

THE HINDU

New path in productive farming



P. Rajendran, Associate Director, ARS, at the farm.

In November last year, Agriculture Minister of Dubai Abdulla Jassim Abdulla M Almarzooqi chartered a flight to Kerala to visit Anakkayam, a village in Malappuram district. There, he headed to the Agricultural Research Station (ARS) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) for a first- hand assessment of the operations of the 25-acre farm.

The Minister later ordered a consignment of ornamental plants and fruit trees and arranged free visas for 100 workers at the farm, so that he could emulate the functioning of ARS in his country.

The Anakkayam ARS has captured global attention not only for its profitable operations, but also the innovative farm management, product diversification and labour management strategies that have made this possible. The annual income of the farm has touched Rs.2.56 crore. While KAU generates an income of less than Rs.8 crore from 3,500 acres, the ARS generates 35 per cent of the amount from less than one per cent of that area.

About 45 per cent of the total income of the farm is from the sale of vegetable and fruit seedlings and fruit graftings produced at the nursery. The processing centre at the station produces a range of value- added products including jams and pickles. Some of the hottest selling items are banana rhizome pickle, pseudostem pickle and raw mango squash.

“These two pickles by themselves, have the potential to make banana cultivation profitable for farmers and promote organic farming by offsetting the extra input costs, says Dr. P. Rajendran, Associate Director of Research, who heads the station. “We have demonstrated that a farmer can make an additional Rs. 4,000 from a single banana plant by producing the pickles,” he said.

Dr. Rajendran says value-added products from jackfruit also had immense potential to boost agricultural revenue and make farming more attractive. The station is planning to scale up its processing unit.

The ARS farm has three huge bottom-lined rain-fed ponds, each with a storage capacity of 10 million litres of rainwater. Out of the 500 tonnes of vermicompost manufactured here, a substantial portion is sold after meeting internal requirements.

The 270- strong workforce is organised into self-help groups and trained in specific areas of scientific farming, organic cultivation, plant management and product diversification.

The ARS also has a Hi-tech Karshika Karma Sena (agricultural army) of 123 youngsters trained in hi-tech methods of agriculture. The specialised unit offers its services to set up polyhouses, greenhouses, rain-shelters, drying yard, store and cattle sheds. It is distributing 300,000 growbags across the district.

“The Anakkayam station has made tremendous impact, in terms of transfer of technology as well as enhancing internal revenue of the University. This is a model we hope to emulate in other research stations,” says Dr. Rajendran.

The government has sanctioned an assistance of Rs.7 crore for an agro tourism project at the farm. A training centre, guest house, amphitheatre and duck farm are scheduled to come up on the farm under the project.

Dr. Rajendran is preparing to emulate the Anakkayam model at the research station in Ambalavayal, Wayanad, another unit under his charge. “ARS, Ambalavayal has 20 times the potential of Anakkayam. We hope to generate 2,000 jobs there in two years”.

Eco meeting calls for climate-smart agriculture

An international conference on Ecosystem Conservation, Climate Change and Sustainable Development (ECOCASD 2013) has urged the government to frame necessary policy, technical, and financial support to mainstream climate change considerations into agriculture and ensure sustainable agricultural development under varying conditions.

In its package of recommendations, a copy of which was released to the media on Sunday, the conference, which concluded here on Saturday, mooted a system of guaranteed income for farmers to make agriculture economically viable, and ensure food security and ecosystem conservation. It called on research institutions to develop drought- and flood-tolerant crops, and promote farming techniques that reduced carbon footprint and protected biodiversity. Highlighting the need to reduce the impact of climate change on agriculture, the three-day conference mooted partnerships with

communities, individuals, and the private sector for adaptation and mitigation measures. The package proposed the establishment of community-owned seed banks at the local level, and utilisation of lesser-known food crops through subsidies and financial assistance.

Maize, new favourite of Cuddalore ryots

There is a marked shift in the outlook of farmers and the crop pattern they have begun adopting in Cuddalore district.

The decision to shift from certain traditional crops to cash crops seems to have been influenced by three factors: the havoc wrought by cyclone 'Thane,' the drought condition that stretched over one-and-half years and profitability.

Deputy Director of Agriculture (State schemes) Ka. Ilango told *The Hindu* that the shift has become so pronounced in Mangalur and Nallur areas of Cuddalore district.

During the financial year 2011-2012, the area under maize crop stood at 14,900 hectares. But, as of now, it extended to 21,000 ha and there were indications that it might widen further. The region is known for traditionally cultivating millets such as raagi, kambu and varagu.

While the areas under raagi and kambu remained almost static, that of varagu had drastically come down from 3,800 ha to 2,500 ha . Undeterred by losses inflicted on them by the cyclone and the prolonged drought condition, farmers stuck to cultivation inherited from their forefathers.

Asked why they were attracted to maize, Mr. Ilango said that the crop had a ready market as orders had started flowing from cattle and poultry feed traders.

Karmangudi Venkatesan, a progressive farmer, told this correspondent that farmers were gravitated to maize as it could be raised in both rain-fed and irrigated conditions.

"This short-time crop matures in three months and fetches steady returns , both in retail and bulk trade."

For raising maize on an acre, a farmer would have to spend on an average of Rs. 5,000 an acre and if the crop yield was good, it would fetch him Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 45,000 an acre.

Such profits could not be earned by raising any other crop, Mr. Venkatesan said. Moreover, maize was a sturdy crop whose yield size could not be grossly affected by vagaries of nature, he added.

According to Mr. Ilango, farmers in the region too had found cultivation of hybrid Bt. cotton an attractive proposition. Bt cotton had become a favoured crop because of its pest-resistance and high-yielding qualities.

Thus, area under Bt cotton cultivation rose to 8,500 ha from 6,000 ha in 2011-2012. However, there was a slight drop in sugarcane area that dwindled from 13,000 ha to 12,000 ha (planted crop), and from 19,000 ha to 16,000 ha.

However, Mr. Ilango further said that in the tail-end delta region, there was a steady increase in the area under paddy cultivation from 40,000 ha in 2011-2012 to 42,000 ha in 2012-13 and to 48,400 ha now.

On whether farmers were now taking to contract farming, Mr. Ilango said, "Farm practices in Cuddalore district would not truly conform to the term, but assured market and steady orders for the crop yield influence their decision on crop choice."

Welfare assistance for farmers



Tourism Minister S.P. Shanmuganathan handing over a assistance to a woman at Vilathikulam in Tuticorin district on Sunday.

Farmers from Kovilpatti and Vilathikulam have been extended welfare assistance through Uzhavar Paadhukappu Thittam on Sunday. Tourism Minister S.P. Shanmuganathan distributed it to beneficiaries in the presence of Collector M. Ravikumar.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa was keen on extending welfare schemes to farmers, the Minister said. According to a statement, assistance to the tune of Rs.8 lakh was provided to 126 beneficiaries in Vilathikulam and Rs.3.58 lakh to 61 beneficiaries in Kovilpatti.

The beneficiaries were provided with marriage assistance, educational assistance, besides accident relief and natural death assistance. The Collector said 45,000 beneficiaries had been included under the Uzhavar Paadhukappu Thittam over the last 10 days at special camps.

Besides, 2.50 lakh people were enrolled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in Tuticorin district. Hence, more farmers eligible for availing assistances should enrol under the scheme, he said.

As for special camps organised under the Amma Thittam, 9,530 petitions had so far been received and 4, 454 petitions were accepted, the Collector said.

C. Raju, Kovilpatti MLA, G.V. Markandeyan, Vilathikulam MLA, K. Vijaya Karthikeyan, Sub-Collector, Kovilpatti, and local body representatives took part in the function.

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Groundnut sowing hit by shortage of seeds in Yadgir

Officials blame it on lack of storage facilities in district

Acute shortage of groundnut seeds has disrupted the sowing operations in Yadgir district, which, according to the Agriculture Department officials, is due to lack of cold storage facility.

A majority of farmers, who were waiting to purchase certified groundnut seeds from the Raitha Samparka Kendras (RSKs) in Yadgir taluk, had to return empty handed due to short supply. As against the total demand of 10,000 quintals, the Karnataka Oil Federation (KOF) had supplied only 2,500 quintals of groundnut seeds, so far.

Additional quantity

The additional quantity of seeds could not be procured due to lack of storage facilities here, according to sources. Joint Director of Agriculture Department Balaraj said that 15 RSKs had been opened, including six in Yadgir, five each in Shahpur and Surpur taluks, for times supply of seeds, so that farmers could take up sowing operations for the Rabi season.

Mr. Balaraj, however, expressed confidence about the department being able to supply the required quantity of seeds to all farmers within the stipulated time and well before the sowing season.

Target

The department has fixed a target of 56,000 hectares for groundnut cultivation.

Of this, 20,000 h was in Yadgir taluk, and 18,000 h each in Shahpur and Surpur taluks.

To a question, Mr. Balaraj said that the district had recorded a normal rainfall so far. As against the average normal rainfall of 682 mm during September, the district received 656 mm, he added.

Training on dairy farming

Indian Overseas Bank Rural Self Employment Training Institute here will offer free training on dairy farming to rural unemployed youth for six days soon.

Experts from different fields will impart training and course completion certificates will be issued to the participants. The candidates should be in the age group of 18-35 years and should have passed class VIII. Interested candidates should submit applications with three passport size photos, and photocopies of mark list, transfer certificate, and ration card to the director, IOB RSETI, 1506/02 West fourth street, Thilagar thidal, Pudukottai.

The applications should be submitted before October 21. For details, dial 04322 225339.

— Special Correspondent

Tamil Nadu gets its first Spices Park in Sivaganga

The park set up at a cost of Rs. 20 crore is aimed at creating infrastructure and processing facilities for turmeric and chilli

“The fact that value added products can be exported from India will soon be proved with the establishment of Spices Park,” said Union Finance Minister P.Chidambaram while inaugurating Tamil Nadu’s first Spices Park at Muthupatti near Sivaganga on Sunday.

Exhorting the farming community to make good use of the facilities at the park, Mr. Chidambaram said that the establishment of the processing plants by exporters will create local employment opportunities.

He also assured that steps would be taken to bring in more spices such as curry leaves and coriander that can be processed and exported from Sivaganga.

The Spices Park set up in Sivaganga at a cost of Rs. 20 crore is aimed at creating infrastructure and processing facilities for turmeric and chilli produced in Tamil Nadu. The State holds around 10 per cent of the total production of spices in the country and is the second largest producer of turmeric. The average production of turmeric in the State is over three lakh tonnes per year.

Thanking the State Government for the allotment of land for the Spices Park, Mr. Chidambaram appealed to the cadre of various political parties to unite and strive for the growth and development of Tamil Nadu.

Turning point

In his address, Anand Sharma, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry said, “It is going to be a turning point for the people especially the farmers of Sivaganga.”

“Value addition of spices is significant, and it benefits the economy of the nation,” he added.

Speaking of quality control, Mr. Sharma also said that the Spices Board has set up 200 laboratories in the country to meet the international quality standards.

Highlighting the schemes implemented by the State Government for the farmers in Tamil Nadu, S. Damodaran, Tamil Nadu Agriculture Minister, urged the Centre to approve various schemes proposed by the State.

Technology transfer, the rural way

Sneha Tanda team of UAS-Dharwad is educating farmers on best practices



Students of UAS-Dharwad explaining a water supply technique to farmers

One of special attractions at the Krishi Mela (agriculture fair) held at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad recently was the stall set up by Sneha Tanda, a team of undergraduate students of the university.

Various simple technologies helping the farmers to get rid of problems in their work were displayed at the stall. It was quite interesting to see the students explaining to the farmers the benefits of the technologies in pure colloquial language.

Sneha Tanda is an initiative by UAS-Dharwad to engage the students in transfer of technology. Its main objective is to collect data on the simple and cost-effective farm technologies developed by experts as well as progressive farmers and reach them to the larger farming community. “The team focuses on transfer of simple technologies not costing above Rs. 10,000 and which have already been successfully implemented by progressive farmers. Even the working models are explained to the farmers,” said Kiran P. Dhareshwar, team member.

It is a voluntary group of 25 students of the first year of Bachelor of Science (Agriculture) course. Each year a fresh team comprising first year students is formed. The junior members run the activities of the team and the seniors guide them in designing and implementing the activities. Team members are selected based on personal interest, capacity to understand and explain technologies and the ability to communicate in the local dialect with the farmers.

Mohan Yadravi and Vinayak K. said the team members collect information about the technologies through field work. They go to the progressive farmers who had developed and implemented the simple technologies and gather information about them.

Even the women members of Sneha Tanda said they have been immensely benefited. It helps them receive the much required field knowledge and exposure which is not available in classroom activities. Students involved in Sneha Tanda activities will have an edge over others in matters of practical knowledge and grassroot communication skill when they complete the course after four year, said Manasa Kulkarni, Gangubai, Shruti S. and Shweta, team members.

Alumni role

The team also welcomes participation of alumni in its activities. The postgraduate and Ph.D. students who had been Sneha Tanda members will continue their association with the team. They play a key role in guiding the team members in developing the models, improving the communication skills, editing write-ups and other such work.

For instance, Anand Yeligar assisted them in setting up stalls and improving the models developed by the team members. Similarly, the team also involves the alumni who have been into agricultural activities after studies. Shivan Gouda, who runs an agriclinic in Belgaum, conducted awareness programmes on setting up agriclinics.

Community Radio

The team also broadcasts various programmes disseminating knowledge and information benefiting the farmers through the UAS-Dharwad's Krishi community radio 90.4 MHz. Krishi community radio station was set up in 2007 with the primary objective of reaching the farmers to address the issue of transfer of technologies and solving their problems.

As Sneha Tanda's motto corroborates with the community radio's objectives, it has been incorporated into the radio's activities. One-hour programmes are aired on selected themes on different occasions.

Books and models

The team is also into book publication. Every year it publishes books in Kannada which contain information on cost-effective technologies helping the farmers. For instance, the book titled 'Krishi Chetana' published this year has information on 16 farm technologies. It is given to the farmers at subsidised prices with financial assistance from the university. The books are distributed mainly on the occasion of Krishi Mela to be held in every September. There is good demand from the farming community for this book. The

team has also developed over 150 farm technology models which are popular among the farmers.

Decennial celebrations

Sneha Tanda has emerged as a trendsetter in involving agricultural science students in the process of transfer of technology. This model concept was started by the then students Ullas Kumar and late Ramesh Pawar in 2004. It is going to complete 10 years of fruitful service to the farming community and has emerged as a role model for others.

The team focuses on transfer of simple technologies not costing above Rs. 10,000 and which have already been successfully implemented by progressive farmers.

This is real field work

Farm varsity students stayed for three months in a village in Hassan taluk and promoted scientific farming methods

For the group of nine students, it was a different experience in the last three months. They were out of the classroom, right in the field of learning. Taking what they experimented with in their labs to the land, these students acquired the experience of working with farmers.

The University of Agriculture Sciences last year introduced the Rural Agriculture Work Experience (RAWE) programme for its students. As part of it, the students have to spend three months in a village with the farmers, actually working in the fields to complete their degree. The final year students of the Agriculture College located at Karekere near Hassan had deputed 156 students in different batches to eight villages in two taluks – Hassan and Channarayapatana.

A group of nine students – Abhilasha, Akshatha Shetty, Akshitha, Alok Y.G., Ambareesh, Annapurna, Arjuna, Ashwitha and Ataulla — stayed at Markuli village in Hassan taluk for three months. They conducted a survey of the village in July and collected data about the extent of agriculture land and crop pattern followed in the land and assessed awareness about scientific farming among farmers.

G. Nagesh, one of the coordinators of RAWE, said that preliminary survey was necessary to prepare an action plan for the activities spread over three months. “Each student was allotted five farmers. That student kept in touch with the farmers and assisted them in all agriculture-related operations.”

Yield improves

Potato, maize and ginger are the major crops cultivated by farmers of Markuli. For last few years the potato growers have not got average yield due to late blight, a fungal infection. “Despite spray of medicines we did not get good yield in the past years. This time the yield is better as we followed the instructions of the students,” said Suresh, a farmer in the village.

Y.G. Alok, a student, sharing his experience, said that farmers were spraying fungicides twice. But it was not sufficient to tackle the disease. “We helped them with the chemical combination and suggested that they spray four times. This saved the crop. Otherwise we could not have stopped spread of the disease,” he said. Similarly the students succeeded in tackling soft-rot disease affecting ginger crop.

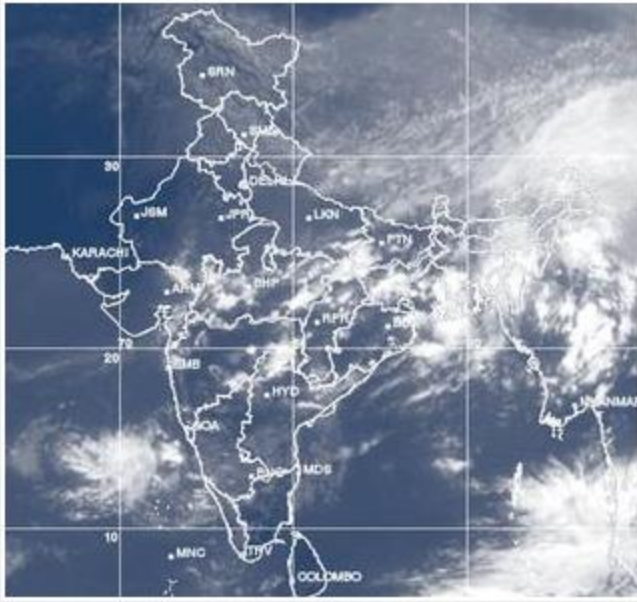
“Memorable experiences during the stay in the village include the appreciation we received from farmers when we were able to help them get better yield with our knowledge acquired in classrooms and laboratories of the college,” said Ataulla, another student.

The students were a bit worried when they entered the village for the three-month stay. But they were impressed by the villagers’ response.

“The people looked after us as members of their family. Our stay in the village was a memorable period of our life. Moreover, we learnt many things about agriculture from farmers,” said Akshatha Shetty.

Siddagangaiah, horticulture scientist and faculty in the college, said that the students have developed a crop museum, conducted demonstration on azolla cultivation, did vermicomposting and held crop seminars. “These activities have helped spread awareness among farmers regarding scientific cultivation,” he added.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on October 06th.

New Delhi (Plm)	34	24	0	5
New Delhi (Sfd)	34	23	0	7
Chandigarh	31	23	0	7
Hissar	34	22	0	4
Bhuntar	32	19	0	4
Shimla	23	14	0	65
Jammu	30	25	1	111
Srinagar	29	14	0	0
Amritsar	32	24	0	8
Patiala	32	24	0	6
Jaipur	32	23	0	tr
Udaipur	31	23	0	1
Allahabad	29	24	8	229
Lucknow	29	21	tr	20
Varanasi	28	24	12	86
Dehradun	30	23	0	18
Agartala	30	25	13	94
Ahmedabad	34	25	tr	25
Bangalore	28	19	0	tr

Bhubaneshwar	34	25	1	51
Bhopal	27	22	3	11
Chennai	35	24	0	17
Guwahati	31	23	70	165
Hyderabad	30	23	0	8
Kolkata	35	24	86	119
Mumbai	31	26	0	0
Nagpur	31	24	0	109
Patna	29	25	1	18
Pune	27	20	3	4
Thiruvananthapuram	33	24	0	14
Imphal	28	21	1	12
Shillong	24	16	30	44

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st October.

Mainly dry weather

The withdrawal line of South-west monsoon continues to pass through Kalpa, Hisar, Jodhpur and Nalia.

Rainfall: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at a few places over east Uttar Pradesh and at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, east Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly dry over the rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm. are: PUNJAB: Malakpur 3 and Madhopur 1, EAST RAJASTHAN: Aklera 5, Chabra, Sarmathura, Aspur and Ganeshpur 2 each and Beir, Chikli, Veja, Asnawar, Jhalawar and Pachpahar 1 each, JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Kathua 7 and Katra 3, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Gorakhpur 7, Handia, Salempur and Bansgaon 5 each, Allahabad Sadar, Shahganj and Hata 4 each, Deoria, Birdghat, Mukhlisipur and Ghosi 3 each, Azamgarh, Bansi and Dudhi 2 each and Sultanpur, Allahabad and Varanasi 1 each and WEST UTTAR PRADESH: garoatha anad lalitpur 3 each and Hamirpur, Rath and Mauranipur 2 each.

MAXIMUM TEMPERTURE: The maximum temperature rose markedly in west Uttar Pradesh, rose appreciably in east Rajasthan and Uttarakhand and changed little elsewhere. They were appreciably above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, appreciably below normal in east Rajasthan and east Uttar Pradesh, below normal in Punjab west

Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 37.8°C recorded at Jaisalmer (Rajasthan).

MINIMUM TEMPERATURE: The minimum temperature rose in Uttarakhand and changed little elsewhere. They were markedly above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, appreciably above normal in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, west Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, above normal in east Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 17.4°C recorded at Fatehgarh (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST FOR REGION VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 08th OCTOBER 2013 : Rain/thundershowers may occur at a few places over east-Uttar Pradesh during next 24 hours and decrease thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over east-Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and southeast parts of west-Uttar Pradesh. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 08th OCTOBER 2013: Partly cloudy sky becoming mainly clear sky.

Goddess Durga 'smiles' on pumpkin farmers

ALLAHABAD: Pumpkin, an otherwise obscure vegetable, has suddenly transformed into 'king of vegetables'. The demand for it has sky-rocketed as devotees, especially those in Kolkata, are using it as an alternative to the banned animal sacrifices.

Traders from West Bengal are thronging villages in [trans-Ganga and Yamuna areas](#) of the district for bulk purchases. Farmers too are smiling as their produce is being purchased at the field. These well-off traders, numbering around two-dozen, have come shopping for the best of the fat round pumpkins from the fertile belt of Saidabad and Soraon blocks of Allahabad and are making bulk purchases at rates much higher than the market price.

"These are happy times for the [pumpkin farmers](#) like me. Usually I would have received a meager Rs 500 to Rs 550 per quintal in the local market. However, now I am selling my entire produce in one go and that too at rates ranging from Rs 700 to Rs 800 per quintal to the traders from West Bengal," shares Ram Chandra Yadav of Jalalpur village in Saidabad block. He further says that instead of high-maintenance crops like bajra (millet) and dhaan (paddy) on a part of his fields, he had opted for pumpkins.

"I had planted the seeds during the first rain at June end and today I have sold my entire produce all within three to four months," says the farmer who owns around four bighas.

Fellow farmers Asha Pal, Bachcha Yadav, Ram Chandra, Ramhit and [Bhaiyya Ram](#) concur with his views. They are among 150-odd farmers across villages of Saidabad block like Pakri, Muteha, Dhankesra and Barethi where around 1,000 bighas is under pumpkin cultivation. Village like Jalalpur accounts for around 200 bighas under pumpkin cultivation.

Another pumpkin farmer, who sold off his produce to traders from West Bengal says "you can find around five to six trucks loaded with pumpkins going to West Bengal every day."

Banarasi, a trader from West Bengal busy sending off three truck loads of pumpkins to Kolkata, says that many devotees sacrifice these pumpkins, some in multiples, during the puja celebrations in West Bengal. With at least one such sacrifice of pumpkin at a pandal, there is huge demand during the festival period. Moreover, a large number of these vegetables are also used for cooking different dishes during the festivities.

"The size and quality of the pumpkins grown here are ideal for our need. We plan to

make these villages our regular annual destination." says Dinesh, another trader from Kolkata.

Kuttanad farmers to protest govt apathy

ALAPPUZHA:Farmers in Kuttanad are struggling to survive. Courtesy low subsidy for cultivation, absence of agriculture officers in Krishi Bhavans, cancellation of many schemes and unfriendly programmes for peasants.

All these are creating hardships for them.

Now, is the time of pancha cultivation. And the farmers say that they would start agitation programmes against the state government for ignoring their plight.

"Farming is my only source of livelihood. In the recent floods, I incurred heavy loss and now we are again gearing up for pancha cultivation. The government is not giving any attention other than making many major futile announcements. We need to spend Rs 22,000 to Rs 25,000 per acre for land preparation works for pancha farming. The government subsidy per acre is Rs 1,600. We also need to spend Rs 39 per kg for buying seeds. Till last year local bodies concerned gave Rs 5 as subsidy per kg of seeds. This time they cancelled it citing financial constraints," said Mathew, a farmer from Ramankari.

"The government should hike the subsidy per acre and also allot the seeds for cultivation free of cost. Otherwise they should give a good amount as subsidy for seeds. All the people know about the flood which we had faced. But the government has not announced any assistance for the farmers for the smooth conduct of the pancha cultivation this time," said Reghuvaran, a farmer from Kainakary.

"The condition of Kuttanad farmers is pathetic. They are doing pancha cultivation after severe floods. They are already in financial constraints. The government should come forward for giving better financial assistance to our poor farmers who work for our food. Many Krishi Bhavans in Kuttanad are functioning without agriculture officers now. So the farmers are unable to get their doubts cleared and get any advice from experts," said district panchayat president U Pratibha Hari.

"The government should conduct a study to understand the expenditure for pancha farming. Then they can easily understand the cost of the cultivation. As per the Kuttanad package fashioned by M S Swaminathan, Rs 50 crore should be set aside as immediate relief to farmers whenever they face any calamities. We have drawn the attention of both the state and centre governments for getting this amount. But they have not done anything for it till now. The state government should approach the Union government for this amount and this amount should be handed over to district collector. He can hand over

the amount immediately whenever farmers face crop loss due to various reasons," said Kuttanad Vikasana Samithy executive director Fr Thomas Peelianickal.

Tamil Nadu's first spice park to boost farmers, traders

SIVAGANGA: Spice trade in the state got a fillip on Sunday when a spice park, the fifth in the country and first in [Tamil Nadu](#) was opened at remote [Mattupetty village](#) in Sivaganga district.

The park, set up at a cost of Rs 20 crore on 29.43 hectares of land by the Spices Board was inaugurated by Union commerce and industries minister Anand Sharma in the presence of [Union finance minister](#) P Chidambaram. The park is expected to be a boost to spice farmers and traders in southern Tamil Nadu.

Addressing the gathering after inaugurating the park, Anand Sharma said that the export of spices has crossed Rs 10,000 crore mark, for the first time in 2012-13 and reached Rs 11,171 crore.

"This is first time in the history of spices exports from the country, the growth in volume has registered all time high of 22% over previous year," he said.

He said the Centre decided to establish the spices park for processing and value addition of turmeric and chillies in Tamil Nadu. The decision was taken in view of the state's second rank in the turmeric production with more than three lakh tonnes per year.

Sharma said that after the land in the park was allotted to entrepreneurs and exporters, more than 15 processing units would be established within the premises. The farming community can make a direct link with the exporters for selling their produce eventually eliminating intermediaries and shortening the supply chain.

[P Chidambaram](#) said that establishment of the spices park was a major initiative as part of its commitment for pro-farmer and agriculture specific growth. He said that the demand for processed spices was on a steady rise and noted that there was immense scope for extending cultivation of spices.

The park is one of 10 spice parks proposed across the country during 11th five year plan. The idea behind the parks is to provide common infrastructure facilities for both post-harvest and processing operations of spices.

The park at Sivaganga is equipped with communication facilities, effluence treatment system, warehousing, banking, laboratory analytical services, pre-shipment inspections and certification and customs clearance. Land in the [spice park](#) would be leased to entrepreneurs and exporters for setting up their own plants for value addition of spices.

Farmers start first direct vegetable market in Nashik

NASHIK: Devnadi Valley Farmers Producer Company Ltd, a group of small-time farmers based in Sinnar, has started supplying vegetables directly to consumers in the city at 10% less than the market rate.

The farmers had recently come together during various agricultural and water-related projects of Yuva Mitra, a non-governmental organization (NGO), and established the company. Over 1,000 farmers are part of the company, which has established exclusively for them.

In September, the farmers started selling their produce through chain markets. These markets are devoid of middlemen, enabling farmers to get value for their products by selling them directly. Besides, the farmers can also sell vegetables at a lesser price than market value.

On September 14, two such shops were inaugurated at Patil Park in Dongre Vasatigruha and Suyojit Lawns in Mahatmanagar in the city with the help of Yuva Mitra and another NGO, Atma. These shops are open every Monday and Thursday from 4 pm to 7 pm. The vegetables are brought for sale only after proper grading, sorting and packing.

"Around 25 types of fresh vegetables are sold in these shops. Farmers bring vegetables to the company after grading, sorting, packing and weighing. Thereafter, the company brings it to Nashik for sale. The farmers get Rs 2 to Rs 2.5 extra per kg and they can also save money for commuting to the markets. The absence of middlemen has reduced the rate of vegetables and the customers have to pay 10% less for fresh vegetables. Till now, we have sent seven consignments to the markets in Nashik," said Sunil Pote, founder of Yuva Mitra.

The vegetables are brought to the market within three hours of plucking from the fields. No chemicals are used for growing the vegetables as they are grown with the help of natural manure, he said.

In 2011, the members of the company had started an "agri mall" to solve the day-to-day problems of the farmers such as getting fertilizers, pesticides, farming instruments, seeds and tractors.

"All items sold at the agri mall benefits the customers up to 7%. Being of good quality, all items resulted in better yield. We want to start such markets in other societies," Pote added.

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University releases 4 new maize varieties at national level

COIMBATORE: Four maize varieties have been recently released by the maize department of [Tamil Nadu Agricultural University](#) (TNAU) at the national level this year.

All of them have passed rigorous field trials held across various states. "These varieties have passed tests proving that they have a higher productivity than 4 high varieties," said G Nallathambi, professor of maize breeding, department of millets at TNAU. These maize varieties were developed with the support of the [Indian Council of Agricultural Research](#) (ICAR). A variety tested successfully in 4 states can be released at the national level.

Nallathambi said that maize is considered to be a crop which would replace rice at the global level. "With temperature rise, paddy is becoming tough to cultivate, whereas maize is an ideal substitute," he said. Moreover, without any support mechanisms, farmers are able to get attractive rates.

Thousands of products can be developed from maize. This includes food, poultry feed and industry products. "The uses of maize are growing. Glucose and starch can be made from maize. Maize is even used to build the outer body part of airplanes. United States is focusing on developing bio-fuels from maize. Maize takes around 75 to 110 days to mature.

In 2005-06, maize was cultivated across 2 lakh hectares in Tamil Nadu, generating an annual production of 2.41 lakh tonnes. In 2011-12, when the latest study was held, the cultivation area was 2.81 lakh hectares and productivity stood at 16.95 lakh tonnes. While in 2005-06, the average productivity was 1,189 kilos per hectare, it increased to 6,042 kilos per hectare in 2011-12. "This jump in the productivity levels can be attributed to improved varieties of crops from both the public and private sectors.

Nallathambi said that many crop varieties are in the pipeline. Meanwhile, one of their varieties released last year, CO6, which is known as CMH08-282 at the national level has

begun to receive acceptance from other states. Two weeks ago they received a letter from the [Gujarat State Seeds Corporation](#) (GSSC) saying that they wanted to take up the production of CO6 variety of seeds and sought seeds from the centre. "We hope our efforts will help fulfill the food requirements of the nation," he said.

THE HINDU Business Line

Tea prices slip at Kochi sale

Kochi, Oct. 6:

Prices at Kochi Tea auctions witnessed a declining trend this week.

In sale no 40, the quantity on offer in Dust CTC grades was 10,62,000 kg. The market opened at Rs 5-10 lower. The decline in prices was more and there was lot of withdrawals. However, the drop in prices was less in the case of plainer teas with clean black appearance.

Kerala Loose Tea traders and upcountry buyers lent fair support, while some export enquiry noticed on grainier varieties.

The quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 4,000 kg and the demand was less. In the best CTC dusts, PD grades quoted Rs 107/122, RD varieties ruled Rs 122/180, SRD fetched Rs 131/156 and SFD stood at Rs 139/165.

The leaf sale witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 159,000 kg. The market for Nilgiri brokens, whole leaf was steady to firm and sometimes dearer. Fannings from the same regions moved up in value following quality.

Clean, black, well-made medium tippy grades, bolder brokens was firm to dearer. Others were irregular and lower. Whole leaf appreciated in value and Fannings sold around last levels. CIS and traditional exporters were active, while fannings was absorbed by tea bag companies and upcountry buyers.

The quantity of offer in CTC grades was 68,000 kg and there was a fair demand from exporters and upcountry buyers. However, the market was irregular and lower at Rs 3-5 .

In the dust category, Manjolai SFD fetched the best prices of Rs 166 . In the leaf grades, Pascoes Woodlands Hyson Green tea quoted the best prices of Rs 301 .

Global pepper prices to remain firm on tight supply

Kochi, Oct. 6:

Pepper futures on both the National Commodity exchange and the commodity-specific regional exchange showed a downward trend while the spot market gained on strong demand.

Hedgers and position takers were not active on the market while the day traders were active. As a result, the futures market decreased. At the same time in the international market all the origins except Brazil were showing firmer trend. Availability of material in Indonesia was tight following a drop in production. A similar situation exists in Vietnam also. In India also there is a squeeze in supply. Given this scenario the pepper market world over is likely to remain firm during rest of the year, according to S. Kannan, Executive Director, International Pepper Community, Jakarta.

According to him, black pepper output in Lampung this year is significantly lower by 15,000 tonnes from around 55,000 tonnes in 2012. In Brazil, this year production is estimated to be normal. In Vietnam, current stock is estimated to be limited. Out of the 1,18,000 tonnes harvested this year, a volume of around 1,00,000 tonnes have been exported during Jan-Aug.

It is reported that the Lampung crop is almost exhausted and there is no selling pressure from Brazil. As the rain gods have been kind the crop of 2014 is likely to be better than that of 2013 hence the farmers are advised not to hold many stocks this year, he said.

From the recent evaluation of the supply-demand scenario and the prevailing tight supply position, he said that one can assess that there is going to be shortage of 6,000-9,000 tonnes during the last quarter of the year.

Add to this, the importing countries have maintained a hand-to-mouth approach towards inventory and hence, there is no carry over left in the consuming countries. "This situation is precarious as any spurt in demand will boost the prices and the volatility will be high", he pointed out.

Indian parity, which remained competitive early last week turned out to be nearly outpriced following strengthening of the rupee against the dollar at the weekend,

market sources told *Business Line*. Dealers from Bihar and Jharkhand started turning towards Kerala and were active in the markets in Kannur, Kasargode, Malappuram, etc., of late. They were reportedly buying low bulk density pepper looking bolder such as Karnataka pepper directly from the primary markets at Rs 401-405 a kg.

This shift of these buyers who were hither to covering from Karnataka to Kerala gives the impression that the stocks in Karnataka have dried up, they said.

The active contracts on the futures market on the NMCE last week decreased by Rs 390 and Rs 100 respectively to Rs 43,150 and Rs 43,450 a quintal. Turnover dropped by 112 tonnes last week to 60 tonnes at the weekend. Net open position declined by four tonnes to 19 tonnes.

On the IPSTA, Oct and Nov contracts decreased by Rs 35 and Rs 235 respectively to close at Rs 43,375 and Rs 43,275. The turnover on this platform showed a sharp rise by 256 tonnes last week to close at 356 tonnes at the weekend.

Spot prices on good buying support soared by Rs 300 a quintal to close at Rs 40,400 (ungarbled) and Rs 42,400 (garbled) a quintal on Saturday. Indian parity in the international market was at around \$7,350 (c&f) for Europe and \$7,600 a tonne (c&f) for US.

Keep apples in 'coma' to make your life healthier

Controlled atmosphere storages in J&K prove a boon for growers



Luscious: Apples have a long storage life compared with other fruits as these can be stored for four-eight months after harvesting.

Recently in Srinagar:

The apples brought from nearby orchards are being put to deep sleep or coma in controlled atmosphere storage facility within 24 hours of their plucking. Stored at 2 degree Celsius temperature, the process cuts oxygen supply to the fruit to stop its ageing process.

Technically, the apple slips into coma. Then, as and when required, the apples are brought out from the cold storage facility and thus the oxygen supply resumes. The fruits are then dipped into water, washed, sorted and packed, ready to be transported to various destinations across India and abroad.

At present, Lassipora has four such facilities with a storage capacity of around 22,000 tonnes.

In two years, this area will have 10 units with 70,000 tonnes of storage capacity, which will make it the largest such facility in South Asia.

According to Government data, apple production is estimated at 21.42 lakh tonne in Jammu and Kashmir and 4.12 lakh tonne in Himachal Pradesh during 2012-13. These two States account for over 90 per cent of the country's total output.

Mir Khurram, the young man behind one such facility, HN Agro, says that in Europe nearly 99.5 per cent of the produce is brought to the controlled atmosphere storage, but in India this number is just 0.5 per cent.

“In the absence of storage facilities, the growers have no option but to sell the produce immediately, considering the perishable nature of the fruit. This also results in lower price realisation,” he said, adding that nearly 30 per cent of the produce gets wasted in this process. Now, with the controlled atmosphere facility, growers are able to sell their produce as and when they want to, even in off-season.

There is no post-crop loss, as there are refrigerated trucks that carry fruits to various destinations. Some facilities also provide a platform for the growers to sell their produce directly to distributors and big stores free of cost.

Of course, growers have to pay for the storage facility.

For instance, Khurram charges Rs 1.25 a kg a month. Still, such facilities help growers such as Sajjad and Mirwais to earn 1.5 times more than earlier. The State has over 2.8 lakh apple growers.

There is another option for apple growers. They can take help in the pre-farming stage, such as in buying seeds and in the farming process to get higher yields.

The apple harvesting season is September-October. Apples have a long storage life compared with other fruits as these can be stored for four-eight months after harvesting. The fruits can be kept in cold storage at a temperature of about – 1.1 degree to 0 degree Celsius and 85-90 per cent of relative humidity.

Financial aid

The apple economy in the State has got a boost through financing facility from State Government-owned J&K Bank. Officials said that the bank's apple scheme enables financial assistance either at pre-harvest stage for production cost, harvesting stage for picking/packing/ grading, post-harvest stage for marketing or for the entire production and marketing cycle.

At the same time, the bank-financed controlled atmosphere units such as Fruit Master Agro Private Limited, Golden Apple, Harshana Naturals and Kachroo Integrated Cold Chain, also get excise duty exemption and income tax benefits from the Government.

Gold loses haven status; sees waning investor interest



Mumbai, Oct. 6:

The big news of last week, the US government shutdown, has been engaging the attention of not only politicians but also businesses and markets. The debt ceiling issue is also looming and there is expectation of an agreement on the issue; if achieved it will boost the US business confidence.

As for commodity markets, despite some catalysts for upward price movement, gold has failed to benefit from the shutdown or reassert its haven status. Delayed tapering of QE has also not really benefited the yellow metal. Simply put, investor interest in this commodity has been subdued this year with sluggish demand growth contributing to reduced interest. Base metals have largely remained range-bound. On the other hand, calming of geopolitical tensions of recent weeks has meant a correction in crude oil prices. Following the shutdown, CFTC data release for the week may not materialise.

The week that went by was a mixed one for commodities. In the London market, precious metals were the worst hit. Gold was down 2.3 per cent in value, while palladium was the worst performer with a price decline of 2.6 per cent followed

by platinum with a loss of 2.1 per cent. Silver moved up marginally over the week. The LME base metals complex was generally soft. Lead and zinc were down 2.7 and 1.9 per cent respectively. While copper softened, tin was up 2.8 per cent to end the week at \$23,962 a tonne.

As we move closer to the year-end and more data become available from the US and other economies, tapering will surely come to the centre stage. In the event, further corrections in some of the commodities such as gold can be expected. Meanwhile, macro data and demand-supply fundamentals of individual commodities will drive the market.

Gold: losing sheen

The metal has pared much of the gains it enjoyed post-FOMC meeting last month when prices rose as high as \$1,370 an ounce. However, it has failed to gain from a host of favourable developments including delayed tapering, the US government shutdown and political uncertainty in Italy. Additionally, the US debt ceiling uncertainty (October 17 deadline) is looming. Gold-backed ETP holding have continued to fall although the pace has slowed. At the same time, a weaker dollar has supported prices from falling further.

The sentiment towards gold has remained hesitant as gross long positions have been scaled back. In the near-term, so long as the dollar remains weak, gold will enjoy support and may trade in a range.

On Friday in London, gold PM Fix was \$1,310/oz, down from the previous day's \$1,316. Silver gained marginally to a Friday AM Fix of \$21.65 versus the previous day's \$21.57. Platinum ended the week at \$1,386 (\$1,373) and palladium was unchanged at \$706.

Demand conditions in two major consuming countries India and China are reported to be improving. With festival season kicking in and crop harvests in full swing, Indian physical demand is seen supporting prices, although the strength of demand is not remarkable. With prices still hovering around Rs 30,000 for 10 gram and limited expectation of appreciation, buyers have turned cautious.

Metals: Range-bound

Prices have remained largely range bound over the past week. Market participants are looking forward to the LME Week. As if in anticipation, aluminium and copper traded higher on Friday. A close of \$1,800/tonne for aluminium meant a year-on-year decline of 8.6 per cent and at \$7,232 copper was down 11 per cent year-on-year.

China's fading growth momentum has become a matter concern for the market even as supplies are improving. Some metals such as copper are expected to fall into a state of surplus by the end of the year. QE tapering decision will also pressure prices down. So, price weakness is likely to extend into 2014.

Crude: on a slip

With dissipation of geopolitical tensions and improvement in supplies, the market is correcting down. In recent weeks, oil has pared close to \$10 a barrel. The possibility of a stock build is real. Analysts hold Q4 Brent price forecast at \$105 a barrel. There is belief, tapering would have little effect on this market.

Export enquiries boost tea at N. India auctions

Kolkata, Oct. 6:

The total offerings (packages) at three North Indian auction centres at Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri were 4,20,941 against 4,54,114 in the corresponding sale last year. Of this, the offerings at Kolkata comprised CTC/Dust 1,19,884 (1,56,423), Orthodox 38,055 (35,626) and Darjeeling 10,759 (9,258). The offerings at two other centres handling mainly CTC/Dust, were: Guwahati 1,46,105 (1,39,784) and Siliguri 1,06,138 (1,13,023).

Liquoring Assam CTC teas maintaining quality were firm to occasionally dearer while remaining Assams were irregularly lower. Dooars sold at irregularly lower levels. Tata Global was the mainstay. Hindustan Unilever was selective. Western India operated actively for the liquoring teas. There was a fair amount of enquiry from other internal and local sections. Export enquiries on fannings showed improvement.

Orthodox tippy teas sold well in line with quality. Clean well made whole leaf and broken were around last. Fannings were irregularly easier. CIS and West Asia shippers were active. There was some Continental interest on the tippy teas. Hindustan Unilever operated selectively.

Darjeeling offerings met with better enquiry. Selected whole leaf varieties maintaining quality were readily absorbed. Broken and fannings also declined. There was fair export interest. Local dealers operated for cheaper sorts. Tata Global was selective while there was better support from Hindustan Unilever.

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Oct 7

Max Min

32° | 26°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 63

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:58

Sunset: 05:55

Barometer: 1009.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Oct 8

Max Min

34° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Oct 9



34° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday
Oct 10



32° | 27°

Overcast

Friday
Oct 11



31° | 26°

Overcast

Saturday
Oct 12



31° | 26°

Overcast

Sunday
Oct 13



31° | 26°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 81

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:17

Sunset: 06:00

Barometer: 1010.9

