

THE HINDU

Adopt organic farming for sustainable agriculture growth: Vandana Shiva



Vandana Shiva

NEW DELHI, November 25, 2013 - Organic farming is needed for sustainable and natural growth of agriculture in the future rather than going for genetic modified (GM) technology, renowned environmentalist Vandana Shiva said on Saturday.

“Organic farming, in a way, fulfils every one of the principles of Gross National Happiness. It respects cultural values and promotes protection of the natural environment, whereas genetic modified crops destroy the natural web of life, threaten biodiversity and the

environment, and are a scourge for human health and society.”

Dr. Shiva was speaking at the Shriram Memorial Lecture organised by the PHD chambers here. Terming GM crops as a threat to the country’s biodiversity, she said: “Organic farming promotes biodiversity in the ecosystem unlike GM crops, which tamper with the system.”

“Biodiversity today is the fruit of billions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and increasing by the influence of humans. Ecosystems are incredibly productive and efficient when there is sufficient biodiversity,” she said.

Sharing her views, Usha International co-chairman Siddharth Shriram said: “Valuing biodiversity is vital to changing the way we view this important resource. Because we have received the benefits of biodiversity for free, we take it for granted. The costs of conserving biodiversity are massively outweighed by the benefits.”

“Ecosystems are incredibly productive and efficient when there is sufficient biodiversity. It is believed that the richer the diversity of life, the greater the opportunity for medical discoveries, economic development, and adaptive responses to new challenges,” PHD Chamber president Suman Jyoti Khaitan added.

Farmers appalled at frequent power cuts

Also complain of cooperative banks refusing to insure their crops

MADURAI, November 25, 2013 - Farmers are appalled at frequent and unannounced electricity load sheddings by Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation

(TANGEDCO) since November 10. They complain that regular farming operations are getting affected due to such power cuts.

Participating in a meeting organised by Collector L. Subramanian on Friday to redress grievances of the agriculturalists, almost all the farmers complained about unannounced load shedding and said that TANGEDCO should be held responsible for a poor harvest this season.

K. Devaraj, president, Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, said: "We do not know when the power will be available. This is the planting season and if things continue like this, farmers will have a difficult time."

Responding to him, M. Shanmugam, Executive Engineer of TANGEDCO at Usilampatti, said load shedding was being implemented only in the last 10 days due to various factors such as sudden breakdown in some power stations. "Nevertheless, we have made sure that people get power without a break for at least three hours in the day as well as night. It is expected that the power situation would improve within a week," he added.

The Collector asked the TANGEDCO officials to make sure that farmers were provided continuous supply of power, and they were informed of the load shedding timings. In so far as the other major issue of cooperative banks not coming forward to provide crop insurance, the Collector told the gathering that all those who had taken crop loans can get their crops insured before December 31, and the others before December 15.

Earlier, P. Lakshmanan, Assistant Manager, Agriculture Insurance Corporation of India, said 8,450 farmers had insured their crops last year. Of them, 5,730 were selected for compensation to the tune of Rs. 2.37 crore. It would be credited to their bank accounts by December 15.

When the farmers questioned as to why the insurance corporation had chosen to compensate only 5,730 farmers, he said it was on the basis of harvest done by them. Not satisfied with the reply, the farmers demanded compensation to all those who had insured their crops.

The Collector promised to look into the issue.

Training programme for farmers

PUDUKOTTAI, November 25, 2013 - The Krishi Vigyan Kendran, Vamban near here will organise a training programme for the paddy farmers on application of fertilizer in paddy crop at its premises on November 26. An official press release urged the farmers to participate in the programme.

Official inspects cattle

PUDUKOTTAI, November 25, 2013 - A team of officials, led by R. Pazhaniswamy, Director of Animal Husbandry, inspected the livestock treated for foot and mouth disease at a number of villages in the district on Sunday. In Alangudi taluk, they visited Arasadipatti, Pudukottai Viduthi, Vellakulam, Nemmakottai and Sooran Viduthi where a few cows and calves were

affected . Mr. Pazhaniswamy said that the livestock were properly vaccinated. He advised the people to keep the area clean and hygienic to check the spread of the disease.

Cumbum farmers get ready for second crop

THENI, November 25, 2013 - Torrential rains lashed some parts of the district on Saturday. Shanmuga Nadhi dam received 95 mm rainfall, highest in the district followed by Uthamapalayam with 72 mm rain.

However, catchment areas of major dams recorded sporadic rainfall.

Farmers in Cumbum valley were jubilant as the showers helped them raise nurseries and prepare the field for the second crop in the double cropping areas stretching to 14,700 acres between Goodalur and Palanichetti in the district.

Harvesting of first crop was almost over and progressive farmers near Goodalur and Uthamapalayam have started raising nurseries for the second crop.

Water level in Shanmuga Nadhi dam went up by one foot in the last 24 hours. Its level touched 39.14 feet with an inflow of 120 cusecs.

The discharge was nil. Sothuparai dam has been surplussing for the past 20 days continuously, due to intermittent showers on Kodaikanal hill. Entire inflow of 55 cusecs has been released into the river.

Storage level

Storage level in Vaigai dam stood at 43.39 feet. Inflow was 421 cusecs and discharge 60 cusecs.

The Public Works Department officials had cut the quantum of discharge for irrigation a few days ago.

Manjalar dam has 45.75 feet of water and Periyar dam has 117.5 feet of water. Inflow into Periyar dam slumped to 1,517 cusecs and discharge was 467 cusecs.

Rainfall recorded

Total rainfall recorded in the district was 131.1 mm and average rainfall was 10.92 mm.

Rainfall recorded at various places in the district at 8 a.m. in mm: Periyar 2.2, Thekkadi 10.2, Goodalur 10.5, Bodi 4.2, Uthamapalayam 72, and Shanmuga Nadhi Dam 95.

Sky was overcast in many places in Dindigul district. Kodaikanal hills experienced moderate showers on Saturday.

Farmers relying on crop insurance benefits

TUTICORIN, November 25, 2013 - Farmers are largely relying on crop insurance scheme benefits as scarce rainfall in Tuticorin district has faded their hopes. With a delayed onset of

Northeast monsoon, only 289 mm rainfall has been received so far in the district as against an average annual rainfall of 662 mm, aggrieved farmers said.

Besides the demand for crop failure assessment by officials in the drought-hit areas for obtaining relief, there was also a need for availing crop insurance benefits, K.P. Perumal, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said here on Sunday. S. Kasivelu, District Coordinator, Agriculture Insurance Company of India, Tuticorin, when contacted, said a modified National Agriculture Insurance Scheme, which is expected to be launched soon, would offer farmers protection against crop failure. For those who lost their much or all of their harvest, the modified insurance scheme would save them from crisis. Citing its advantages, he said there would not be any delay in settling claims. Now, crop-cutting experiment would be taken up at single revenue village as unit-area to assess crop yield against the previously withdrawn National Agriculture Insurance Scheme on November 1 this year. Earlier, such experimental analyses were done on a firca-basis which comprised three or four revenue villages.

Hence, the insured farmers, who encountered delayed crop sowing, would also be entitled to claim 25 percent of the insured amount.

Earlier, the insured farmers had filed insurance claims for major crops including pulses, black gram, green gram, chillies, maize, millet and paddy but now the scheme is likely to be extended to additional crops also.

He said based on notifications by the government, the agriculture insurance company would workout the premium and communicate it to the implementing agencies.

Even before sowing, the farmers could insure their crops under the modified insurance scheme, which had been in existence in Sivaganga, Cuddalore and Namakkal districts, Mr. Kasivelu added. Reliable sources said an insurance premium of Rs.2.1 crore was paid by around 65, 000 farmers during 2012-13 and their claims were expected.

Farmers' outfits to go ahead with bandh today

BELGAUM, November 25, 2013 - *Hukkeri had appealed to them to call off their agitation* Farmers' organisations, including Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Hasiru Sene and Bharatiya Krishik Samaj, as well as workers' associations, have rejected the State government's appeal to withdraw their agitation on Monday.

These organisations have called for a 'Belgaum bandh' on Monday in support of their demands: announcement of State Advisory Price (SAP) for sugarcane, compensation to Bt Cotton growers and other demands of associations representing contract workers in government services.

Minister for Sugar, Small Scale Industries and Muzrai Prakash B. Hukkeri, who also hails from Belgaum, had appealed to the protesters on behalf of the government to call off the agitation

The former Minister Shashikant A. Naik told *The Hindu* here on Sunday that at a meeting attended by KRRS president Kodihalli Chandrashekar, BKS district general secretary Sidgouda Modgi, and farmers' leaders Kalyan Rao Muchalambi and Lingaraj Patil, the

leaders decided to go ahead with their agitation, as the government had not conceded to their major demands.

They said the government's notification on sugarcane price was not the SAP sought by the farmers.

The government had tried to play safe to protect the interests of sugar mills, he alleged.

Another demand was to draw attention towards the delay in implementation of Kalasa-Banduri Nala diversion project.

Also, farmers who had taken up Bt Cotton in more than 5 lakh acres of land had suffered losses due to the supply of spurious seeds. There were a large number of workers serving on contract basis who were seeking job security and the regularisation of their services.

Padayatra

They said, as per their programme, farmers would take out a padayatra from Rani Channamma circle to Suvarna Vidhana Soudha.

P. Rajeev, MLA for Kudachi, who has been involved in the farmers' agitation during the past three months, called on farmers' leaders and assured his participation in the agitation.

Kanna for waiver of farm loans

ELURU, November 25, 2013 - Agriculture Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana on Sunday sought waiver of farm loans in the areas hit by the Cyclone Helen. The State government intended to take up the issue of loan waiver with the Central government, the Minister said while visiting the cyclone-affected areas in Narsapur and Mogaltur mandals in West Godavari district. He was confronted by the pleas for relief from the farmers whose crops were heavily damaged in the disaster.

5 paddy varieties grown through natural farming

TARAKATURU (KRISHNA DIST.), November 25, 2013 - *This model of farming minimises input cost and increases quality of produce, says a farmer*

A group of farmers experimenting on a 3.5-acre land in their cattle rearing unit cum farm field has scripted a success story by growing the seed of five paddy varieties, which is ready for distribution to other farmers. The five varieties which were proven suitable to grow on the soil of Krishna district are Delhi Bhoga, Narayana Kamini, Balaji and Gayatri and Pakistan variety Basmathi. Seed from these varieties was collected from farmers in different places in India. "Hundreds of Indian paddy varieties are now on the brink of extinction. The experiment was to introduce a few available varieties to our local farmers," Mr. Vijaya Ram belonging to Machilipatnam told *The Hindu* .

Mr. Ram, a firm believer and follower of Subash Palekar's natural farming, and his aides have attempted to grow seven paddy varieties but only five varieties survived the soil conditions in their field at Tarakaturu in Guduru mandal, adjacent to the National Highway.

Mr. Ram owns the cattle rearing unit in which his aides prepare 'Jeevaamrutham', a mix of cow dung, cow urine, water and jaggery, which is being sprayed on the fields, instead of fertilizers and pesticides. "This model of farming, largely based on cattle, minimises the input cost and increases the quality of the produce. "The harvesting of the paddy varieties has been scheduled for December, same as the other local varieties," said Mr. Promod, who notes down the changes and growth.

On a high

About suggesting the five seed varieties to the farmers of Krishna district, Mr. Ram and Mr. Promod are expressing a deep sense of belief. "The crop period of these varieties, including Pakistan Basmathi, is between 135-140 days. Initially we will offer free service to the farmers in every mean – from extending technical support to distribution of 'Jeevaamrutham' at free of cost and guidance," they added.

Yavatmal farmers get flood relief after 7-year wait



A farmer's family at Yavatmal.

YAVATMAL, November 25, 2013 - On the night of November 5, Datta Chouhan (45), a farmer from Bhamb village in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district, did not return home.

The next day when his wife carried food to the farm for him, he informed her that he had swallowed poison. He was frustrated with the destruction of his crop in the July floods. And the non-

payment of the compensation promised by the state government.

"After telling me about what he had done to himself, he started crying, asking me to save him," recounted Yashoda with tears in her eyes. But it was too late.

Datta of Bhamb village was one of the 170 plus disgruntled farmers from Yavatmal district who ended their lives unable to bear the long delay in getting flood relief.

The entire district is staring at huge crop damage caused by heavy rains, but the farmers are apprehensive about the receiving relief from the government. This is because many who lost their crop in the 2006 floods are receiving have started receiving compensation only from September this year, after a delay of seven years.

Even the Sarpanch of Bhamb village Namdev Pandey claimed that the compensation received by his villagers for 2006 floods was "too little and too late".

The farmers of Sewadasnagar in Darhava tehsil say the compensation they finally received for 2006 was too meagre to really help. They received hardly Rs.400 to Rs.500 per acre for crop damage.

“Four acres were eroded in my field in 2006. I have received Rs.1,800 as compensation” said Ganesh Jadhav of Sewadasnagar where Dhanyeshwar Rathod (29) who killed himself on November 14.

According to government estimates, 827 villages were affected by heavy rains and floods due to over-flowing Wainganga River in 2006. Crops in over 10,000 hectares were damaged affecting 20,187 farmers in 2006, said a press release by district administration. The district administration received Rs. 9.79 to disburse compensation to farmers only on August 31 this year.

When asked about the delay in distributing the compensation, Yavatmal District Collector Ashwin Mudgal said the relief amount came only after he persistently followed it up. “I must have written at least 12 letters to the concerned authorities” Mr..Mudgal told *The Hindu* . The press release praises Ministers Shivajirao Moghe Nitin Raut as well as State Congress chief Manikrao Thakre for their efforts to get the compensation.

“This is a cruel joke on the farmers. What does the administration want to convey? Such delays are killing the farmers here” said Mr. Mohan Jadhav, an activist of the Vidarbha Janandolan Samiti, which works with the distressed farmers of Vidarbha.

Attacked by bug, rejected by cattle, Keezhvelur fields tell a sordid tale



Reckless use of pesticides led to high incidence of diseases, say farmers

Hit hard: Farmers showing paddy crop wilting under mealy bug attack at Vadakadanamangudi in Nagapattinam district.

KADALANGUDI (NAGAPATTINAM), November 25, 2013 - Yellow blades of paddy grass bereft of tillers glisten against the scorching noon sun. For the farmers of Vada Kadalangudi in Orkudi panchayat here, the 80-100 day pesticide-infested paddy crop will not make up even for good fodder.

Vast stretches of directly-sowed fields of Keezhvelur block here, lie wilted under mealy bug attack.

The story stretches across fields, irrigated by the Vennar, which witnessed mass direct sowing owing to water shortage in the Vennar division of Cauvery.

The Rs.20,000 per acre expenditure incurred on direct sowing of paddy and on pesticides has landed Ramamoorthy and Santhanam, farmers with 10 acres each, in debt. Poor quality seeds and reckless use of chemical pesticides were the reasons behind high incidence of diseases, the farmers rued.

Absence of technical intervention for sustainable agriculture by agricultural agencies added to their burden. The fields, as suggested by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Sikkal, were experimented with one pesticide after the other, said Ramamoorthy, holding out empty

cans of fungicides, pesticides, and weedicides. “We cannot even afford to hire labour to harvest the wilted crops and cattle won’t feed on them,” he said.

According to Kaveri Danapalan, general secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Protection Association, chemicals were forced down the farmers, and today the soil has lost its fertility and crops their resistance.

His 120 acres of directly-sowed fields in Keezhvelur cultivated solely on organic inputs have survived, except for marginal infection from neighbouring fields. “The seed subsidy is given in the form of chemicals inputs, leaving farmers with little option.”

“There is no accreditation of seeds and certification is random. We had always demanded proper field study based on pilot use of fertilizers. But the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), KVKs, and the department have not been proactive,” Mr. Danapalan said.

When contacted, an agriculture department official said: “pesticides and weedicides are indented at the top and are being supplied under various schemes. Mealy bug attack is also caused by adverse weather conditions.”

According to S. Ranganathan, secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, *Bapatla* or the BPT variety went out of procurement by government agencies last year, because they were commercially procured in mass scale by the traders.

The seeds that were procured by the department agencies largely came from dealers from Dharapuram and other areas, and were contaminated. “Today, the farmers whose fields were diseased should be fully compensated for their loss.”

There is a huge shortage of staff in the agriculture department.

“There are over 400 assistant directors each in agriculture and horticulture departments. However, while 60 lakh acres was covered by agriculture, only 9 lakh acres was under horticulture. This asymmetrical staff strength should be addressed to deal with the field realities of farmers,” said Mr. Ranganathan.

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📌 ***‘Seed subsidy given in the form of chemical inputs leave farmers with little option’***

📌 ***‘Accreditation of seeds is nil and certification is random’***

Officials on high alert to contain spread of foot-and-mouth disease

TIRUCHI, November 25, 2013 - Animal Husbandry Department in association with Uppiliyapuram panchayat union and village panchayats that formed part of the union, has chalked out plans to contain the spread of the foot-and-mouth disease. An emergency meeting of Uppiliyapuram panchayat union held recently discussed steps to create awareness and enforce the precautionary measures to prevent the cattle killer.

N. Periasamy, veterinary assistant surgeon, Uppiliyapuram, said the department is on high alert and is taking every possible step to arrest the spread. He explained the cause, method of transmission, clinical symptoms, first aid treatment in case of occurrence, and environmental hygienic procedures to be adopted.

The roadside and water-logging areas were disinfected with bleaching powder and farmers were instructed not to purchase animals from disease-infected areas. Wall posters explaining the precautions and the procedural adoptions are on display in the common places of all the villages of the block.

Discussions were arranged at panchayat level by the presidents with milk suppliers, cattle brokers, and butchers.

At the meeting, veterinarians explained the emergency situations prevailing about the FMD and urged the participants to immediately inform them if there are any ailing animals.

Paddy, maize to be procured from today

SHIMOGA, November 25, 2013 - The process of procurement of paddy and maize at minimum support price (MSP) will commence in the district from November 25, in-charge Deputy Commissioner Sasikanth Senthil said.

The procurement in Shimoga, Bhadravathi, Shikaripur and Sorab taluks will commence from today and in Hosanagar, Tirthahalli and Sagar taluks from tomorrow, he said at a meeting on procurement of food grains held at his office in the city.

Karnataka State Warehouse Corporation is the procurement agency for the district. The district administration will form committees under the chairmanship of Assistant Commissioners of Shimoga and Sagar sub-divisions to ensure proper functioning of the procurement centres. He directed the officers concerned to depute the necessary staff for the procurement centres.

The farmers who bring their produce to the procurement centres should bring a copy of Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crops (RTC) and a copy of their bank passbook to facilitate direct transfer of the amount, he said.

State to urge Centre to relax paddy procurement norms

'Collectors asked to submit reports on damaged and discoloured paddy'

BERHAMPUR, November 25, 2013 - The government will write to the Centre, urging it to relax the norms of paddy procurement from the State by accepting discoloured paddy, particularly from the districts affected by cyclone Phailin and subsequent floods.

"We have asked the district Collectors to submit reports on the yield of damaged and discoloured paddy, and then we will write to the Centre urging it to relax the norms of paddy procurement," Odisha's Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Pratap Keshari Deb said here.

Though the exact quantity of damaged and discoloured paddy produced in the State would be known only after crop cutting, the Minister said the volume of such paddy would be huge as 40 per cent area of the State was ravaged by the cyclone and flood.

Ganjam, known as one of the rice-bowl districts, was the worst affected in the last month's natural calamities.

The Minister was here to attend the district Collectors' conference on paddy procurement for the kharif market season (KMS).

"We have discussed thoroughly about the procurement of discoloured paddy at the meeting and asked the Collectors to submit the report of expected yield of low grade paddy in their districts," Mr. Deo said after the meeting.

Since the southern Odisha districts bore the brunt of the natural devastation, the government had not fixed paddy procurement target for these districts.

"We have also not fixed the procurement time. The district administration will begin to procure as per their convenience," the Minister said.

Target

Despite the huge crop loss due to the cyclonic storm, heavy rains, and subsequent floods in at least 18 of the 30 districts of Odisha in October, the government is confident of achieving procurement target of paddy this year.

The government fixed the target of procuring 30 lakh tonnes (LT) paddy this year. The target was fixed before the cyclone battered the State and on the basis of last year's production.

Last year, the State had procured 36.68 LT against a target of 29 LT.

"We hope to achieve the target this year in view of bumper crops in the districts in the western part of the State," Mr. Deb added. — PTI

📌 ***Volume of damaged paddy to be huge as 40 per cent area was ravaged by cyclone and floods***

📌 ***Since southern Odisha districts bore the brunt, paddy procurement target not fixed for them***

Official inspects cattle

PUDUKOTTAI, November 25, 2013 - A team of officials, led by R. Pazhaniswamy, Director of Animal Husbandry, inspected the livestock treated for foot and mouth disease at a number of villages in the district on Sunday. In Alangudi taluk, they visited Arasadipatti, Pudukottai Viduthi, Vellakulam, Nemmakottai and Sooran Viduthi where a few cows and calves were affected. Mr. Pazhaniswamy said that the livestock were properly vaccinated. He advised the people to keep the area clean and hygienic to check the spread of the disease.

Egg rate

NAMAKKAL, November 25, 2013 - The National Egg Coordination Committee egg rate was Rs. 3.98 on Sunday.

Water levels

Water level in **Papanasam dam** on Sunday stood at 96 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 673.54 cusecs and 596 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam. The water level in Manimuthar dam stood at 69.50 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 202 cusecs and 35 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari - The water level in **Pechipparai dam** stood at 26.35 feet, 60.70 feet in Perunchani, 11.31 feet in Chittar-I, 11.41 feet in Chittar-II, 4 feet in Poigai and 43.64 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru dam.

Mettur level - The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 84 feet on Sunday, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 5,019 cusecs and the discharge, 4,990 cusecs.

Water level in the **Periyar dam** stood at 117.5 feet on Sunday with an inflow of 1,517 cusecs and a discharge of 467 cusecs.

In the Vaigai dam, the level was at 44.39 feet with an inflow of 421 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs.

Rainfall - The amount of rainfall recorded in the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Sunday was (in mm): Periyar 2.2, Thekkadi 10.2, Gudalur 10.5, Shanmughanadhi 95, Uthamapalayam 72 and Sothuparai 32.

CPI to launch struggle for irrigation projects

CPI district committee urged the government to complete the on-going irrigation projects in the most-neglected Kurnool district.

In a statement, CPI district secretary K. Ramanjaneyulu said the party has planned a series of agitations to press for early completion of projects. Mr. Ramanjaneyulu said Hundri-Neeva project was crucial for Kurnool, Anantapur and Chittoor districts.

The project would provide irrigation to 80,000 acres and drinking water to more than 100 villages in Kurnool, Kallur, Veldurthi, Kodurumur, Krishnagiri, Tuggali, Pathikonda, Devanakonda and Gonegandla mandals.

Also, the LLC and HLC canals were unable to deliver the water allocated to it due to pilferage. The two canals could be stabilised by constructing Vedavathi projects across Hugari. Irrigation could be provided to Aluru, Adoni, Yemmiganur and Kodumur areas.

The party has planned seminars on December 9 at Kurnool, December 21 at Kurnool and December 30 at Yemmiganur. The party has also planned to celebrate the centenary of veteran CPI leader Chandra Rajeswara Rao in a befitting manner in the district.

The CPI district Committee demanded a price of Rs.6,000 per quintal for groundnut and Rs.5,000 for castor to overcome the present crisis. The party demanded distribution of land

to the poor at Sakunala, Kalugotla, Dhone, Rudrakshagutta, Kodumur, Nandyal, Banaganapalli and Kurnool.

The CPI district Committee demands MSP of Rs.6,000 per quintal for groundnut and Rs.5,000 for castor

From cotton fields to classrooms in Sitheri



*photo: Pratichi Tiwari/ UNICEF
Anjana Krishnan*

SITHERI, DHARMAPURI, November 25, 2013 - From the age of six till she was eleven, Kalaiarasi would travel to Aatur village in Salem from her home in Sitheri hills, Dharmapuri during summer. For the next three months in Aatur, in the evenings she would emasculate the cotton plants in the fields. She would then use a sieve to obtain the fine pollen dust from the grains.

In the mornings she would be up at dawn to rub the pollen dust on the female flowers. Then, she would stick a red paper to the plant to indicate that it had been pollinated. A day's job would earn her Rs 100.

Since cotton plants usually grow upto a height of 3-4 feet, children were the ideal choice to carry out cross pollination in the fields in Salem.

“Initially there was no actual count of the number of children migrating from these districts – Dharmapuri, Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram. An assessment conducted by our team revealed that the tribal pockets in the hills had the maximum migration of child labourers,” says Vidyasagar, Child Protection Specialist with Unicef which started working in

Dharmapuri in November, 2008. "Once we identified the vulnerable areas, we decided that prevention of migration would be our main focus," he adds.

To start with, Unicef, along with the National Child Labour Project (NCLP), a programme of the Indian government, deputed temporary teachers in tribal schools, some of which had no teachers, to ensure that kids stayed in school during the cotton cultivation season – typically between March and July.

In 2008, NCLP directly rescued 11 children, who were travelling to Salem from Sitheri for work – Kalaiarasi being one among them. Now 17, Kalaiarasi was rehabilitated in an NCLP-run school in Sitheri and subsequently mainstreamed.

"NCLP schools serve as a "bridge course" for rescued children who spend 2-3 years here making up for the education they have missed and preparing for the normal school when they are mainstreamed," says M. Saravanan, NCLP Project Director in Dharmapuri.

R. Sennammal, an NCLP teacher in Sitheri, has 30 mainstreamed kids under her supervision. Each week she meets the teachers of at least five of these kids to ensure that they are regular to their normal school. Among Sennammal's other duties are training the rehabilitated kids and carrying out an enrollment campaign to get dropout children back to school.

"Follow-up and counselling is an essential part of Unicef's Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). While rehabilitation was essential, it was important to ensure that they did not drop out once they were mainstreamed. Improved quality of education, social protection schemes for parents was part of this integrated approach which has benefitted more than 5000-6000 children, " says Vidyasagar.

Migration apart, children also worked in their own lands in Sitheri. Two years back, Dharman working in his neighbour's land in Vellampalli for a pay of Rs 50-60 a day, was approached by a teacher who enrolled him in an NCLP school.

Experiencing a drastic shift from the 12-hour grind in the fields, he now finds "school to be fun". Unicef along with NCLP also helps sponsor higher education for these children and counsels them regularly on their future options after education.

KFRI to monitor ecosystem of Western Ghats

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, November 25, 2013 - *Project to generate baseline data on ecology*

: Scientists of the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) will join hands with their counterparts in other research institutions for long- term monitoring of the Western Ghats ecology to understand the impact of climate change and develop strategies for conservation and restoration of tropical forests.

The multi-disciplinary initiative, involving the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI), the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM) and the Forest Department, is one of the long- term mission projects identified by the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE) to promote collaboration among scientists working in different sectors. It is estimated to cost Rs.10 crore.

Over the course of the 10-year project, researchers from the participating institutions will establish permanent sample plots in the species- rich tropical forests of the Western Ghats to study the ecological structure and function, wildlife status, species diversity, human impact on biodiversity, the influence of tropical forests on climate, carbon sequestration and ecosystem services.

ILTER networking

The project will generate weather data through automated weather stations to analyse the impact of climate change on the forest sector. It will also study the soil nutrient dynamics and hydrological aspects of forest ecology.

According to E.A. Jayson, scientist, KFRI, long-term ecological research (ILTER) networks like SI/MAB (Smithsonian Institution/ Man And Biodiversity program), RAINFOR (Amazon Forest Inventory network) and Gloria (Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine environments) have generated useful data for different ecosystems in Europe, Africa and America and provided an understanding of the dynamics of global change.

“Despite being a country with diverse vegetation types, India still lacks long- term ecological studies. As one of the hotspots of biodiversity, the tropical evergreen forests in the Western Ghats offer scope for such a long- term monitoring programme,” he says. “It is also significant because, in spite of three decades of scientific enquiries, our understanding of the Western Ghats forests remains fragmentary and inadequate.”

Executive Vice-President, KSCSTE, V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai said efforts were on to rope in Central research institutions also into the programme.

The pilot project would be funded by the State. “We will approach the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Department of Science and Technology and Department of Biotechnology for financial assistance,” Prof. Pillai said.

Baseline data

The project will utilise technological tools like DNA bar-coding, remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) to generate benchmark information on the forest ecosystem of the Western Ghats.

It will create a database to understand the impact of climate change on the ecology.

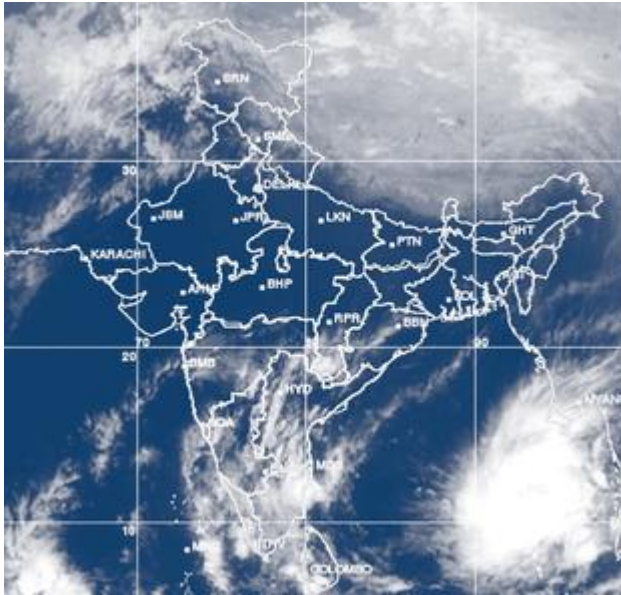
Another output is a Web portal for researchers to access all the data and publications generated by the participating institutions.

Dr. Jayson said the project had the potential to become part of the global network of LTER programmes.

☐ ***Impact of climate change to be studied***

☐ ***Collaboration with other institutions***

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on November 24.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Anantapur	33230	51
Arogyavaram	30200	174
Bapatla	3023tr	511
Calingapatnam	28200	980
Gannavaram	29231	512
Hanamkonda	31177	291
Hyderabad AP	23216	248
Kakinada	2822tr	695
Khammam	31170	100
Kavali	312310	543
Kurnool	31220	96
Mahabubnagar	2622tr	163
Machilipatnam	29230	477
Narasapur	30230	646
Nellore	32242	439
Nizamabad	282211	118
Ongole	32236	513
Ramagundam	30220	201
Tirupathi AP	332222	334
Tuni	2822tr	512
Vizag AP	29220	713
Vizag	30220	695

KARNATAKA

Agumbe	31180	600
Bengaluru AP	271923	148
Bengaluru	2819108241	
Bagalkote	31170	—

Belgaum AP	30150	60
Bellary	33210	63
Bijapur	31180	113
Chitradurga	31200	55
Chickmagalur	291816	57
Chintamani	28180	64
Gadag	30180	88
Gulbarga	30230	35
Hassan	301629	114
Honavar	34220	261
Karwar	34210	167
Madikeri	25186	195
Mangalore AP	3324tr	305
Mysore	292128	181
Mandya	302024	172
Panambur	33250	235
Raichur	30220	102
Shirali	33220	414
KERALA		
Alappuzha	32241	306
Kannur	3425tr	321
Kochi AP	32233	494
Kottayam	34234	493
Kozhikode	33259	281
Punalur	332337	579
Thiruvanantha		
-puram AP	322437	361
Thiruvanantha		
-puram City	322420	409
Vellanikkara	332313	449
TAMIL NADU		
Adiramapattinam	322413	134
Chennai	322413	346
Chennai AP	31234	404
Coimbatore AP	30231	135
Coonoor	181448	469
Cuddalore	322325	299
Dharmapuri	31210	262
Kanyakumari	31240	262
Karaikal	31242	324
Kodaikanal	17100	229
Madurai AP	33240	215
Nagapattinam	31245	274
Palayamkottai	332436	282
Pamban	33250	195
Parangipettai	332463	464
Puducherry	322413	310

Salem	31210	206	The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in
Thanjavur	312512	190	Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall
Tiruchi AP	32240	319	in mm since October 01, 2013.
Tiruttani	33240	315	ISOLATED RAIN IN COASTAL A.P.
Tondi	32257	267	CHENNAI: A Depression has formed over south Andaman Sea
Tuticorin	312231	265	at 5.30 p.m. on Saturday and moved northwestwards and
Ooty	17101	248	intensified into a deep depression. The system further
Valparai	25154	307	intensified into a Cyclonic Storm "Lehar" at 5.30 a.m. on
Vellore	31240	99	Sunday. The cyclonic storm 'LEHAR' over Andaman Sea

LAKSHADWEEP

Amini Divi	32250	166	latitude 10.0{+0}N and longitude 95.0{+0}E, about 300 km
Minicoy	32250	119	south-southeast of Port Blair. The system would move

OTHER STATIONS

Kolkata (Alipore)	30200	523	between Hut Bay and Long Island, close to Port Blair around
Mumbai	34230	66	Sunday night. It would then emerge into south east Bay of
New Delhi	27110	73	Bengal, identified further gradually into a very severe cyclonic

storm. It would move west-northwest wards and cross A.P. coast between Machillipatnam and Kalingapatnam near Kakinada around 28th November noon. Rainfall occurred at many places over Kerala and Telangana and at a few places over T.N. and south interior Karnataka. Isolated rainfall occurred over coastal A.P., Rayalaseema, coastal and north interior Karnataka. Dry weather prevailed over Lakshadweep.

Forecast (valid till Tuesday morning): Rain would occur at many places over Kerala, south T.N., Lakshadweep at a few places over coastal and south interior Karnataka, north T.N., Puducherry and A.P. Isolated rain may occur over north interior Karnataka.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

Monday, Nov 25

Max Min

30° | 25°

Sunrise: 06:12

Sunset: 05:39

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Nov 26

Max Min

32° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Nov 27



32° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday

Nov 28



28° | 23°

Overcast

Friday

Nov 29



30° | 22°

Overcast

Saturday

Nov 30



27° | 23°

Overcast

Sunday

Dec 1



27° | 25°

Overcast

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Farmers refuse to accept fixed price for sugarcane

MYSORE: KRRS leader and lawyer N Nanjgowda termed the claims of state government that the KRRS has agreed to the price of Rs 2,500 fixed for per ton of sugarcane supplied by [farmers](#) to factories as "false" and asked how farmers will agree to this price when they are demanding more than Rs 3500 per ton.

At a press meet here, he said farmers will not accept the price of Rs 2500 as the factories make a lot of profits and how the sugar minister has agreed to this price which is not even 10 percent of the profits made by the factories. He said the KRRS has worked out the cost of cultivation of sugarcane and the factories profits.

"According to our research, factories earn at least Rs 34,000 on each ton of sugarcane supplied by the farmer," he pointed out, disclosing that the factory in addition to 100 kg of sugar, produces 150 units of power and 35 litres of spirit which equals to Rs 39,000. When the factories are making huge profits why is the government reluctant to fix a good remunerative price for sugarcane.

He said farmers should be provided at least Rs 3500 per ton. "We will keep fighting for at least Rs 19,000 for per ton of sugarcane which sounds unrealistic for the government in general and factories owners in particular," Nanjegowda said adding that KRRS will keep fighting the issue till the government comes out with a profitable price for the sugarcane.

In reply, he said Rs 39,000 revenue on each ton of sugarcane has been worked out in consultation with the farm scientists in the state. When cost of inputs is increasing and farmers are toiling day and night to get water for sugarcane what prevents government and these politicians from fixing a good price for the produce, he asked and said he is even planning a legal battle against the government and factory owners.

Retired weaver's terrace garden knits up vegetable supply for family

PUDUCHERRY: The [soaring vegetable prices](#) do not bother this [retired mill worker](#) in [Puducherry](#). T Thirugnanasambandam's [terrace garden](#) provides most of his family's daily vegetable requirement for the past six years. It helps him save money that he would have spent at the market.

The 66-year-old retired weaver of the government-run Anglo French Textiles (AFT) has more than 50 potted plants, mostly vegetables, in his 720 square feet terrace garden. The vegetables include tomatoes, brinjal, ladies finger, capsicum, broad beans, snake gourd, ridge gourd, bitter gourd and drumstick. Apart from vegetables, he has flowering plants like rose, jasmine, crossandra and hibiscus.

"The garden caters to more than 80% of our requirement of vegetables every day. We're planning to grow more plants to ensure that we need not buy vegetables from the market at all," Thirugnanasambandam said. The yield of vegetables varies through the year. "A tomato plant yields 10 fruits per day while a brinjal plant five or six per day during the season," he said.

The senior citizen spends roughly three hours everyday to maintain his garden, changing pots, watering plants and pruning them as and when required. His wife Thenmozhi, son Thyagarajan, a physical education teacher in a private school and daughter Subhashini help him maintain the garden. They prefer organic compost, which is also used very sparingly. "Our compost is mostly dry leaves," said Thyagarajan.

Thirugnanasambandam was passionate about agriculture and gardening since his childhood.

His dream of joining the agriculture department as a field officer almost came true, but other circumstances forced him to become a weaver. "My interest towards garden grew post retirement as I had ample time and energy. I started focusing more on growing vegetables in the garden, but gradually, due to lack of space, shifted it to the terrace," he said.

Setting up a kitchen garden was not a costly affair as many might think, he said. "It is not money but a passion and interest that is required," he said.

An army to ring in farm revolution

KOCHI: They don't look like your average farmers. For one they are wearing a uniform and a young group, tilling in the hot sun and working by the clock. Secondly, they are trained professionals, comfortable using hi-tech farming equipment.

They call themselves the green army, while the [agriculture department](#) refers to them as the food security army. Whatever the name, this group of 23 young men and [women](#) under the banner of Pampakuda block green army model agro service centre has been a boon to the farmers in the district as the group helps them with tasks from tilling to planting and harvesting.

Clad in green they arrive with the hi-tech equipment and toil in the blazing sun, be it for a single farmer or a collective. Armed with training from the [Kerala Agricultural University](#) (KAU) and supported by the agriculture department, they first began their venture two-and-a-half months ago in a small farm.

"Most of the members have a degree in science, commerce, ITI and related fields. Once they register, we send them to the Kerala Agricultural University which trains them in various tasks involved in farming. The department appoints a [farming officer](#) as their supervisor and they are attached to an agro-service centre," said Elizabeth Punnoose, assistant director at the agricultural department, Piravom, who is in-charge of the unit.

The agriculture department has provided the group with equipment worth Rs 25 lakh. "We have two tractors, a power tiller, mini-power tiller and a transplanter," said V C Mathews, field officer, Pampakuda green army. The team got noticed when they arrived to help actor Srinivasan in harvesting paddy in his farm.

"When contacted, we first inspect the farm and plan the equipment to be taken. We try and ensure that there is a couple of ITI-qualified individuals in the team to take care of complaints with the equipment," he added. The group includes 13 women.

The Pamapkuda green army has emerged as a model agro service centre and is now reaching beyond the seven panchayats that they were initially engaged for. Their message is - go ahead and farm, we will join you in the labour.

Talks with farmers to go on: Harshwardhan Patil

PUNE: State co-operation minister [Harshwardhan Patil](#) said on Sunday that discussions with sugarcane [farmers](#) will continue to find an amicable solution to their ongoing agitation demanding a better purchase price for cane this season.

Maharashtra is a leading state in sugar production. At the start of the season, the state has 24 lakh [metric](#) tonne (MT) surplus sugar. The country has a total surplus of 90 lakh MT.

The season normally starts in October and ends by March/April next year, depending on the number of sugar cooperatives that go for crushing and the availability of cane. This year, the crushing season started in the first week of November.

Farmers are demanding that sugar factories should give Rs 3,000 per tonne as the first installment. But most sugar factories in the state have expressed their inability to pay the amount citing slump. They are willing to pay Rs 2,600 per tonne which is not acceptable to farmers.

The state held a meeting with farmers and factory representatives from Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara districts in Mumbai on Friday and then on Saturday. There is, however no consensus yet.

[Chief minister](#) Prithviraj Chavan, cooperation minister Harshwardhan Patil, sugar commissioner Vijay Singhal and representatives of sugar factories attended the meeting along with leaders of farmers union.

The farmers, who started the agitation in chief minister's home town Karad, have said that they won't allow the CM to attend a programme organised to pay homage to veteran leader [Yashwantrao Chavan](#) in Karad next week.

"The sugar factories are suffering due to poor returns. The overall cost of production and maintenance has gone up. So this year many factories are unable to give a price that farmers have demanded. But the Centre and state government have planned to help farmers," said Harshwardhan Patil.

A meeting will be held with the representatives of the Union government on November 26. Patil also said that steps such as giving relief in import duties, [excise duty](#) and export subsidy can be taken for benefit of farmers.

As per the officials of cooperative department, as many as 54 sugar factories have started crushing activities so far. The factories have produced about 10.82 lakh quintal of sugar with crushing of 14.59 lakh MT of sugarcane till now.

The estimated availability of sugarcane for crushing during this season would be 690 lakh

MT, which is more than earlier estimated quantum of 645 lakh MT. The increase in the quantum of sugarcane is due to extended presence of rainfall in many parts of the state.

The total sugarcane area considered in the state for ongoing season is 9.37 lakh hectare, which is slightly higher than last year's area of 9.36 lakh hectare. Close to 170 sugar factories are expected to undertake cane crushing during the ongoing season.



UP sugar mills run 'ponzi scheme' to pay farmers' dues



Sugar companies are party to mortgage arrangements of farmers' land to raise money from PSU banks. (PTI)

On the surface, the [sugar crisis](#) in Uttar Pradesh may seem to be inching closer to a resolution. But cane farmers may have unwittingly mortgaged their land, signing up for crop loans from public sector banks, with the money so raised being used by the mills to pay arrears of a different set of farmers.

This model, of mills rotating working capital loans from banks, to deliver pending payouts to farmers has reportedly been on for the last several cane crop seasons.

In Uttar Pradesh's [sugar industry](#), the biggest industry in the state, the crop loans concept has been twisted to suit the interest of three interest groups in the value chain — the cane farmer, the crushing mills and PSU banks.

Under this, mills, acting as agents or intermediaries for PSU banks, borrow money on a particular farmer's account to buy inputs such as seeds or fertiliser for the next year's crop but the money is actually paid to a different farmer to clear overdue cane payments.

"It is akin to a ponzi scheme," said the owner of a large sugar company, who did not wish to be identified, but admitted to a practice that has been rife in the organised sugar industry over the last couple of years. If banks refuse to provide loans this season, and mills are unable to raise funds, the ponzi scheme will be exposed with many farmers' land remaining mortgaged with the banks.

The trigger for an impending implosion comes from two factors — one, banks have declined to provide higher working capital loans to the sugar industry this season and two, there is uncertainty over how much of the season's produce will go for crushing.

The arrangement is on the verge of unravelling because a big sugar company has already cried foul and has sounded out not only the banks but also the UP administration and the Union agricultural ministry. Almost all big sugar companies are party to such mortgage arrangements of farmers' land to raise money from PSU banks.

Bajaj Hindustan, the largest sugar company, refused to comment and Balrampur Chini, another big company, denied it. A spokesperson for Balrampur Chini said the company has "never borrowed any money under the said scheme". Sources in Bajaj Hindustan admitted to private mills' problems being compounded by the fact that banks have declined to provide higher working capital loans to the sugar industry this time around.

In a BSE filing earlier this week, the company said, "Unviable, unaffordable and unreasonable sugarcane price has been continuously fixed over and above the paying capacity of the mills or above a level, which did not give a fair and reasonable return to the mills. This has already caused huge losses to us and has created an unavoidable situation, which is beyond our control to continue to run the operations in losses."

What makes the situation more precarious is that private sugar mills in UP already owe farmers nearly Rs 2,500 crore for the last season, and that is without factoring in any interest on delayed payments.

"Most of the outstanding payments are generally taken care of by fresh loans. This year has been different as the crop is still standing and banks have clamped down on working capital loans. As a result, the payments are still pending," an industry insider said.

The big banks that fund crop loans to the sugar mills include Punjab National Bank, UCO Bank, Bank of India and the Oriental Bank of Commerce. When contacted, UCO Bank chairman Arun Kaul said, "Banks enter into tripartite agreements with mills or sugar companies and farmers. This practice has evolved over time. Mills get committed cane from farmers. Farmers avoid the hassle of dealing with banks with mills acting as intermediaries. Banks deal with one company, which ensures repayment, instead of thousands of farmers." Kaul said he was unaware that crop loans raised by mortgaging land of one set of farmers is used to repay another set of farmers. "UCO Bank directly credits the farmers accounts," he said but did not rule out some mills indulging in wrong practices. "There needs to be more transparency if instances like these are reported," he said.

The sugar industry association too is also aware of companies acting as intermediaries to facilitate crop loans for farmers. Abinash Verma, director general, Indian Sugar Mills Association, said, most companies are banks' agents and help farmers with crop loans. "If companies are doing this (mortgaging land of one set of farmers and paying dues of another set of farmers) it needs to be investigated."

In UP, over 60 out of the 101 private mills have so far informed the state authorities about suspension of crushing operations in the 2013-14 marketing year (October-September), raising the spectre of default. Among them, listed players like Bajaj Hindusthan, Balrampur Chini, Dwarikesh Sugar and Dhampur Sugar Mills have also communicated their decision to the bourses via regulatory filings. Most of them are waiting for a bailout from the Centre ahead of the upcoming polls as a potential facesaver.

Sugar mill owners meet CM again, no headway yet

In a much needed attempt to resolve the stand-off between the government and the sugar industry, chief minister Akhilesh Yadav met some of the mill owners at his official residence in Lucknow on Sunday. The meeting comes a day before the deadline given by the CM to the mill owners to start crushing cane in western UP comes to an end.

Though neither the state government nor the sugar mill association were forthcoming on the outcome of the meeting, sources inform that issues were discussed but not resolved. Further dialogues are likely to continue on the issue.

Earlier, the CM had asked all mills to start crushing by November 25 in western UP and by November 30 in other districts of the state or else action will be taken against them. However, of the 99 private sugar mills in the state, 75 have already issued notices of suspension of operations for the current season. Till Sunday, none of the private mills started crushing cane.

The industry has been demanding a linkage between cane prices and sugar prices and has declared a paying capacity of not more than Rs 225 per quintal of cane. The state government declared the State Advised Price (SAP) of cane at Rs 280 per quintal for the general variety of cane earlier, which is the same as last year. Yet, the industry, claiming to be in precarious condition, has not relented to the government's wishes so far and abstained from crushing the cane. The cane farmers, with their crops ready to be harvested, are facing the brunt of the stalemate.

Meanwhile, the CM inaugurated the Mohiuddinpur Sugar Mill in Meerut district on Sunday, which was closed for the past three seasons. The mill will become the 24th cooperative sugar mill to run in the state. It was the only mill that could not find a buyer in 2010 when 10 other sugar mills were handed over to different private players by the Mayawati government. Earlier this year, the Samajwadi Party government decided to outsource the operation of the mill to private players, while retaining the ownership of the mill. This was a first of its kind experiment.

Addressing the gathering during the function, Akhilesh put the blame of sugarcane crisis on the Government of India, saying that it was the Centre's responsibility to stop sugar imports and control its rate in the country, which it failed to do. He said the Mohiuddinpur Sugar

Mill has a crushing capacity of 30,000 quintal per day, which will benefit the farmers of nearby areas.



Plants have inbuilt fruiting clocks, says study

Plants in the Indian subcontinent have an inbuilt clock that makes them flower and bear seeds when the monsoons are about to hit, says a recent paper by city scientists.

Prof Uma Shaanker and Prof K N Ganeshiah of University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, and Dr N A Aravind of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment in the city are the authors of the paper in *Biology Letters*, published by the Royal Society. Uma Shaanker says, "Our study has demonstrated the role of the two monsoons in shaping the evolution of fruiting time in plants in India. While it has been known earlier, that plants may be selected to ripen their fruits and seeds to coincide with the arrival of the wet season, there had been no means to evaluate this experimentally. The fact that India has two distinct monsoons that occur at different time of the year, gave us an excellent natural experimental set-up, to evaluate the above."

"In our study we show that species of plants that occur during South West monsoon path, give fruits in the month of April ahead of the wet season beginning in June and for plants of the same species that occur during North East monsoon path, they fruit in the month of August, ahead of the wet season beginning in October," he adds.

Giving an example Uma Shaanker said, "A comparative analogy is the arrival of passengers on a train platform. For a train departing at 10 am, we expect passengers to arrive before 10 am (say 9 am) while for the same passengers, if they were to have their train departing at 3 pm, you would expect them to arrive before 3 pm (say 2 pm).

So, what could happen if the monsoons came before their time or did not come at all? He replies, "It is very important to disperse fruits before the arrival of the wet season, else the rain would wet the dispersal structures and hence impair dispersal. Think of silk cotton trees and what would happen to the seeds bearing the silk when they are wet."

He gives another example, "Plants that have shaped their fruiting time in time with the arrival of the wet season have made several

"evolutionary" adaptations. In the common jack fruit tree, for example, seeds have a viability period of only two weeks. Thus if the rain does not come fall within this period, these seeds will die. Any rain later is of no use."

Dr K V Ravi Shanker, Principal Scientist at Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, says, "The above study is very interesting and helps us know more about how plant behaviour may change according to changes in climate."

Let us say, we get mango plant materials from Haryana in north India and grow them in Bangalore. Monsoon in Haryana, comes in July, a month later than in Bangalore. According

to the above findings, the plant will now flower and be ready for seed dispersal a little later than local mango trees.

Business Standard

Soybean prices gain on low supplies



[Soybean prices](#) gained almost 10 per cent in spot markets in a week on low domestic supplies and support from overseas markets, said traders.

"Farmers have probably offloaded most of the damaged and spotted soybean stock and they want to hold the good quality stock in expectations of better prices," claimed B L Saini, a soybean trader in Indore.

Soybean crop got damaged in many areas in Madhya Pradesh in Kharif 2013 due to heavy and incessant rains at the time of harvesting, said traders.

At present, quality of soybean reaching the mandis has shown improvement, said traders. Madhya Pradesh is the biggest soybean producer in India.

Across Madhya Pradesh, around 70,000 bags of 100 kg each were supplied by farmers on Saturday which were around 350,000 bags a week ago.

Election activities and mandi closures ahead of polling is also seen as a major reason behind sudden decline in arrivals, said traders.

On price front, average auction range for soybean in Indore was Rs 3,500-4,000 per 100 kg on Saturday which was Rs 3,200-3,500 per 100 kg a week ago, said traders.

Good grading quality soybean was being sold as high as Rs 4,200-4,250 per 100 kg in Indore mandis, said traders.

Plant delivery prices have also shown improvement as the prices have gone up from Rs 3,810-3,850 per 100 kg to Rs 3,960-4,000 per 100 kg in a week.

Traders and analysts feel support from overseas markets is also pushing up the domestic prices.

"Last week, domestic markets got really good support from gains in Malaysian palm oil prices and Chicago Board of Trade soybean contracts," said a mill buyer from Indore.

Coffee exports in 2013-14 may slip below last year's level

Foreign demand for Indian beans and processed coffee expected to remain strong on the back of weaker rupee



India's [coffee exports](#) may drop from the last year's record level to 5.1 million bags in the 2013-14 marketing year, due to lower production as well as export prices, a report has said.

The country is estimated to have shipped a record 5.2 million bags of coffee in the 2012-13 marketing year (October- September). One bag contains 60 kg of coffee

bean.

"Exports for 2013-14 marketing year are forecast at 5.1 million, down by 1,05,000 bags from last year's record level," the US Department of Agriculture ([USDA](#)) said in a report.

"Lower export prices, a reduced domestic crop and large crops in key producing countries are expected to temper Indian exports, but exporters are optimistic that significant volumes of coffee will be exported," it said.

However, foreign demand for Indian beans and processed coffee is expected to remain strong on the back of weaker [rupee](#), the report added.

On weak export prices, the USDA said while Indian Arabica remained steady, prices of Robusta, which comprises the bulk of Indian exports, have dropped sharply in anticipation of a larger global supply. This supported the expectation that exports will be competitively priced.

India's shipments are expected to be affected also because the domestic output is pegged lower by more than 1,00,000 bags to 5.1 million bags for the 2013-14 marketing year due to lower yields following heavy monsoon rains, it said.

The USDA's projection of India coffee production is significantly lower than the Coffee Board of India's estimate of 5.7 million bags for 2013-14.

According to the report, heavy rains in key growing regions, especially in Karnataka that contributes 70% of the total production, appear to have reduced yields.

The bulk of India's coffee production is exported and the domestic industry's marketing efforts are very much focussed on export promotion. There are indications that the popularity of coffee is increasing with the spread of both foreign and home-grown coffee shops, it said.

However, exports continue to siphon a large amount of coffee away from the domestic market, and consumption estimates are unchanged, the report added.

Italy, Germany, Russia and Belgium are the top markets for Indian coffee exports.

THE HINDU Business Line

With yield rising, Karnataka set to become pepper hub



Displaces Kerala where output is hit by pests, diseases

Chennai, Nov. 24: Karnataka could soon turn out to be the country's pepper hub with production and yield in the State showing great potential.

According to the Spices Board statistics, pepper production in Karnataka has seen an eight-fold rise at 25,000 tonnes from over 21,000 hectares this year against 3,624 tonnes from 16,320 hectares in 2007-08.

Next year, though, adverse weather conditions are likely to drag production to around 20,000-22,000 tonnes.

Surprisingly, peppergrowth in Karnataka comes at a time when the country's acreage and production of the crop have dropped sharply over the last one decade.

The area under pepper in the country has dropped from 2.18 lakh hectares in 2002 to 1.71 lakh hectares in 2012. Four years ago, the area dropped to 1.53 lakh hectares before staging a marginal recovery.

Production has dropped during the same period from 80,000 tonnes to 43,000 tonnes. It recovered to 58,000 tonnes this year.

Next year, it is estimated to fall to 45,000 tonnes says the International Pepper Community, a group of pepper-growing nations. The trade, however, pegs it around 40,000 tonnes.

Inter-crop advantage

"Pepper is doing well in Karnataka because the growers there are taking good care of the crop," said a Spices Board official. Pepper is mainly grown as an inter-crop with coffee there. Planters say that pepper has been the saviour for them when the coffee crop has been hit by adverse weather conditions and the menace of white stem borer.

"In estates where we grow arabica coffee, pepper has come in handy when the borer has wreaked havoc over the last few years," a planter in Kodagu said.

The problem with Kerala is that growers have not been motivated by pepper as it is cultivated as an inter-crop.

Pepper is grown along with coconut or vegetable or rubber in Kerala, the Spices Board official said.

Kerala's output

Pepper production in Kerala has almost halved in the last five years. During 2012-13, production is estimated at around 25,000 tonnes but this season, it could drop below 20,000 tonnes. In 2008-09, Kerala produced over 41,000 tonnes on 1.75 lakh hectares. "Diseases such as quick wilt in Wayanad estates of Kerala have not helped matters," said an official of the United Planters' Association of Southern India.

The Spices Board, in its recent presentation at the International Pepper Community meet, said that four factors are affecting pepper production. They are lack of quality planting material, small and marginal holdings, existence of senile and unproductive vines and pest and diseases. All these hold good for the current situation in Kerala.

S. Kannan, Executive Director of International Pepper Community, told at the meet that increasing costs of production and labour shortage are also adding to the problems.

"Growers in Kerala do not seem to take proper care of plants affected by diseases. The vines are old and no steps have been taken to replant most of them," said Hemanand Kishore, an exporter.

According to him, return for small growers, who make up most of the area under the crop, is a meagre Rs 8,000 a month even at current prices that are at a record Rs 500/kg. "How will any grower take interest in his crop when the return is so poor," he asked.

The country's pepper productivity in 2011-12 was 223 kg a hectare against 283 kg in 2010-11. Though production improved in 2012-13, it is estimated to be lower again this year.

Yield matters

Given Karnataka's progress in pepper productivity, the country's yield is lower primarily on account of poor crop in Kerala.

This year, a Karnataka planter said, he should get at least 120-140 catkins from a pepper vine but could get 60-70 only. "The situation could be the same or even a little worse in Kerala," he said.

Kerala's impact on the country's pepper scenario can be seen from the fact that the area under pepper has dropped by 2.16 per cent annually since 2001 on a compounded basis, while production has slipped by 5.65 per cent.

During the same time, Vietnam's acreage has improved by 14,000 hectares to 50,000 hectares but its production has doubled to over one lakh tonnes. This season, its production is estimated at a record 1.5 lakh tonnes.

The Spices Board, however, is hopeful of a turnaround in the scenario. It has now begun to focus on replanting and rejuvenation of pepper farms, farm mechanisation and train growers on various aspects of production.

Higher arrivals squeeze tomato

Karnal, Nov. 24: An increase in arrivals dragged tomato prices by Rs 350-500 a quintal on Sunday.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that improved availability of stocks mainly pulled tomato prices down. Arrivals have improved over the last couple of days and it may increase gradually in the coming days, he added.

Arrivals may touch 1,000 crates-a-day mark within the next 15 days. Drop in prices was anticipated as rising arrivals are putting pressure and prices may come further down in the coming days, said trade experts.

Around 600 crates (of 25 kg each) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted between Rs 3,500 and Rs 5,500 a quintal.

Around 950 crates of varieties such as 524, Abhilash, Nasik, Himsona and Hybrid were received in the markets of Karnal district.

Out of total arrivals, about 10 per cent stock was of low quality around 50 per cent of medium quality while the rest of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality eased by Rs 500 and quoted at Rs 5,200-5,500 while the prices of Medium quality produce went down by Rs 400 and quoted at 4,400-4,500 while low quality produce was at Rs 3,500 , Rs 350 down.

According to the market experts, tomato prices may drop but the fall will be limited as market is getting good support from the ongoing marriage season. Quality of the stocks is also expected to be good, said sources.

Pepper continues to rule firm despite slow buying

Kochi, Nov. 24: Pepper market continued to witness the supply crunch even as there was some slowdown in buying from upcountry markets.

The spot prices hit a historic Rs 500 a kg last week and later fell by Rs 300 to Rs 49,700 a quintal. At the same time, uptrend continued in the national and regional exchanges.

Reports of tight supply situation in other origins world over is said to be aiding the price rise.

Small volume of farm grade pepper arriving at the terminal market was being traded at Rs 500-505 a kg. Meanwhile, semi processed 550 GL pepper was being sold by expert processors at Rs 510-512-515 a kg, they said.

Even though buying activities have slowed down due to the “heavy wedding season in Delhi and other cities of north India and the election fever in some States”, the *pappad* industry is reportedly covering good quantity from all the available sources, market sources claimed.

Meanwhile, Karnataka sellers who are holding pepper was offering at Rs 525 a kg delivered anywhere in India, trade sources claimed. Even though there was a decline in the prices on Saturday, the overall performance showed an increase during the week for the active contracts on both the national and regional exchanges.

On the NMCE, Dec and Jan contracts increased by Rs 599 and Rs 1,014 respectively to Rs 52,650 and Rs 52,740 a quintal. Turn over surged by 24 tonnes to 72 tonnes while net open position moved up by two tonnes to six tonnes.

On the IPSTA, all the active contracts went up by Rs 1,315 and Rs 568 respectively to Rs 52,329 and Rs 52,500 a quintal. The turnover increased during the week by 486 tonnes to 705 tonnes while the net open position dropped by one tonne to three tonnes.

Spot prices fell by Rs 100 during the week to close at Rs 49,700 (ungarbled) and Rs 51,700 (garbled) a quintal on Saturday on limited activities.

Indian parity in the international market was at higher levels because of the rise in prices on the spot and the futures markets in India on strong domestic demand. At the same time, the

supply squeeze in other origins has pushed up the prices in the world market. Malabar was being offered in the international market at \$8,750 (c&f) for Europe and \$9,050 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained out priced. According to the International Pepper Community, pepper price in producing countries has again increased. "The increase for black pepper is up to 4 per cent and up to 2 per cent for white pepper," S. Kannan, Executive Director, IPC, told *Business Line*. He attributed the continued price rise mainly to short supply in Vietnam and Indonesia.
