmers and sugar mills should be present at the weigh bridge cabin to check that there was no cheating in weighing sugarcane supplied to mills.

He clarified that the proposed agitation was not planned to create problems for the government but they had been left with no option.

The government was playing with the plight of nearly 2 crore farmers, 50,000 traders, 15,000 labourers and another 15,000 tractor drivers dependent on the sugarcane industry in the State.

Farmers’ leader Kalyanrao Muchalambi and others were present.

[Uncertainties put Wayanad coffee farmers in a fix](#)



KALPETTA, November 4, 2013 - A farmer at work in his coffee plantation at Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad district.

With only a few weeks left for coffee harvest, the uncertainties

prevailing in the coffee industry have cast a shadow on thousands of farmers in the State.

A sharp decline in the price of the produce, climatic vagaries, increasing input costs, dearth of workers, lack of support from the government and Coffee Board, and skyrocketing price of fertilizers are the major concerns of the farmers.

The spot price for a kg of Robusta coffee beans in Wayanad market on Saturday was Rs.96 a kg as against the Rs.147 a kg during the corresponding period last year, K. Salu, a coffee dealer and secretary of the Kerala Coffee Processors and Dealers Association, said.

The fall in price was on par with international markets, but it was not fully reflected in Indian market owing to the fall in rupee, he said. A bumper coffee production this year in major coffee producing countries such as Brazil and Vietnam was another reason for the price fall, he said.

Coffee harvesting in Brazil had almost been completed and harvesting in Vietnam had just begun, he said. The price of coffee beans had touched Rs.153 a kg in October last year, Mr. Salu said.

Traders expect a production of 40,000 tonnes of Robusta coffee from the district this year as against the 44, 000 tonnes last year. Trading sources are expecting a 20 per cent fall in production this season owing to the heavy rain during blossom.

According to the data of the Coffee Board, cultivation is spread over 84,931 hectares in the State, including 67,366 hectares in Wayanad district, 12,915

hectares in the southern districts, and 4,650 hectares in Nelliampathy in Palakkad district.

The total production of coffee in the country in 2012-13 fiscal was 3,15,500 tonnes, including 1,00,225 tonnes of Arabica and 2, 15,275 tonnes of Robusta. In Robusta production, 30 per cent was grown in Kerala. The average coffee production in the State was 65,000 metric tonnes annually of which a major share, nearly 55,000 metric tonnes, came from Wayanad district alone, the data said.

Coffee cultivation was not a lucrative business now, as various factors were adversely affecting the industry, Prasanth Rajesh, president, Wayanad Coffee Growers Association, said. The coffee sector in the State was facing acute crisis owing to the alleged negligence from the part of the government and Coffee Board, he said.

The blossom shower and back up showers were the major factors determining the production. As many of the farmers were holding below one hectare, modern irrigation systems such as drip and sprinkler irrigation was far away from their reach and a small change in climate would adversely affect their family budget.

Though the Coffee Board had implemented a Coffee Rainfall Insurance, a scheme to help growers in risk management during excessive or scanty rainfall, most of the farmers kept away from it as the payout from the scheme was far below the actual crop loss, Mr. Rajesh said.

Pokkali harvest in Ezhupunna earns a symbolic victory for farmers

Harvesting begins on 140 acres of pokkali rice fields brought under cultivation after a gap of 25 years



Farmers scythe through the pokkali rice fields that were brought under farming after 25 years. KOCHI, November 4, 2013 -

Farmers at the Puthenkari paddy field collective in Ezhupunna, about 20 km south of Kochi, celebrated a symbolic victory over great adversities on Sunday when they began harvesting 140 acres of pokkali rice fields that were brought under cultivation after a gap of 25 years.

The harvesting operations were launched officially by Laha Gopalan, the leader of Sadhu Jana Vimochana Samara Vedi, which is at the head of the historic Chengara struggle for agricultural land in Pathanathitta district. Around 100 people from the Chengara also participated in the harvesting operations on Sunday.

Francis Kulathungal, convenor of the Pokkali Samrakshana Samiti, which led a group of activists in wresting the paddy fields collective from the grips of the shrimp farming lobby, said that about 20 acres of farmland was harvested on Sunday and that the rest of the area would be harvested over the coming days.

He said the yield from the fields would be lower than expected because of the bad weather that immediately followed sowing, launched by the Alappuzha district collector N. Padmakumar early in July.

Large swathes of paddy field were inundated in heavy rain in the months of July and August but most of it survived through the rains. "The yield is likely to be a little over 2.5 tonnes a hectare," said Mr. Francis.

The Puthenkari paddy fields used to be under shrimp cultivation throughout the year. However, the efforts by Pokkali Samrakshana Samity saw the fields being brought under rice cultivation under the traditional practice of 'one rice and one fish' cultivation in a year.

Exhibition

An exhibition of the traditional practices involved in cultivating pokkali rice, a salt resistant and tall variety of rice unique to the marshy parcels of land in Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts close to the backwaters, is being organised at the Puthenkari fields from Monday.

The exhibition comprising posters, live animals, fishes and reptiles from the fields and tools used in pokkali cultivation was being supported by the Vyttila Rice Research Station of Kerala Agricultural University, said Mr. Francis. The show is on for seven days.

Flower farmers stopped in their tracks, literally



Withering bloom: A scene of flower garden at Vasanadu village near Kuppam. – Photo: Umashanker Kalivikodi

CHITTOOR, November 4, 2013 - Flower farmers in Kuppam Assembly constituency are in despair as trains between Chennai and Bangalore has been running late since past one week due to conversion of regular trains into

special ones and track repairs at various junctions. It has led to the rejection of flower consignments to the tune of over 15 tonnes a day running into lakhs of rupees.

The farmers in Kuppam area are dependent on express trains bound towards Bangalore and Chennai to transport flower bags as there are no direct buses to these major cities from Kuppam. Sending flowers in trucks to neighbouring States has reduced considerably due to spiralling transport costs forcing the farmers to depend on trains. Moreover, the farmers, to avoid being exploited by the local traders, have been engaging directly in business these days.

During the last couple of weeks, the express trains in which the farmers transport flowers ran two to three hours behind the schedule. The Seshadri Express originating at Kakinada has been reaching Kuppam two to three hours late as against the scheduled time of 10.04 hours. The Brindavan Express and Lalbagh Express on the sector are also running late, causing misery to the farmers.

The farmers say that their stock including varieties of Chamanthi, Karabanthi, rose and jasmine should reach the KR Flower Market in Bangalore by 1.30 p.m. Same is the case with Chennai market. Late arrival of stocks at the markets has been causing heavy loss to farmers as there are less or no buyers for flowers after 1.30 p.m. As the situation hasn't changed even after a week, the farmers have left their flower gardens uncut. They say that their hopes of getting huge profits were dashed.

Farming is now part of CSR



Expanded learning: Students of Goa Institute of Management on field work



Management students help farmers adopt modern practices to improve yield

It seems to be the time to teach students to 'give back' to society even as they get hands-on experience. Business schools are out to promote social responsibility among the managerial workforce. One such example is the Goa Institute of Management (GIM), Sanquelim, north Goa, where students undertake various projects under a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative known as 'Give Goa'.

The Governing Board of GIM felt it was time to emphasise social responsibility through the curriculum, towards preparing more responsible managers. This has been imbibed as a graded course in the first year of the Post-Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) programme. Since its inception, this initiative has been growing through constant efforts from the faculty and students. The GIM recently received the silver award at the first Indian Management Conclave (IMC) Awards 2013 for excellence in 'Innovation in Curriculum' for its 'Give Goa Initiative'.

Projects are taken up broadly in the fields of education, social welfare, agriculture extension and public health. They are finalised based on inputs from the CSR coordination team, the client organisations, and the students of GIM.

Currently, GIM has 42 groups of students working with various client organisations such as banks, NGOs, government departments like the Zonal Agriculture Office, NABARD, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and the State-owned GHRSSIDC Ltd., a corporation promoting handicrafts and small-scale industry products in Goa.

ICAR role

Through this initiative, the GIM, in collaboration with NGOs and other firms, tries to address the social issues related to the welfare of society and improvement of the Human Development Index in various villages in Goa.

One such group is working in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Goa, in the village of Aldona in north Goa.

Students of the first year of the Post-Graduate programme are formed into groups of six to undertake a project at an organisation in Goa. They visit one of 20 client organisations every Thursday (for 20 Thursdays). Each group is guided by a faculty member and by a project coordinator in the client organisation.

ICAR has been working to improve agricultural practices in the State over several years. GIM is working with ICAR in Aldona to spread scientific methodologies and technologies among the farmers. The intention is to benefit the farmers of Aldona and eventually the State, in terms of revenue generation for the farmers and the State, and to contribute to the environment, say the joint promoters, GIM and KVK.

The KVK, north Goa, has been the knowledge centre and the hub of the agricultural technology transfer wing of ICAR since its inception in 1984. It has been doing a lot to improve agricultural practices in the State over the last four decades. An essential requirement of the project is that student-groups reflect on and document their experiences and outcomes. A lot of OFT (On Farm Testing) and FLD (Front Line Demonstrations) activities are implemented in the village to enable the farmers to utilise the available resources better.

Successful

In a State where there is no formal education available in the agriculture sector, KVK has taken it upon itself to educate the farmers about modern practices in agriculture that are superior to the traditional practices in many ways. They have successfully implemented the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method in paddy cultivation in the village. They have also initiated projects in vermi-composting, green gram cultivation and integrated farming system, says Hiralal Prabhudesai, Subject Matter Specialist [Agronomy], who is the mentor of the group working on two projects, viz., technology for 'green gram' under rice fallows, and 'vermicomposting', with adequate training to the students in the subject matter.

New perspective

GIM, being a third party, provides an alternative view to the scientific approach of the KVK. It gives a different perspective to the issues relating to successful transfer of technology from KVK to farmers and facilitates reverse learning. The GIM students try to look at the problems from a managerial perspective and try to provide innovative solutions.

They also try to impart their subject knowledge to help farmers in cost cutting, cost management and marketing their products effectively, thus going beyond merely improving their productivity.

Six students working on this project with KVK are encouraging farmers in the Quitla ward of Aldona village to adopt appropriate technologies, thereby improving farm productivity by doing the following: understanding the current practices followed by the farmers and persuading them to use better technology, helping scientists conduct On Farm Testing, organising frontline demonstrations of suitable technologies to compare the performances of old and new technologies, and helping in organising extension activities such as Kisan Mela.

“A project like this helps the students to understand the basic problems faced by farmers and let them use their learning to help and solve the problems by coming up with innovative solutions. A project like this one as part of B-school curriculum make the students learn practically,” says Divya Singhal, faculty of GIM.

The student group is led by Pranali Naik and is guided by Mr. Prabhudesai.

The project will run till February 2014 with visits to the village on weekly basis.



The students look at the problems from a managerial perspective and try to provide innovative solutions

A wave of bad luck for paddy in Mandya, Mysore

Worms, blast diseases ravage paddy fields in the two districts

Farmers have been advised to be vigilant for any signs of disease or worms.

MANDYA, November 4, 2013 - While paddy farmers are struggling to find a way out of the huge losses incurred by the 'root-knot nematode' disease that affected their nurseries in the district, case worms and blast diseases have also done their bit for the standing paddy crops in the district.

While the case worms hit paddy fields at several parts in Mandya, diseases such as 'neck blast' and 'leaf blast' have been affecting the paddy crops in Mandya and Mysore districts since the past few weeks. Researchers and plant pathologists at the Zonal Agricultural Research Station (ZARS), V.C. Farm, say that the diseases could have severe impacts on Mandya's rice production this year.

Blast diseases have been noticed at a large area of paddy fields in several taluks in the district, M.P. Rajanna, Senior Rice Breeder and Head (Rice), V.C. Farm, told *The Hindu* on Sunday. "It was observed that a vast area of paddy fields in Mandya and Mysore district is was in the panicle emergence and grain filling stage. The symptoms of leaf and neck blast have already appeared in a few varieties such as MTU 1001, IR 64 and KCP-1," Mr. Rajanna said.

Other districts

Blast diseases are commonly observed especially during cloudy weather and light rain, H.M. Atheek ur Rehman, Subject Matter Specialist at V.C. Farm (Agronomy), said. The symptoms of neck blast and leaf blast diseases have also been observed in Tumkur, Ramanagaram, Davangere, Chitradurga and a few other districts.

V.C. Farm noticed the outbreak of 'root-knot nematode' disease in K.R. Pet taluk recently. The disease had severely affected crop growth. Farmers should be very vigilant about their standing crops. They should immediately initiate measures to tackle diseases as they could cause severe damage to the crop and yield, D.K. Siddegowda, Entomologist (Rice, V.C. Farm), said.

Case worm disease

Meanwhile, Agriculture Department officials said that case worms had hit vast areas of paddy fields in the Akki Hebbalu, Kasaba, Kikkeri, Agrahara Bachahalli, Valagere Menasa, Harihara Pura, Mailanahalli, Makavalli, Madapura, Uginahalli, Somanahalli, Basavanahalli, Ambigarahalli, Sangapura, Ballekere, Natanahalli, Sathanur, Kommerahalli, Hulivana, Keregodu, Keelara, Uammadahalli, Hanakere, Hemmige, Karasawadi, Kothathi and other villages, Following the outbreak of paddy-affecting diseases, researchers at ZARS have launched an awareness programme for farmers. For information, contact D. K. Siddegowda (9449687599); C. Ramachandra (9449137362); N. Shivakumar (9448558481) and M.P. Rajanna (9945900893).

Water level

Madurai

Water level in Periyar dam was 117.70 feet on Sunday with an inflow of 1,223 cusecs and a discharge of 805 cusecs.

In Vaigai dam, the water level stood at 42.75 feet with an inflow of 516 cusecs and a discharge 60 cusecs respectively.

Rainfall recorded was (in mm): Thekkadi 2.2 mm, Gudalur 2, Shanmughanadhi 3, Vaigai 0.6, Sothuparai 12mm, Mettupatti 4 mm, Kallandhiri 7 and Kodaikanal 7 mm, according to the Public Works Department here.

Tirunelveli

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 75.73 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 1,483.59 cusecs following 73 mm rainfall and 901 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam. The water level in Manimuthar dam stood at 52.90 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow

of 1,727 cusecs after 62 mm rainfall was recorded and 10 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 19.70 feet, 58.35 feet in Perunchani, 8.43 feet in Chittar 1, 8.53 feet in Chittar 11 and 37.24 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru dam.

Water projects back on track

Agency sends request to the sanctioning committee for the second time

One out of the six proposed multi-village water supply projects will depend on the Phalguni. Pictured above is the vented dam built across the river at Malavoor on the outskirts of Mangalore.— Photo: R. Eswarraj

Six multi-village water supply projects proposed to be launched in Dakshina Kannada may become a reality despite the uncertainty surrounding them following a negative report by a high-level government committee.

The State Technical Agency (STA) has decided to recommend the State Level



Scheme Sanctioning Committee, the high-level government committee, for the second time to sanction the projects.

Uncertainty dogged the projects after the committee returned the proposals to the agency asking it

to review them. The committee was of the view that Dakshina Kannada did not require multi-village water supply projects as the district received an annual average rainfall of 4,000 mm. and hence did not face a water scarcity. In addition, the multi-village water supply projects were meant to those

districts where source of drinking water was highly contaminated with contents like chloride, arsenic and other hazardous components. Dakshina Kannada is said to be relatively free from such hazards.

According to S. L. Sathyanarayana, Executive Engineer, Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat, which had mooted the proposal, the STA in its last meeting on October 28 decided to recommend the committee once again to sanction the projects by considering it as a special case.

Mr. Sathyanarayana said the agency again decided to apprise the committee that water table in Dakshina Kannada suddenly went down between January and May due to its soil conditions. As a result borewells supplying water to the villages proposed under the scheme faced scarcity forcing the panchayat to supply water through tankers. Under the scheme, five projects had been designed to supply water from the Netravathi and one project from the Phalguni (popularly called Gurupur river).

The Executive Engineer hoped that with the STA firmly backing the proposal, the committee might not reject it.

Once the committee approved the projects the proposals would go for administrative approval and later bids would be invited.

He said the five proposed projects supplying water from the Nethravati would cover villages under the jurisdiction of Sajeepamunnur, Karopady, Narikombu, Mani, Sangabettu, and Sarapady gram panchayats in Bantwal taluk.

The project proposed to lift water from the Phalguni would cover 11 villages — Malavoor, Kenjar, Moodushedde, Padushedde, Bajpe, Jokatte, Bala, Permude, Tenka Ekkar, Badaga Ekkar and Kalavaru — spread across seven gram panchayats. For this project water from the upstream of existing vented dam across the Phalguni at Malavoor would be lifted by drilling a jack well either on the river or river bed. A 22-km. pipeline would have to be laid connect 11 villages.

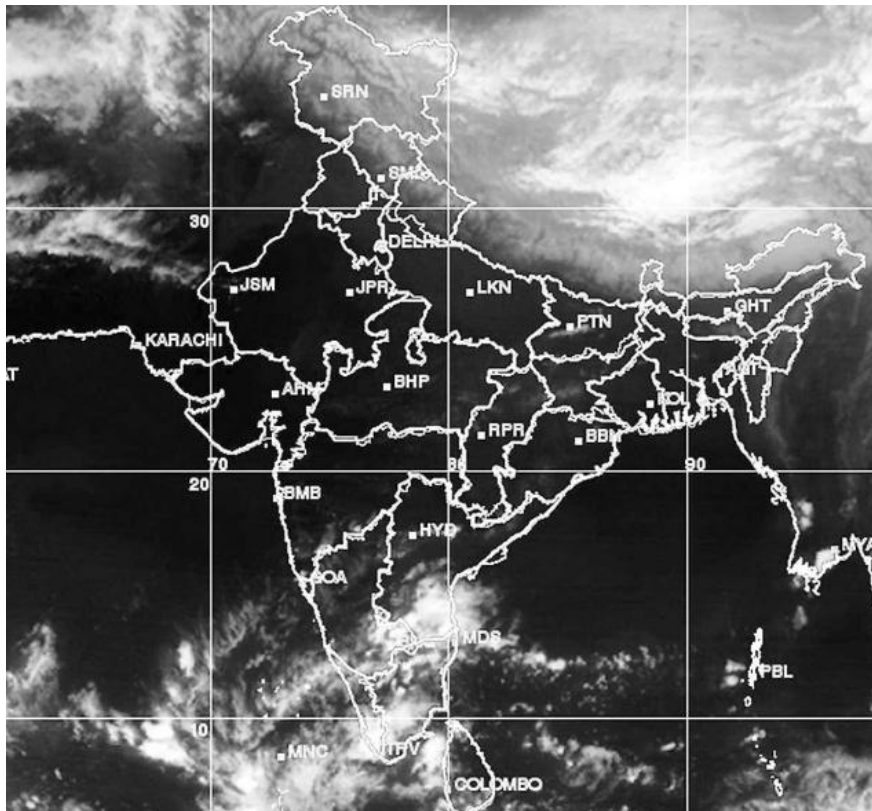
• *The committee had questioned the purpose of the projects*

- *The committee may not reject the STA's proposal: official*
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Egg rate

The National Egg Coordination Committee egg rate was Rs. 3.70 on Sunday.

Weather



*INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on
November 03*

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Monday, Nov 4

Max Min

30° | 25°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:03

Humidity: 94

Sunset: 05:41

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1010

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Nov 5

Max Min

32° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Nov 6

Nov 7

Nov 8

Nov 9

Nov 10



31° | 25°

Cloudy



32° | 25°

Cloudy



27° | 26°

Cloudy



27° | 26°

Overcast



27° | 25°

Overcast

Onion growers block roads over low prices

HUBLI: Hundreds of [onion growers](#) from North Karnataka blocked [Hubli-Dharwad Road](#) for over two hours on Saturday demanding better prices for their produce.

The growers arrived at the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) in Amargol to sell their produce but were shocked by the price being quoted by merchants. The farmers immediately blocked the road saying the right price for their produce would be between Rs 4,000 and Rs 4,500 per quintal, but the merchants were quoting Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,500 per quintal. Traffic was blocked for hours and police had to divert vehicles from Dharwad towards bypass via Gokul, and Hubli traffic via Kalghatgi Road to ease the traffic.

Speaking to TOI, S G Dasanur, APMC president, said APMC officials called a meeting of the farmers with commission agents and solved the problem.

"Most farmers brought onions with high moisture levels and therefore merchants fixed [lower prices](#). We've spoken to farmers about this. We will monitor the auctioning of onions and give farmers a reasonable price," he said and added that the sudden flow of about 30,000 tonnes of onion had added to the problem.

After onion, tomato prices hit the roof

JAIPUR: After onion, [tomato prices](#) are leaving the consumers in tears as they have reached an all time high this festive reason. According to wholesale

traders of Muhana Mandi, there has been a rise of 35% to 40% in the prices of tomato and it will come down only after the arrival of fresh stock a week after Diwali.

The rise in prices is attributed to disruption in supplies in northern parts including Rajasthan due to extended monsoon which affected the crops and also hoarding.

Since the first week of October, price of tomatoes have risen by nearly 35% to 40% at the local Muhana Mandi.

"In September, the wholesale price of tomato was varying from Rs 20 to Rs 30 per kg which was nearly Rs 25 to Rs 35 in the retail. But since the first week of October, the wholesale price of tomato is between Rs 35 to Rs 45 per kg which is sold at Rs 45 to Rs 55 per kg in various retail markets and outlets across the city," said Banwari Lal Saini, a wholesale dealer of onion, potato and tomato.

The same is the case in other parts of the state including Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli, Sawai Madhopur, Jodhpur, Barmer, Churu, Ganganagar, Jhunjhunu and Sikar.

In localities like Raja Park, Malviya Nagar, Jawahar Nagar and C-scheme, tomato is selling at Rs 45 to Rs 55 per kg while in colonies that get them mainly from Chomu, the prices are between Rs 35 to Rs 40 per kg.

"The crop of tomato is sowed and harvested in a period of two months. After [Diwali](#), there will be availability of local harvest from Chomu, Dudu, Bagru and Bassi. There has not been rain in the past one fortnight and the temperatures are drastically dipping which will certainly bring a good crop by the second week of November. During then the prices of tomato will dip," said Abdul Aziz, a wholesale dealer of tomato at Muhana Mandi.

Price rise triggers potato smuggling

Hooghly: Though chief minister [Mamata Banerjee](#) recently asked the authorities concerned to see that home-grown potatoes were not sold to other states, in a desperate bid to scale down the prices, this has not stopped rampant cross-border smuggling of potatoes to other states.

Potato sacks are now being loaded in private buses in the city and smuggled to neighbouring states of [Jharkhand](#) and Odisha. The activity goes on in broad daylight and increases at night. Private buses depart from Strand Road with sacks of potatoes on top.

These buses are bound for Bihar and Jharkhand and cross the border via Singur, Maheswarpur, Burdwan's Masagram and Jamalpur areas. Wholesellers, on the other hand, prefer the Durgapur expressway to smuggle potatoes. Police have failed to check their activities.

The chief minister had also ordered a crackdown on potato retailers who sell their products above the government rate of Rs 13 a kilogram. However, this has created a dilemma for traders. As the potato prices are very high across the country, traders are facing losses.

According to traders, they will face more losses if they start selling potatoes below the rate of Rs 13 per kilogram. In such a situation where the police are pulling them up for selling potatoes above the rate fixed by the government, potato traders are not willing to bring their products from the cold storage to the markets.

The price of potato could also not be controlled in the districts. Whereas a 50 kilogram sack of potato was being sold for Rs 580 on Saturday, on Sunday it

was getting sold at Rs 600 to Rs 675.

Chandramukhi and Jyoti varieties of potatoes for several markets in the city and adjacent areas are mostly supplied from Hooghly district.

Lalu Mukherjee of the 'Progotisil Aloo Babosayi Samity' said that they were planning to request the state government to relax the rules on exporting potatoes.

"There are 417 cold storages where almost six to seven lakh tonnes of potatoes are being stored. These potatoes will rot if not utilized by the month of December. Till this year, traders have been selling potatoes to other states. Why did the government come up with the ban this time?" he asked.

Hooghly district magistrate Manmeet Nanda and SP Sunil Chowdhury said that they were constantly monitoring the situation. "Five cases have been registered and we are keeping a tab on almost all retail and wholesale markets," they said.

Business Standard

Bengal floods: Paddy output may drop by more than 30% in state



Just about when the second green revolution in the east was getting scripted as a success story, [floods](#) washed away the outcome in a flick.

For the year 2013-14, under the Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI) scheme, nearly Rs 151 crore was allocated to West [Bengal](#), with the first installment of Rs 75 crore released only in September.

The state government had set a target of increasing rice productivity by 500 kg/hectare through new varieties of seeds introduced as part of the second green revolution in the East.

Informal estimates suggest floods are likely to reduce [paddy output](#) in West Bengal by more than 30 per cent. Apart from standing crops, the entire paddy seed bed, prepared for the winter or Boro season, have been damaged.

More than 70 per cent of paddy crop in Purba Medinipore, Paschim Medinipore, Purulia , Hooghly and Bankura have been smashed. About one lakh tonne of paddy seeds are feared to be destroyed in the floods.

In August, when the state witnessed the first major flood of the year, agriculture [production](#), particularly paddy, was unlikely to drop drastically, in spite of crop damage, due to the use of high yielding variety of seeds.

However, a flood just before the harvest season in November have surfaced substantial standing paddy crop.

In July-August, floods in nine of the 19 districts in the state, including the high rice-productivity districts of Bardhaman, Hooghly, Birbhum and Nadia, destroyed a part of standing crop.

“Initial estimates suggested this year paddy productivity was much more than usual. However, with the recent floods, the whole of paddy seeds as well as standing crop have been severely destroyed,” said Pranab Chatterjee, professor at Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya.

In 2012-13, the state produced 15.3 million tonnes (MT) of rice, an increase of 5.5 per cent over the previous year. This year, the production is likely to be nothing more than 12 million tonnes, against the initial target of 15-16 million tonne, according to Chatterjee.

This year paddy was sown in nearly 4.2 million hectare land in the Kharif season.

Apart from paddy, floods in West Bengal have damaged farms of betelvine, spices, vegetables and flowers.

At Panskura, marigold farms still dot the flooded fields, but left to be rotten in the inundated fields. Flowers worth Rs 8 crore have been damaged by the floods in Purba Medinipore. The total horticulture damage is vetted worth Rs

35 crore, of which only vegetable damage is to the tune of Rs 22 crore. The fisheries department reckons a damage of about nearly Rs 9 crore in the district. The kharif harvest season also coincides with the season of betel nut harvest in Purba Medinipore. Prices of betel nut have gone up from Rs 120 kg to nearly Rs 200 per kg in one month due to crop loss.

At Mahesidal Cooperative Marketing Society in Tamluk, which procures paddy from farmers on behalf of the government, there would not be any procurement this year, as market prices are much higher than the MSP. The market prices of paddy are likely to at Rs 1,500-1600 per quintal of paddy, against the minimum support price of Rs 1,310 per quintal, according to an official at the cooperative.

Last year, the cooperative saw a record paddy procurement, worth nearly Rs 12 crore. In 2011-12, the state government had procured 3.04 MT of rice from farmers due to crash in prices due over-production. Rice production in West Bengal is spread across three seasons — aus, aman and boro. Kharif rice (aus and aman) alone accounts for about 70 per cent of the state's total rice production.

West Bengal accounts for 14-16 per cent of India's rice production.

District	Rice Production
a) Bankura	5,07,000
b) Paschim Medinipore	17,18,000
c) Purba Medinipore	12,28,000
d) Hooghly	9,04,000
e) Purulia	2,61,000
f) Total	4,618,000

g) Total Rice Production in West Bengal	1,46,34,000
f as a % of g	31.55

Source : Economic Survey. 2011-12, West Bengal

Wheat, mustard sowing starts at brisk pace



Even as rains continue to lash several parts of the country more than a month after a formal withdrawal of the [southwest monsoon](#), [farmers](#) have started sowing [rabi crops](#) at a brisk pace to make utmost use of the soil moisture.

According to the latest data from the agriculture department, sowing of the main rabi crops, such as [wheat](#), pulses and [mustard](#), reached 6.47 million hectares on Friday, a whopping 208 per cent higher than the year-ago period.

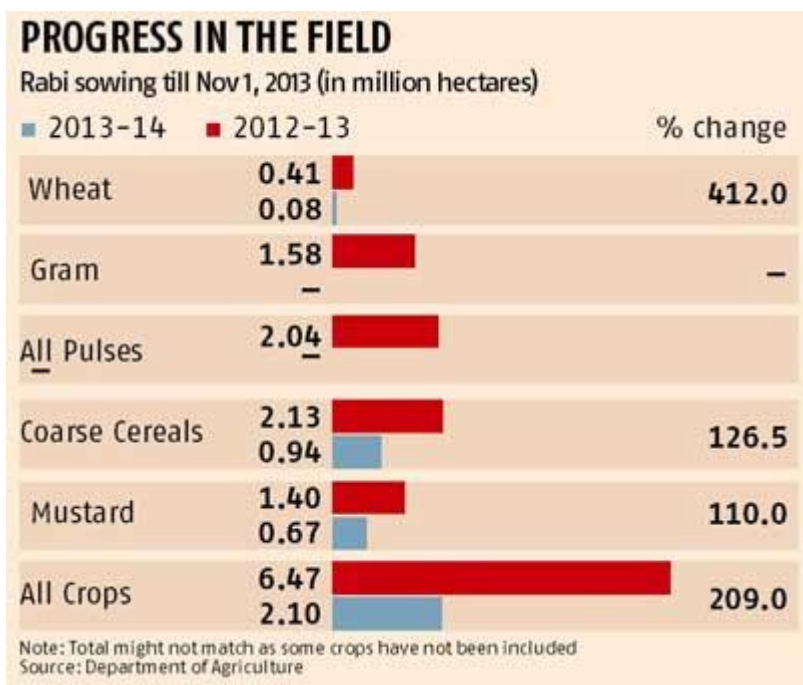
"Sowing of rabi crops usually picks up pace after Diwali as farmers come back to the fields. This year it seems growers didn't even wait for festivals to get over to cash in on the excellent soil condition," said a senior agriculture ministry official.

He added that if the trend continues in the coming months, rabi foodgrain production could reach a record. This should augur well for the government as it battles to keep food inflation within manageable levels in an election year. According to Ashok Gulati, chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), wheat, gram (chana) and mustard production will hit a

record this year because of good moisture residue. "Unlike kharif, the possibility of any damage to crops during the latter stages is less during rabi season and, hence, their production is more stable," Gulati told Business Standard. According to official data, wheat has been planted 415,000 hectares till Friday, compared with only 83,000 hectares in the same period last year.

The big jump has come from Madhya Pradesh, where 321,000 hectares have been planted against 2,000 hectares last year.

Wheat is sown on around 28 million hectares across the country during the entire rabi season. Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are the leading growers. In pulses, gram has been a standout performer so far. The crop has been sown on 1.58 million hectares so far, while not a single hectare had been sown at this time last year. Mustard has been planted in 1.7 million hectares, 110 per cent more than last year. Officials said overflowing reservoirs and extraordinary rainfall in October had aided sowing.



Data from the Central Water Commission shows that water level in 85 major reservoirs across the country was 134.10 billion cubic centimetres, 122 per cent of last year's storage and 123 per cent of the 10-year average.

"Even if rains disappear in the next few weeks, there would be little impact as both groundwater and water in storage is at their record levels," explained the official.

Southwest monsoon in 2013 was around six per cent more than normal. However, since October 1 till date, India has received 128.6 centimetres of rainfall, which is 62 per cent more than normal.

Cash-strapped cane farmers sell cheap in UP



With uncertainty looming large over [sugarcane](#) crushing in Uttar Pradesh (UP), farmers have resorted to selling the cash crop to kolhu ([jaggery](#)) units at Rs 160-250 a quintal in western parts of the state.

Farmers in Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Baghpat, Meerut and Bijnor have been queuing at kolhus, which make cash payment. There are 1,575 such units in western and central UP districts.

Farmers in need of cash for the festival season have been forced to sell to kolhu units. Such selling is also termed as panic selling. The private mills owe about Rs 2,400 crore in sugarcane arrears for 2012-13, which means farmers are in dire need for money.

“The farmers also need fodder for cattle, as jowar stocks start to exhaust by this time. Besides, the uncertainty about cane price and crushing date remains,” Kisan Jagriti Manch president Sudhir Panwar told *Business Standard*.

In the backdrop of the communal tension in Muzaffarnagar, several kolhu units are not functioning, which means depressed cane pricing by kolhus.

The private mills stand firm in demanding that the state first announce a cane price and then only will they start crushing. The millers also want the state to subsidise them for any price above Rs 240 a quintal.

Meanwhile, the arrival of gur (jaggery) to local mandis has come down by 50 per cent, owing to a lesser number of kolhus operating. "Last year, almost 3,200 quintals of gur arrived in Shamli every day. This year, the arrival has come down to 1,600 quintals," said Panwar.

According to the latest available figures, about 200,000 quintals of cane had been procured by kolhus.

"The delay in crushing season would further bring down prices paid by kolhus to farmers," said Muzaffarnagar -based khandsari trader Narendra Kumar.

From December, cane farmers start sowing wheat, for which they would need to get their fields vacated in time.

Earlier, the government had asked private sugar millers to start crushing operations by the date corresponding to the last season. Last year, crushing had started after November 15, while the state cane price was declared on December 7. The cane price fixation committee is likely to meet on Friday.

On the other hand, cooperative mills had been assigned specific datelines for their crushing operations. Cooperative mills in western UP (Meerut, Saharanpur and Moradabad) have been directed to start operations between

November 15 and 20. Similarly, mills in Bareilly and Lucknow regions have to start crushing between November 20 and 25.

Cooperative mills in eastern UP have been asked to start operations by the end of November. The state accounts for 30 per cent of India's annual sugar output and cane farming supports four million farming households in the state.

Greaves Cotton reports net loss of Rs 7.98 cr in Q2

Engineering firm [Greaves Cotton](#) today reported a net loss of Rs 7.98 crore for the quarter ended September 30, mainly due to its divestment in its step-down German subsidiary Greaves Farymann Diesel.

The company had reported a net profit of Rs 33.56 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal.

Its revenues for the July-September quarter stood at Rs 448 crore against Rs 450.83 crore year ago.

"The company divested its entire stake in its step-down subsidiary in Germany and have provided for diminution in the value of this investments to the extent of Rs 39 crore which resulted in negative PAT," the company said.

"The profits for the quarter have been affected with our divestment in Greaves Farymann Diesel GmbH. With global business sentiments at an all time low, and Greaves Farymann Diesel not performing to expectations, the strategic business decision to exit was taken in the long term interest of Greaves Cotton," company's MD and CEO Sunil Pahilajani said.

The company manufactures farm and automotive engines, pumpsets and construction equipment.

"The 3-wheeler automobile, construction equipment and pump markets are currently going through a challenging business scenario. We have successfully been able to consolidate our market presence, maintained market shares and in some segments even increased market share.

"Greaves has been able to maintain topline by focusing on product development and superior customer satisfaction. The focused efforts and several initiatives have resulted in reducing costs and in maintaining profitability of the businesses," he said.

On its overseas business, he said: "International business has grown significantly and it is heartening to note that our strategy of widening global foot print across strategic markets of Middle East, East Africa and South East Asia have yielded positive response."

THE HINDU Business Line

Take up potato sowing, farm varsity tells farmers in western TN

Potatoes sown in September-October and harvested in December- January would fetch better prices, say experts at the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (Demic) of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

These experts, who conducted a market survey and analysed the price movement of potato in the Nilgiris Cooperative Marketing Societies at Mettupalayam, foresee the rates to hover around Rs 16 and Rs 18 a kg during harvest in January.

Based on their forecast, they have advised the farmers to take to potato sowing this season.

Potato is grown in the hilly regions of Dindigul, Nilgiris and also in the plains of Krishnagiri and Erode districts in Tamil Nadu.

There are two major varieties, viz., Kufri Jyoti and Kufri Giriraj grown in Nilgiri district. These potatoes are considered the best in taste and hardness.

Potatoes from Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh are stored and used for seed purpose, the farm varsity experts said .

The mess caused by fixing wheat prices



Three major events relating to Indian wheat unfolded during last week of October 2013. First, the Cabinet gave its consent to reduce the minimum export price (MEP) of FCI (Food Corporation of India) wheat by 13 per cent — from \$300 per tonne f.o.b. to \$260 for international parity.

Second, roller flour millers clamoured for a reduction in delivered prices in southern States and are objecting to special treatment for exports at lower values. Third, the implementation of the Food Security Act has been deferred by a year.

Today, the FCI carries about 23 million tonnes of wheat (\$8 billion or Rs 50,000 crore) over and above the buffer norms; yet food inflation remains untamed.

All these events have a common factor: price fixing that is out of sync with market reality. Therefore, fixing a minimum export value at \$300, then unfixing it and re-fixing at \$260 makes little sense.

Price fixing flaws

Through the MEP format, world trade knows in advance the price band within which quotes can be submitted. That vitiates the tendering mechanism. Therefore, the urge to fix prices is fundamentally flawed.

Is \$260 the right peg? That cannot be endorsed with conviction. In fact, world prices reacted by moving downwards immediately after this revision. Will the Food Ministry pass over or ignore upcoming tenders if the price is \$259 or below and repeat the long drawn-out process of seeking fresh Cabinet approval for a revised lower value? Should the price quoted be \$290 in subsequent tenders; will it again resort to an MEP hike?

It is hard to keep track of Black Sea, the US or Australian quotes. Suggestions to this end, submitted to the Committee of Secretaries or the Cabinet

Committee on Economic Affairs, could be misleading. The Cabinet may end up courting controversies, if it tries to peg its values on the basis of markets that are essentially unpredictable.

Indecisiveness on MEP blocked the FCI wheat exports for last nine months. The Commission of Agriculture Costs and Prices has been suggesting an MEP based on MSP plus 5 per cent, or \$228-230 f.o.b/tonne, for shipping out 10 million tonnes in a year.

Exports lost

Bids received by PSUs at around \$290-300 f.o.b/tonne were ignored in February-March 2013. Four million tonnes could have been shipped out from FCI stocks. The revenue foregone is estimated at Rs 6,500 crore (including buffer carry-cost at Rs 21,000/tonne per annum) or about \$1.04 billion — at a time when fiscal and current account deficit are critical to the economy. After nine months of dithering, \$260 is found acceptable! What about direct losses and additional carrying costs suffered by the Government?

Domestically, open market sale scheme (OMSS) price too is “fixed”. Currently, the FCI offers wheat to bulk users under OMSS at Rs 18,200 per tonne (\$294) in Karnataka and Kerala at the railway yard. Fixed OMSS costs 13 per cent more than the MEP of \$260.

Actually, even an MEP of \$260 has nothing to do with export parity. It gives a realisation of Rs 16,120 per tonne (1\$=62) which equals an OMSS price of Rs 16,000 in many north and central States.

Flour millers have a case for enhanced relief when compared to MEP.

Faster disposal needed

In anticipation of Food Security Act, the FCI has overburdened itself with grains for the last five years. Procurement has hovered around 70-80 million tonnes, while offtake is about 53 million tonnes. Due to lack of readiness on the part of States, the Cabinet, on October 30, decided to defer implementation of FSA by 365 days. But the nation is stuck with massive hoarded stocks. This humongous inventory can be cleared only if the Food Ministry stays away from “fixing” domestic and international prices.

Recovery of investments

All that the Cabinet needs to do is give firm guidelines to the Food Ministry. It could officially declare stocks that are above buffer norms plus 5 per cent as “surplus for disposal” for each crop year.

These should be sold transparently, at market rates, within a specified time frame of six months to a year, before the next crop comes up for procurement and storage.

The market value and investments made in “surplus grains” must be reported every month on the FCI website.

This will create awareness of extra inventory and investment stuck. Revenues generated by liquidation of surpluses should be reported as recovery or credits from the sunk cost of grains.

Addressing the policy and procedures is the right approach, and not “fixing” a price that is irrelevant to market requirements.

42% tea goes unsold at Coonoor sale

Teas worth Rs 6.17 crore remained unsold at Sale No: 44 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction as there were no takers for as much as 42 per cent

of the offer despite reducing the average price to Rs 74.62 a kg – the lowest level so far in 2013.

Prices dropped on an average by Rs 3 a kg over last week. Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market when Mittal Tea Co bought it for Rs 183.

Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 178, Crosshill Estate and Shanthi Supreme Rs 166 each and Hittakkal Estate Rs 165. In all, 31 marks got Rs 125 and more.

Chamraj topped orthodox market at Rs 235 followed by Coonoor Tea Rs 199, Kodanad Rs 190, Prammas Rs 186. In all, 44 marks got Rs 125 and more.

Upcountry markets were closed for Diwali celebrations. Besides, teas were available at lower prices in North India. So, domestic demand was inadequate at high bids.

Pakistan Selective

Pakistan was selective in a wide range Rs 61-108 , but with excess teas in global market, importers from all countries showed no interest to bid high. With about 122 million kg more tea in global market, importers were choosy.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 60-62 for plain leaf grades and Rs 115-140 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 66-70 for plain dusts and Rs 120-170 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Demand for pepper likely to emerge this week

Pepper prices dropped last week, despite tight availability. Attributing the slow buying to the shift by upcountry dealers to dry fruit business during Diwali, traders said that they would revert to pepper trade after '*Panchami*' on November 5 .

Therefore, the current decline in the market, especially in the spot, “is only a temporary phenomenon,” market sources told *Business Line*.

In the international market also the prices are ruling steady to firm on short supply.

The only available source as of now is reportedly Brazil, they said.

Demand from the domestic market is expected to pick up from late next week onwards for the winter requirements. Similarly, overseas demand is also likely to come for the Winter/Christmas and New Year needs.

Meanwhile, availability appears to be limited. The next crop, according to growers in Kerala and Karnataka, is likely to be less by 10 to 20 per cent. If the 2012 crop is estimated at somewhere around 50,000-55,000 tonnes, then the next crop would be at around 50,000 tonnes, traders said. The carry-forward stock is also understood to be much less. The current rate of arrival of immature and partially mature green pepper for the industry is taken by the trade as an indication about the next crop.

At this time of last year, they said, it used to be around 10-12 tonnes daily and as against it has been around 3-4 tonnes.

The pepper in brine manufacturers require very immature berries while slightly mature berries are needed by the units producing dehydrated pepper, they said.

Karnataka, which is claimed to have a crop of around 35,000 tonnes, is reported to have exhausted them and those having some stocks were quoting Rs 485-490 a kg on cash-and-carry basis and this phenomenon said to have driven upcountry buyers to Kerala. Thus, there has been an upsurge in demand from all the major north Indian markets pushing the spot prices until the week before last, they said.

On the NMCE, the rise in prices for November and December contracts was marginal last week end by Rs 350 and Rs 450 respectively during the week to Rs 47,490 and Rs 47,32 a quintal on Saturday.

However, on the IPSTA platform November contract fell by Rs 1,200 during the week to Rs 47,300 while December increased by Rs 20 to Rs 47,700. Total turnover on the NMCE decreased by 59 tonnes to 44 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by five tonnes to 14 tonnes.

Spot prices fell by Rs 600 to Rs 45,800 (ungarbled) and Rs 47,800 (garbled) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market moved up further to \$8,100 (c&f) Europe and \$8,350 a tonne (c&f) for the US.

All the origins are reportedly firmer as the supply scenario continued to stay tight world over, they said.

Farm scientists board plans to woo back Indian researchers abroad

Faced with shortage of talent in farm research, the Agriculture Scientists Recruitment Board (ASRB) is planning to woo Indian scientists and students pursuing post-doctoral fellowships in the US and Australia back to the country.

This endeavour would also ensure a stream of talent for the proposed international cadre of agriculture research services (ARS).

“A large number of students from the country’s agricultural education system go abroad for higher education and research. We want to ensure that such overseas talent pool is made aware of the opportunities that exist back home in the National Agriculture Research System (NARS) and sensitise them to take part in the same,” said ASRB Chairman Gurbachan Singh.

ASRB is an independent body that recruits talent for the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), which has 99 research institutes and 53 agricultural universities under its fold.

target varsities

Singh said a proposal was being worked out to attract Indian talent overseas.

Universities, such as Harvard and Stanford among others, will be targeted as part of the proposed initiative.

It would also help to plug the talent shortfall in areas such as crop processing technology, agri-statistics and bio-informatics among others, he said.

Paucity of hands

ASRB has seen a limited success in the last two years in such an initiative. It has recruited about 13 Indian scientists from foreign universities.

The scale-up of such an initiative would also benefit the creation of the proposed international cadre of ARS, Singh added.

On Friday, eminent agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan had suggested the creation of an international cadre of agri-scientists to help assist developing countries in Asia and Africa. Singh said that ASRB had been facing a shortfall in scientists due to lack of qualified talent.

Against some 429 vacancies advertised for ARS in 2012, the recruitment body could only fill 319 slots. In 2011, the ASRB could only fill 176 of the 303 slots.

This trend in shortfall of requisite qualified candidates has existed for a major part of the last decade, says H.S. Gupta, Director, Indian Agriculture Research Institute, stressing the need to improve and strengthen the quality of the education system.

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Plan to woo back overseas Indian agri-researchers

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Shortfall

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Onion prices could go up again: Survey

Days after Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan announced that onion crisis was over, a recent survey by the Department of Agriculture has indicated that its prices may soar again. The recent survey found that around 40 per cent of the monsoon onions, which were to hit the market in the first week of November, was washed away in the exceptionally heavy rainfall that hit various parts of the country last month.

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh are the major producers of Kharif onion that hits the markets early November. The failure of the summer crop had seen the prices of onions hitting the roof, with the retail rate touching the Rs 100-a-kg mark at some places. Shortage of onions in the markets was cited as the reason for the price rise, with Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar claiming that good November crop would help bring down the prices. Subsequently, a survey was commissioned by the agriculture and allied departments to study the state of the monsoon onion crop.

Nashik, Pune, Solapur and Ahmednagar are the main onion producing districts of the state, while Dharwad, Chitradurga, Gadag, Haveri, Bagalkot and Davengere are the zones that produce most onions in Karnataka. The districts of Surendranagar and Bhavnagar are the onion zones of Gujarat, while Nalanda and Patna are the onion producing districts of Bihar. In Andhra Pradesh, Kurnool and four other districts are the onion belt.

As per the survey, around 25-30 per cent of the onion crop was washed away in Gujarat, Bihar and the districts in North Karnataka. In Maharashtra, the survey said, a majority of the crops got washed away at the storage points

due to unseasonal rains. In Dharwad, the November crop was destroyed because of lack of rains. The onion crop in Andhra Pradesh would be the only one hitting the market on time.

The survey pointed out that while 15,899 lakh tonnes of onion had hit the markets between September and October 2012, the figure is only 12,743 tonnes during the corresponding period this year.

Jaydutt Kshirsagar, president of the Lasalgaon Agricultural Produce Market (APMC), said while the market used to see 25,000 quintals of the crop coming for daily trade, of late they were getting hardly 2,500-3,000 quintals per day. "The rains have spoiled the monsoon crop also and the prices would rise in the next few days. There is no crop with the farmers," he said.

P K Gupta, joint director of Nashik-based National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), however, said there might be a fall in the onion prices immediately after Diwali. "The APMC markets are closed for Diwali and once when they open, there will be excess crop, which will result in a fall in the prices," he said. Asked about the response to the import tenders floated earlier for onions from Afghanistan, China, Iran, Egypt and Pakistan, Gupta said no action had been taken on that front.

DECCAN Chronicle

Onion prices come down to earth



The price of onions — seen as a major economic marker — has fallen sharply in the last two days in city markets. The price came down by half, thanks to increased supplies from neighbouring districts and states.

Onions, which were sold for Rs 60 per kilo till a week ago, are now being sold for Rs 30 per kilo. In Rythu Bazaars, onions are sold for just Rs 13 to Rs 15 per kg. While the decreased prices have brought respite to consumers, it led to protests by farmers in wholesale markets.

Mahbub Mansion Market in Malakpet, the biggest onion market in the city, received 17,000 quintals of onions on a single day, on November 1, leading to a sharp fall in prices. About 180 truckloads of onions from neighbouring districts and states arrived in the market.

Onions are mainly sold in three categories. A kilo of top quality onions (Grade-I) cost Rs 60 till a week ago and is now available for Rs 30. The price of the Grade-II variety has fallen from Rs 30-Rs 35 per kg to Rs 10-Rs 20 per kg. Majority of the people in the city purchase Grade-II variety.

At the Rythu Bazaar, the Grade-2 variety bought for Rs 10 per kg in bulk is being sold for Rs 13 per kg. The Grade-III variety costs Rs 6-Rs 8 per kg.

Should supplies stabilise at current levels, this price will hold but there is no guarantee of this, say marketing department officials.

“The price reduction is mainly because of increased supplies to city markets from neighbouring states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and neighbouring districts such as Kurnool and Mahbubnagar.

Malakpet Market has received 34,320 bags of onions amounting to 17,000 quintals on a single day on November 1. With this, the auction price of onions came down sharply,” explained Agriculture Market Committee, Malakpet, chairman M. Rammohan Goud.

Rains help cool onion prices

Hyderabad: Another reason for the fall in onions prices in city markets was the recent rains.

“The incessant rains for the last one week have made onion stocks wet and they cannot be stored. Farmers had no option but to sell off the stocks to traders for whatever price. This led to the fall in prices,” said Agriculture Market Committee, Malakpet, assistant secretary Sambaiah.

Farmers though have been protesting the fall in prices and have alleged that a “syndicate” of wholesale traders was bringing down the prices. Officials pacified them saying that the increased arrivals of onion stocks was the reasons for the fall in prices.

Nilam-hit farmers still await solace a year on

Vijayawada: The wait for about 23,000 farmers whose crop had been damaged by cyclone Nilam continues though its almost a year since the state government announced financial help for them.

The state government had identified 23,000 farmers whose crops were destroyed by the devastating cyclone and had announced a compensation package of Rs 13.5 crores for cyclone-hit farmers of Krishna district.

The district collector had announced recently that the government has released Rs 10.25 crore. Another Rs 3.5 crore is yet to be released.

However, the compensation has not yet reached the farmers, prompting legislators and a minister of the district to bring the issue to the notice of the Chief Minister. They requested the CM to ensure early release of the funds.

According to officials of Krishna district agriculture department, the compensation amount would be released within a week and would be distributed immediately. The remaining Rs 3.5 crore would be released after completion of first phase of funds distribution.

However, the district administration is now collecting data regarding the crop loss due to the recent heavy rains that affected farmers across the district. According to preliminary estimations, crops worth over Rs 600 crore were damaged in Krishna district alone.

“This assessment can climb up as the enumeration work is under process,” said Krishna district agriculture department J-D Balu Naik.

S. Mallikarjuna Rao, a farmer in Vallurupalem of Thotlavalluru mandal said that the government must extend compensation or help immediately. “Delay in releasing compensation would not help farmers who are facing problems,” he said.

B. Nagesh, another farmer, wondered what would be the use if compensation was to be released after one year.



Farmers seek Rs 25,000 per ha

Thousands of farmers of Sadar block under the aegis of Anti-Corruption Committee and Krushak Sangharsha Samiti handed over a 14-point charter of demands to the district Collector after a grand rally in the headquarters town. Framer leader Debashish Hota led the villagers.

In their memorandum to the administration, they warned it to fulfill all their demands by December 4 lest they would intensify their stir and approach the NHRC, NCST and NCSC to intervene into their case and get them justice.

Their demands included declaring Dhenkanal as Phailin and rain-hit, compensation of Rs 25,000 per hectare of crop loss, Rs 1 lakh for house damage, repair of all damaged roads and power infrastructure and immediate release of compensation for crop and house damage caused by elephants, among others.

Notably, the villagers had held a rally at Gondia block earlier and are scheduled to hold similar rallies on November 5 at Kamakhyanagar and on November 6, at Bhuban.

Farmers demand compensation

Many farmers of Derabish and Marshaghai blocks under the banner of the Krushak Bikash Parishad (KBP) on Thursday staged a demonstration carrying rotten and damaged crops before the district Collectorate here and demanded provision of Rs 30,000 per acre for crop damage and exemption of kharif loan.

The KBP demanded that Collector Niranjan Nayak conduct a thorough inquiry to ascertain the crop loss. The agitators led by KBP president Bijay Parida also demanded interest-free loan to farmers and free seeds, fertilisers and insecticides, exemption of school, college and examination fees of the farmers' children.

The Collector assured the farmers to conduct a thorough inquiry in the nine concerned blocks to assess the crop damages and submit a detailed report to the Government for providing crop loss compensation.
