

# THE HINDU



## **Relief package placed before State Cabinet subcommittee**

The Union and the State governments are expected to jointly provide assistance to coconut growers in 11 districts of Karnataka who have been in distress for over two years following large-scale devastation of coconut palms due to moisture stress and pest attacks.

Sources in the State government told *The Hindu* that a comprehensive package had been finalised by an official team and placed before a Cabinet subcommittee. After getting the Cabinet approval, the package would be forwarded to Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar.

## **Tentative nod**

The Centre has tentatively agreed to provide special assistance to Karnataka under the aegis of the National Horticulture Mission and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana for the benefit of coconut growers. A high-level team from the State under the chairmanship of Minister for Horticulture Shamanur Shivashankarappa and Principal Secretary, Horticulture, M.K. Shankaralinge Gowda along with several members of Parliament from the State recently called on Mr. Pawar.

The cost of providing relief to coconut growers (nearly Rs. 580 crore) will be shared by the Union and State governments in the ratio 50:50 and this is the first time that such a massive assistance scheme is being extended to the growers of one horticultural crop.

Karnataka has been seeking the support of the Centre to provide relief to coconut growers for nearly two years. The major coconut growing districts in the State are Mysore, Mandya, Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Chamarajanagar, Tumkur, Hassan, Chitradurga, Bangalore Rural, Chickballapur and Kolar.

According to a report prepared by the State Horticulture Department, coconut plantations on 1.65 lakh hectares of land have been either totally devastated or affected partially.

## **Report**

“Nearly 2 crore coconut palms have dried up in about two years due to lack of rain and due to diseases and pest attacks.” A Central study team comprising senior scientists had recently toured the affected areas and submitted a report to the government.

The former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, who represents the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency which largely comprises of coconut growing areas, has also made a representation to the Union government and requested for assistance.

The State Cabinet subcommittee on coconut is headed by Minister for Revenue V. Srinivas Prasad and includes Minister for Law T.B. Jayachandra, Minister for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda apart from Mr. Shivashankarappa.

Coconut is an important plantation crop of Karnataka. It is grown on nearly 4.91 lakh hectares of land, accounting for 26 per cent of the total area under horticultural crops in the State. The State produces 528 crore coconuts a year and ranks second in the country. Coconut is cultivated mostly in the south interior parts and coastal regions of Karnataka.

## **Rs. 1,000-cr. loss**

Nearly 70 per cent of the total coconut growing area has been severely affected due to recurrent dry spell in over two years, resulting in an estimated loss of over Rs. 1,000 crore.

Moisture stress in soil has resulted in low productivity and this is expected to have an impact for at least two years despite good rain during this monsoon.

## **Kuruvai procurement picking up**

**7,000 tonnes of paddy procured in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts so far**



The procurement of kuruvai paddy in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts is expected to reach its peak at around Deepavali festival. —FILE PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Kuruvai procurement is picking up in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts. Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) has so far procured 7,827 tonnes of Kuruvai paddy in the two districts.

Of this, 2,297 tonnes had been procured in Tiruvarur district while 5,530 tonnes had been procured in Thanjavur district.

One hundred and forty nine direct purchase centres are functioning in Thanjavur district while 60 are functioning in Tiruvarur district. “We are receiving an average of 800 tonnes a day,” said TNCSC officials in Thanjavur district. In Tiruvarur district, arrival is of the order of 1,000 tonnes a day.

TNCSC is paying 1,415 a quintal (Rs. 1,345 price plus Rs. 70 as incentive) for fine variety and Rs. 1,360 a quintal for common variety (Rs. 1,310 as price plus Rs. 50 as incentive).

Kuruvai was raised only in pumpset-irrigated areas this year in the two districts. It was raised on 28,000 hectares of land in Thanjavur district and 16,000 hectares of land in Tiruvarur district.

Harvest had begun and it would reach the peak around Deepavali. TNCSC was procuring paddy with 17 per cent moisture content.

### **Samba**

Meanwhile, samba transplantation is going on in full swing in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts. In Tiruvarur district, the plan is to raise the crop on 1.30 lakh hectares of land and in that cultivation had already been done using direct sowing method on 70,000

hectares. In Thanjavur district, the plan was to raise samba on 1.18 lakh hectares of land. Transplantation had been completed on 50,000 hectares of land.

## **With some help, potato farmers got better yield this year**

### **Students from agriculture college gave them advice**



Made a difference: The group of nine students stayed in Markuli village in Hassan taluk for three months as part of the Rural Agriculture Work Experience (RAWE) programme.

Farmers in Markuli village are a happy lot.

This year, late blight (a fungal infection) that affected their potato fields was dealt with early, resulting in better yield compared to previous years.

Help came in the form of nine students from the Government Agriculture College in nearby Karekere who gave the farmers advice and tips. They stayed in the village for three months as part of the Rural Agriculture Work Experience (RAWE) programme.

### **‘We got guidance’**

“Last year, owing to lack of rainfall and guidance, we lost our potato crop to late blight. This time, the crop was saved as the students stayed with us and guided us,” said Suresh, a potato farmer.

Every year, potato farmers receive information on the steps to be taken to prevent spread of late blight from the Horticulture Department. But the department staff are not be in a position to stay with the farmers and oversee everything.

### **Different approach**

Gangadhar, another farmer, said: “Last year, we sprayed fungicide twice. But this time, the students suggested that we spray it four times by changing the combination of chemicals every time. With that, we could get a better yield. Of course, rainfall was better this year than the previous year.”

As part of the RAWE programme, the college deputed its final year students to different villages. The students went to the village in July and the programme will come to an end on October 6.

### **Field work**

Siddagangaiah, horticulture scientist in the college, said: “The objective of the programme is to make students familiar with field work. Learning in classrooms alone will not help them. They go to villages and stay with the residents to get experience.”

Before going to stay in the village, the students collected data about the extent of the fields, crop pattern and identified areas that required scientific intervention. “Each student was allotted five farmers, whom they have to meet regularly. If the farmer is sowing, the student has to join in. The students have to join in at the time of spraying medicines as well,” said G. Nagesh, coordinator of the RAWE.

### **‘Memorable experience’**

The students found the experience “memorable”.

One of the students, Y.G. Alok, said he was very happy to be able to tackle the spread of late blight in the village. “They appreciated our effort in safeguarding their crop. They followed our instructions at each level,” he said.

Annapoorna, another student, that she, like the others, was a little worried initially. “But the residents made our stay here memorable. We are happy that we could help the farmers tackle the late blight that had affected the potato crop and the soft-rot disease that had affected the ginger crop. What we learnt in the field will help us in our careers,” she said.

### **Subsidy for pacific white shrimp farmers**

The department of fisheries has proposed to provide subsidy for pacific white shrimp farmers (L.Vannamei) in the district. The proposal under the NADP-2013-14 scheme envisages a subsidy allocation of Rs. 22.79 lakh for 12 farmers. Subsidy allocation will be made only for an area of up to two hectares. There are over 803 registered prawn farms in the district of which, 56 farms have been issued licence for farming pacific white shrimp by the Coastal Aquaculture Authority. Preference will be given to farmers on

first-come-first-served basis. Farmers are requested to contact the department of fisheries for registration. — Staff Reporter

### **Sorake promises relief to areca growers**

Minster for Urban Development Vinay Kumar Sorake on Monday directed the district officials to immediately distribute compensation to arecanut growers who suffered losses due to fruit-rot disease (Kole Roga).

He was presiding over the Udupi taluk-level review meeting on the implementation of government schemes. Mr. Sorake said the government had released Rs. 3.25 crore to be distributed as compensation to Udupi farmers. Rs. 12,000 per hectare would be given as compensation to the affected growers, he said.

The officials of Revenue and Horticulture Departments should conduct a joint survey of the affected plantations immediately and distribute payout cheques to the areca growers by the end of next week, he said.

The government wanted to take administration to the doorsteps of the people. Government officials should visit villages and accept petitions from the people. They should attend Gram Sabha meetings in the district. This would lead to better coordination and increase the confidence of the people in the administrative machinery, he said.

Mr. Sorake directed the officials to reach targets with regard to schemes and programmes aimed at the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, the Backward Classes and the Minority communities.

### **Move to convert farmers into buyers**

About five weeks after being launched in the Nilgiris, the Perimetro Vegetable Cluster Development Programme of the State Horticulture Department is now in the process of undergoing changes to iron out shortcomings.

### **Teething problems**

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Tuesday, Joint Director of Horticulture N.Mani said that teething problems such as shortage of buyers was now engaging the attention of the department here.

Even buyers from the Cooperative Department had not yet started going to the collection centres.

Hence, it had been decided to convert some of the farmers into buyers.

Stating that assistance can be extended under the programme for implementing such a scheme, he said that at the Kil Kauhatty collection centre some of the farmers had been identified as buyers.

In the Anikorai collection centre the process was on.

### **Outlet in Coimbatore**

With the help of the department, an outlet would be opened in Coimbatore within about 10 days for marketing the vegetables collected here under the Perimetro programme, Mr. Mani said.

Help would also be provided to transport the vegetables from here to Coimbatore, he added.

To a question, Mr. Mani said that under the programme about 2.5 to 3 tonnes of vegetables were being purchased daily.

### **CM urged to meet cane farmers**

Office-bearers of Bharatiya Krushika Samaja (BKS) have urged the Chief Minister, who is scheduled to hold 'Janata Darshan' in Belgaum on Wednesday, to announce the government's decision on sugarcane prices during his visit.

Addressing reporters here on Tuesday, state secretary of BKS Siddhagouda Modagi urged Mr. Siddaramaiah to hold discussions with farmers' representatives and sugar factory owners during his visit.

Taking a dig at the State government for failing to address the concerns of sugarcane growers, Mr. Modagi said that while the government had announced packages for arecanut and red gram, it had not done so for sugarcane.

Despite farmers submitting several memoranda and holding a protest on Gandhi Jayanti, the State government was yet to resolve the issue, he said. Mr. Modagi alleged that the government had yielded to pressure from the sugarcane lobby and had neglected the farmers.

He said if the State failed to address their concerns, cane farmers from Belgaum, Bagalkot, Dharwad and Bijapur would hold a meeting on October 10 to chalk out the next course of action.

He said sugar factories in Punjab, Haryana and Uttaranchal were paying Rs. 2,850, Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 2,800 per tonne. Another factory in Gujarat was paying Rs. 3,880 per ton for the sugarcane procured, he said.

He urged the State government to fix a minimum price of Rs. 3,500 per tonne of sugarcane procured from farmers.

### **Farmers suffer losses on poor quality seeds**



The farmers from Kalghatagi taluk held a protest demonstration in front of the deputy Commissioner's office in Dharwad on Tuesday.

Despite claims from Agriculture Department officials regarding streamlining of the sale of seeds, complaints against seed sellers duping farmers by selling substandard quality seeds have not come down.

In a fresh incident, farmers of Kalghatagi taluk have complained about crop loss due to the supply of poor quality seeds.

The farmers who brought the issue to the notice of Deputy Commissioner Sameer Shukla here on Wednesday, said they had to incur heavy losses due to crop failure. They had purchased seeds from private firms recommended by Department of Agriculture officials.

As the district had received good rainfalls after three consecutive years of natural calamities, the farmers were expecting good yield during this season, they said. The seeds were of poor quality and the cotton did not flower, they said. A farmer said he had got no yield in his entire two acres of field and was worried how to repay the loan he took for cultivation.

The farmers bought the Kanaka 7351 variety Bt cotton seeds from Sangameshwar Agro Centre in Hubli in May-June.

These seeds were recommended by the assistant director of the Department of Agriculture in Kalghatagi.



The district administration should conduct an inquiry into this matter and see that compensation was paid to farmers, they said and added the issue had to be settled within seven days.

### **Relief sought for farmers**

Bharatiya Janata Party functionaries, led by MLC D.S. Veeraiyah and former MLAs M. Narayanaswamy and Y. Sampangi, staged a protest outside the Deputy Commissioner's office on Monday demanding compensation for farmers who lost their cattle due to foot-and-mouth disease. The Animal Husbandry Department and Kolar and Chickaballapur Cooperative Milk Union Ltd. should have created awareness among farmers about cattle vaccination, they said. Deputy Commissioner D.K. Ravi received their memorandum and said farmers need not pay for cattle vaccination. — Staff Correspondent

### **High soil acidity impairing crop productivity**



Planning Board Vice-Chairman K.M. Chandrasekhar with member C.P. John (right), J.S. Samra, CEO, NRAA, Planning Commission (second from left), and A.K. Sikka, Deputy Director-General, ICAR, New Delhi, (extreme left) during the inauguration of a national workshop on 'Soil fertility evaluation - towards a State framework for 12th and 13th Five Year Plan' organised by the State Planning Board in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.— Photo: S. Mahinsha

Soil acidification has assumed serious proportion in farmlands across Kerala, impairing the productivity of most crops, a multi-institutional survey on soil fertility has revealed.

The study coordinated by the Kerala State Planning Board revealed elevated levels of acidity in 91 per cent of the 200,000 soil samples collected for analysis from across the State.

As many as 54 per cent of the samples tested for strong to very strong and extremely acid reaction.

All farmlands in the State, except the southern coastal plains, Attappady hills and eastern Palakkad plains reported heavy acidity.

According to the report of the study, the primary cause for soil acidification in Kerala is indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers, intensification of agriculture through high-yielding crop varieties and the neglect of the traditional practice of applying lime to neutralise the acidity.

Strongly acidic soils provide a stressed environment for plant growth. It impairs the absorption of nutrients and inhibits the microbial process responsible for nitrogen fixation and decomposition of organic matter in the soil.

In strongly acidic soils, the high concentration of aluminium ions affects plant roots. Biofertilizers are found to be ineffective in acidic soil.

The study involving the Department of Agriculture, Kerala Agricultural University, institutions under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP), utilised 14 laboratories to analyse the 200,000 soil samples for major, secondary and micro nutrients. The project is aimed at developing soil-based plant nutrient management plans for the 978 panchayats in the State.

### **Phosphorous problem**

The survey also revealed exceedingly high levels of phosphorous, with 80 per cent of the soil samples showing considerable build-up of the nutrient.

The indiscriminate application of phosphatic fertilizers over a long period is blamed for the high level of phosphorous in soils which interferes with the uptake of other essential nutrients like zinc and boron.

Phosphorous run off from farms is a major source of contamination of water bodies. It promotes excessive growth of algae and weeds in streams and lakes, affecting fish and other aquatic organisms.

Washed out to sea, it also pollutes the marine environment, often triggering harmful algal blooms.

The study also revealed that 59 per cent of the soil samples were deficient in boron, a micro nutrient, while 74 per cent were deficient in magnesium and 40 per cent low in calcium.

Boron deficiency can lead to stunted growth and deformities in plants while low magnesium levels results in yellow leaves and fruit rot. Calcium deficiency is responsible for impaired root growth and fruit rot.

### **Recommendations**

The study report, to be released here on Friday, recommends regular application of lime or cheaper alternatives like dolomite to combat soil acidity and alleviate the deficiency of calcium. It also proposes application of borax to address the deficiency of boron.

The report advocates a 50 per cent reduction in the use of phosphatic fertilizers to correct the excess of phosphorous.

### **Call to step up productivity of cash crops to overcome FTA challenge**

Kerala will have to step up productivity of cash crops if it is to overcome the challenge posed by India's Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and their trade partners, J.S. Samra, CEO, National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA), Planning Commission, has said.

Talking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a national workshop on soil fertility here on Tuesday, Dr. Samra said the FTA posed a major crop productivity challenge for Kerala, as cheaper products such as rubber, cashew, spices, and coffee from the nine ASEAN countries were flooding the market. "With their higher productivity, the ASEAN countries are in a position to erode Kerala's share of the market. Black pepper from Vietnam and palm oil from Indonesia are examples. The only option before Kerala is to improve productivity if it is to catch up with the ASEAN rivals."

He said the State would have to match the highest productivity level of its market rivals, even in the case of rubber. "The trade agreements between ASEAN countries and China, New Zealand, and Australia raise an indirect challenge for Kerala that the State can ill-afford to neglect."

Dr. Samra said the worldwide decline of marine fish stocks should force Kerala to look at replacing capture fisheries with culture fisheries.

Advocating an integration of paddy cultivation and fish farming, he said it would also help the State meet its nutritional and food security requirements. "As a species sensitive to the environment, fish can be a good indicator of soil health. By responding to slight variations in water quality, farmers are alerted to the need for timely interventions."

The State, he said, would have to devise methods to improve the productivity of inland fisheries.

## **Mobile farm-fresh outlets to be rolled out soon**

To reach out to more number of households and to give boost to farm-fresh vegetables, the Cooperation, Food and Consumer Protection Department has decided to buy five vans.

Currently, the department is selling farm-fresh vegetables in select areas through 29 outlets in the city. As there is a demand from households, the department plans to deploy two vans for selling vegetables and three for transporting vegetables from different parts of the State.

According to informed sources, the State government will spend Rs. 70 lakh for purchase of five vans.

After modifying it as per the requirements, two of them will be used by the Triplicane Urban Co-operative Society. The department will use the remaining three vans for procuring vegetables from primary marketing cooperative societies located in the districts of Krishnagiri, The Nilgiris and the regions surrounding Palani.

### **Design yet to be finalised**

“The G.O. was issued on Tuesday. Each truck will have a capacity to carry five to six tonnes of vegetables. We are yet to finalise the design that might include refrigeration or cold storage facility as vegetables and fruits have to be brought to the city in fresh condition. The exact date of launch will be announced soon,” an official said.

Having commenced the sale of farm-fresh vegetables on June 20 in Chennai, the department till date has sold 1,800 tonnes of vegetables with the retail sales volume crossing Rs. 5 crore on Tuesday.

“Though the daily sale of vegetable is about Rs. 4 lakh, more and more customers have started to visit our outlets as the prices are comparatively cheaper than the open market. In the recent times, we have brought down the prices of onion, tomato, ginger and coconut by timely intervention. Following requests from customers, we are deploying two mobile outlets and the routes will be finalised soon,” the official added.

## Spurious fertilizer unit busted



Officials of the Agriculture Department seizing fake pesticides in Kuyavarpalayam in Madurai on Monday during a surprise check. Photo: S. James

Yet another spurious fertilizer manufacturing unit has been unearthed in the city within a span of 10 days.

The seizure of fake zinc sulphate came in the wake of complaints voiced by farmers at the grievance meeting held by District Collector L. Subramanian on Monday that the chemicals used by them were ineffective in controlling pests.

A special team led by Joint Director (Agriculture) Jayasingh Gnanadurai was formed to track the bogus fertiliser units.

Ten days ago, a unit in Kamaraj Nagar in Tallakulam was raided and sealed. A week later, officials seized fake farm aid products from a godown near Tamil Sangam Road.

On Monday, the team raided the premises owned by R.D. Kumar off Old Kuyavarpalayam where spurious chemicals were stored. Kumar confessed to running the clandestine operation for over seven years, officials said.

Government sleuths also seized goods worth Rs 9 lakh from unauthorised premises in Melur. Mr. Gnanadurai appealed to farmers not to be lured by false offers and discounts.

***Ten days ago a unit in Kamaraj Nagar was sealed***

## **Volatile food prices here to stay, says FAO**

Volatility in food prices is here to stay, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has said, even as it called upon its member countries to adapt to the situation by helping small landholding farmers and low income groups.

“The world’s food price problems are not over despite a current market lull,” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva told a ministerial meeting on international food prices in Rome. More than 30 Agriculture and Food Ministers participated in the meeting held on the sidelines of the 40th Session on World Food Security.

Representing India, Union State Minister for Food K.V. Thomas acknowledged that this year’s meeting was taking place in less troubled times than the first event in October 2012, when Ministers came together in response to the third spike in international grain prices in five years. “The outlook for international food commodity markets finally looks calmer this year. Grain production has rebounded and higher stock-to-use ratios should bring greater stability to prices. The FAO Cereal Price Index is 20 per cent lower than a year ago.”

But although prices have stabilized, Mr. Silva cautioned against dropping the guard. “International prices have declined but they are still above their historical levels. And prices are expected to remain volatile over the next few years,” he warned, adding that “higher prices were not necessarily all bad news as they came after three decades of stagnant prices that negatively affected the farm sector in many poor countries.” Asking nations to prepare for future market turbulence, he said: “If higher and volatile prices are here to stay, then we need to adapt to this new pattern.”

## **‘Fix sugarcane price at Rs. 3,500 per tonne’**

### **Farmers assail Centre, State Government for not announcing procurement price**

Assailing the Central and State Governments for not announcing the procurement price for sugarcane so far, the Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam has demanded that the price be fixed at Rs. 3,500 per tonne.

The cultivation expenditure has gone up by 60 per cent due to drought conditions, shortage of labourers, and escalation in input costs, Sangam State president K. Venkatachalam said.

After a meeting of the Sangam’s executive committee here Tuesday, Mr. Venkatachalam wanted the Government to take immediate steps to ensure payment of outstanding amounts to farmers by Sakthi Sugar Mill.

Though water was released from the Bhavani Sagar Dam 45 days back, sowing could not be carried out in the tail-end areas of the main canal and branch canals due to paucity of water.

Steps must be taken by water managers to ensure adequate supply to the tail end areas, he said.

Due to the drought situation, banks must write off the crop loans. Based on the expenditure incurred for cultivation, the drought compensation must be fixed between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 25,000 per acre. Remunerative prices must be announced for all types of agricultural produce.

The Government must procure cow and buffalo milk for Rs. 30 and Rs. 40 per litre respectively, he said.

Mr. Venkatachalam wanted the Government to withdraw its project for concrete lining of Lower Bhavani canal saying the move would eliminate possibility for groundwater recharge. Farmers rely heavily on groundwater for sustaining agriculture throughout the year.

Farmers of Erode, Tirupur and Karur districts would resist the concrete lining project with rallies and a conference planned during February 2014, Mr. Venkatachalam said.

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### **Dizzy heights of 'green collar jobs'**

Of late, harvesting coconut palms have become a tall order for farmers in the State. Many are even thinking of quitting farming.

However, Kollam is witnessing a trend reversal, courtesy a 35-strong corps of trained climbers. Clad in jeans, T-shirts, and caps, members of the "Thenginte Changathikoottam" (Friends of the Coconut Tree) spread out in different directions from 5 a.m. every day on motorbikes and autorickshaws, in response to phone calls (9447 303811) from big and small farmers.

They take pride in their "green collar job" and even cater to city dwellers owning just one palm or two.

The charge is reasonable — Rs.20 for a palm. If the place is too far from their base, which is Ambalamkunnu, a moderate TA is charged. Bookings have to be done 10 days in advance.

### **Degrees galore**

A team member, Thulasi Narayanan, is a Ph.D. He says he wasted time by joining politics, earning nothing. Now, as part of the group, he gets around Rs.30,000 a month. Another 'friend,' Sreemon, has done BBA and is saving money for his MBA. The youngest, Vineesh, 21, is a graduate in Political Science from Sree Narayana College, Kollam. The fastest climber is a woman, Martina, from Kottarakara. She set a record at the 'Coconut Olympics' organised by the Coconut Development Board by climbing a 40-foot palm in 1 minute and 13 seconds using a coconut palm climbing device provided by the Board. In September, she set a record by harvesting coconuts from 120 palms a day.

The team has two 'masters', Anil and Rajan, both toddy-tappers. Anil says that demand is heavy and on some days, he takes around 400 phone calls. The group already has clients at Pangode, Anchuthengu and Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram district and in parts of Alappuzha district.

Anil says his team practises yoga. None of them smoke or drink. In fact two members of the team who used to drink heavily gave up alcohol after joining the group. They were trained in palm climbing, using the climbing device, by the Krishi Vigyan Kendram at Sadanandapuram.

Anil says that if farmers feel confident that their palms could be harvested in time, coconut farming will once again thrive in Kerala. With the market price of a coconut touching Rs.25, coconut farming is becoming more attractive, he says.

Apart from harvesting, Anil's group caters to disease-control measures and adding manure to palms at the right time. Harvesting at the right time is vital for the palm's health. Delay will result in the nuts losing demand too, he says.

***A 35-member group of palm climbers has brightened the prospects of coconut farming in Kollam***

### **Call to step up productivity of cash crops to overcome FTA challenge**

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The State, he said, would have to devise methods to improve the productivity of inland fisheries.

## For farmers, cumin smells of money

AHMEDABAD: In the last two years, the state's [cumin farmers](#) have become richer by Rs 739.5 crore. Cumin production in the state has increased nearly threefold since the financial year 2010-11.

According to officials at [Agriculture Produce Market Committee](#) at Unjha, in 2010-11, production was 4.90 lakh quintals which went up to 7.99 lakh quintals the next year and by 2012-13 it touched a record 11.13 lakh quintals. Officials say the increase has brought down prices at the Unjha Agriculture Produce Market Committee. The cumin prices which were as high as Rs 18,500 a quintal have now fallen to Rs 12,000 per quintal in 2012-13.

Sources said that in monetary terms, income at the APMC was Rs 596.23 crore in 2010-2011 and has grown to Rs 1,335.73 crore.

This is because exports have increased by at least 20%. Simultaneously, yield per hectare has also gone up. Yields which were around 2,000 kg per hectare are now at over 2,400 kg a hectare. According to APMC officials exports have increased because of greater demand not only from foreign markets but also as there is an increase in demand from perfume companies.

Officials said research has proved that the predominant compound in cumin, cuminaldehyde, accounts for up to 40% of the seed's oil content. Aldehydes are rich in naturally-occurring oxygen compounds and they are used in perfume industry.

Agriculture officials said parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat grow jeera or cumin almost exclusively. Banaskantha and Mehsana in Gujarat, and Barmer, Jalore, Jodhpur and Nagaur in Rajasthan are the major jeera producing areas. The two states together account for more than 95% of the country's cumin production. Gujarat contributes around 85% of the total production. Other jeera producing states are [West Bengal](#), Uttar Pradesh, [Andhra Pradesh](#) and Punjab.

Chairman of APMC at Unjha Gaurang Patel says, "Indian researchers have found that cumin had valuable anti-cancer properties and was hence used extensively by pharma companies. The larger part of cumin seed from Gujarat is exported to Bangladesh, Brazil, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, UAE, UK, US among other countries. Jeera powder from here is largely exported to UK and the US. Of late we have noted that demand is increasing for cumin seeds and exports registered a growth of about 20%."

Sitaram Patel, president of [Unjha Traders Association](#) said that there was an obvious increase in demand abroad and hence production was increasing too. The new cumin seed, Gujarat-4, which is being pushed into the market has increased yields to over 2,500 kg per hectare. He said with better irrigation facilities have also led to an increase in the area of under cumin farming which has resulted in a bumper crop.

### **Border area farmers peeved with state govt**

AJNALA/KHADUR SAHIB: Farmers of border areas of Punjab are up against the state government for giving a "namesake" inconvenience allowance and compensation for losses suffered by them on account of natural calamities.

A conglomerate of 17 farmers and farm worker unions has decided to launch a statewide agitation against the government to press for their demands.

Representatives of these unions, including Jamhuri Kisan Union and [Border Sangharsh Committee](#), held two meetings simultaneously at Ajnala and Khadur Sahib on Tuesday to chalk out future course of action, besides staging protests in front of sub-divisional magistrates' (SDMs) offices at both places.

"We are not ready to accept inconvenience allowance of just Rs 3,000 per acre, that too for only 2013," general secretary, Border Area Sangharsh Committee, Rattan Singh Randhawa told TOI. It was a cruel joke on farmers by the state government, he said, adding that such gimmicks can't "buy" votes in the ensuing [Lok Sabha](#) elections.

To address the woes of farmers, who had cultivable land beyond the border fence, the Union government had started giving Rs 2,500 per acre as inconvenience allowance to them from 1998, but gave relief only for four years. "We will not settle for anything less than Rs 10,000 per acre from 2001 onwards," said Satnam Singh Ajnala, president of Jamhuri Kisan Sabha. There was more than 19,500 acres of land beyond border fence in Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur and Pathankot districts, he said.

Kabal Singh, whose land is beyond the border fence, said, "In my view, the government should purchase this land from us at the prevailing market rates. We are not being given enough time to plough the fields. So why should we spend time, effort and money on cultivating the land."

Randhawa said that recent floods and heavy rains had cost the farmers dear and if [the situation](#) was not handled wisely, farmer may be forced to commit suicide. "I can see a lull before the storm since the farmers are quiet and waiting for compensation from the government," he remarked.

Randhawa said that a survey conducted by their organization found that more than four

lakh acres of land was affected by the recent floods and rains, in which around 6,000 cattle was killed, besides loss of many human lives. "The government is giving just Rs 5,000 and Rs 2,500 per acre for total and partial loss of crop," he said, and questioned why the government's think tanks didn't make a reality check before suggesting such a meagre relief in today's inflated market conditions.

### **'Make warehouses for farmers, not traders'**

NAGPUR: The committee assessing the feasibility and need for splitting of the Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth (PDKV) in Akola and the Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth (MPKV) in Rahuri had a second-round hearing and interaction with students, teachers and other stakeholders at the College of Agriculture here on Tuesday. Before submitting its report by November end, it will be holding a few more rounds of such interactions.

YSP Thorat, the committee chairman who also is the former chairman of NABARD, did not take any queries and did not make any statements on the interactions. He only reiterated the comments made by the state agriculture commissioner Umakant Dangat while speaking to TOI that there were divided views on the splitting of the university.

However, Thorat also said that he believed that an ideal agriculture university should not just be restricted to developing new varieties and education. "It should encompass everything from the farm to processing, the processing technologies for every possible product from a particular crop to market and the technologies required for everything," he said.

Talking for creating conditions that will allow farmers to hold their crops until they want and get the maximum possible price, Thorat said that the warehouses should be structured for farmers and not traders. "The warehouses should have an accreditation system and must be located right near the villages instead of being stationed in cities," he said.

Former chairman of the national [Agriculture Scientists Recruitment Board](#) (ASRB) CD Mayee, who too is a member of the committee but did not attend the first committee meeting, too wants to widen the scope of the university. He told TOI that he was against the idea of bifurcation or splitting of a university.

Mayee said that he has offered to study the growth pattern of eastern and western Vidarbha using data from various sources and will submit a paper on it to the committee. He also refused to be a member of the team which will look into MPKV and clarified that he will only work for Vidarbha.

"Why can't we have another new university for entire Vidarbha which can address the issues and which PDKV has failed to do. It can focus on secondary agriculture, something which universities have not done so far. We are only restricting agriculture to

just production and selling of certain raw materials, be they grains or crops like cotton. Why can't farmers be involved in entire process of making a finished product with a price decided by him," he said.

Besides Thorat, Dangat and Mayee, Uttam Kadam, the director education of [Maharashtra Council for Agricultural Research](#) (MCAER), and associate dean of agriculture college VS Gonge were also present at the meeting.

### **Wheat bowl Bhal turns to cumin crop for profit**

AHMEDABAD: Bhal, the region around Dholera, south of Ahmedabad was known for the quality of its wheat. Of late, farmers in the region have given up their traditional unirrigated 'Bhalia' wheat rabi crop and are replacing it with cumin. The high price cumin has begun to fetch has been an incentive for farmers to leave their traditional wheat crop.

The price of the wheat was about Rs 1,200 to Rs 1,500 per quintal, while cumin fetches between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 per quintal. While cumin produced about 2,400 kg per hectare, the unirrigated wheat crop yield was only about 1,000 kg per hectare.

The change in cropping has come about because of the availability of irrigation. The presence of farm ponds (khet talavdis) in the area has led to the shift. Bhupat Rathod, a resident of Ghogha village says, "Not just individual farm ponds, but the village has collectively constructed a pond recently which is for irrigation only. Farmers have their own ponds use excess water which flows in from in the nearby areas. This water is diverted to farm ponds which are also used for irrigation."

Rathod says, he has about 25 to 30 bighas of irrigated land and he has started growing cumin for the past year. "I decided to experiment and found success. This year too I will be grow cumin. He said that the yield per bigha was around 200 kg which was a good yield compared to wheat which was only 100 kg."

Devraj Baraiya, a resident of Jhankharia village says, "I have around 50 bighas of land, and my farm pond is usually adequate to meet the irrigation requirements for cumin. Sometimes when I do need more water, farm ponds of nearby fields which are not used are rented out for about Rs 50,000."

Ranchod Baria, a resident of Kamal Talav village says, "One farmer experimented with

cumin and was successful. I too tried it and found good profit in it." He said that he has about 100 bighas and has three ponds and these are enough to irrigate cumin with. The ponds are three to four feet deep and also have a embankment height of 4 feet above the ground. This has been done prevent salinity ingress."

[Gaurang Patel](#), chairman of [Unhja Agriculture Produce Market Committee](#) says "For the past couple of years we are getting a good quantity of cumin from the [Bhal](#) area. Earlier, farmers use to grow wheat, but for the past couple of years, they are sowing cumin. If there is a good monsoon, we get nearly 2.5 lakh bags of cumin from the area. Each bag is 60 kg," he said.

### **Onion prices see sharp jump of 12% at Lasalgaon**

NASHIK: The average wholesale onion prices further jumped 12% at the Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) on Tuesday, a sharp contrast to the hike recorded on Monday, wherein, the average wholesale price rose by 3.75% only. The rise was attributed to a dip in the fresh arrival of the vegetable to 1,100 quintals, sources from the Lasalgaon market committee informed.

The prices fluctuated from Rs 2,000 to Rs 4,780 per quintal for the fresh crop, while the average was recorded at the higher-end, at Rs 4,650 - Rs 500 more than the prices quoted on Monday at the largest wholesale onion market in the country.

According to officials, the farmers were selling the left over crop of the season gone by, even as they awaited the fresh arrival. "The farmers who had stocked the crop are now slowly releasing it in the market. They are still holding on to get mileage from the price hike. Since the new crop is yet to come, the prices are likely to stay around Rs 4,000 per quintal," the official said.

Similarly, the Pimpalgaon APMC saw the average prices of onion inching up on Tuesday against the previous day. The prices swung between Rs 3,051 per quintal to Rs 4,766 with an average of Rs 4,501 -up by Rs 50 against Monday average of Rs 4,451. The arrivals in the market stood around 800 quintals.

"For the old crop the average price was Rs 4,501, while the average price for the new crop was Rs 1,701," the official said.

The prices for the new crop swung from Rs 1,166 to Rs 2,200 with average price of Rs 1,701 per quintal. The arrivals stood at around 100 quintals only.

The arrival of the new crop has just begun and slowly, it will replace last season's crop. "Once the new crop takes over, the prices will settle down. It will take another week at least for the new crop to make its impact on the prices. The faster the arrival, sooner the rates will come down," the official said.

### **Onions worth Rs 2 lakh stolen in two months**

SURAT: Vegetable vendors may dub them as thieves. But for their customers, they were nothing less than Robinhoods at a time when onions have gone out of common man's reach!

Vegetable vendors and traders in Dindoli nabbed a thief, believed to be a part of a gang which has allegedly stolen onions worth Rs two lakh from the main vegetable market in the last two months. They used to sell the onions for Rs 20 to Rs 30 a kg whereas the actual price is Rs 80 per kg.

So fed up were the vendors with rampant onion thefts that they formed a special five-member group to keep a watch in the market at night. On Monday night, they saw two persons stealthily taking away sacks of onions and nabbed them.

One of them Bhushan Patil tried to hide in an empty sack but he was caught while his accomplice managed to escape.

"We were worried since last two months as onion sacks were stolen from the market. We normally leave the sacks in open shops at vegetable market but in morning many sacks were missing. Every night the thieves used to steal at least two to three sacks," said complainant Vijuben Patil, resident of Navagam in Dindoli police station area and a vegetable vendor at the Dindoli market.

Patil, living near the Dindoli vegetable market, was nabbed red-handed stealing two sacks of onion worth Rs 4,000 during early hours on Monday. Police are questioning him to get more details about thefts of onion carried out by him in recent past.

"They struck every two to three days. They used to sell onions in different areas for Rs 20 to Rs 30 per kg while the [onion price](#) is actually Rs 80 currently," said Harikesh Kumar, a vegetable vendor who first nabbed the accused.

"The thieves have stolen onions worth at least Rs two lakh in the last two months. Stealing and selling stolen vegetable was his full time activity," said K M Rawal, police inspector, Dindoli police station.



## **Food law may test WTO limits**

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) new chief Roberto Azevedo on Monday said India's food security law will increase subsidy levels that will likely breach WTO commitments even as India pressed for a need to find a middle ground as negotiations gathered steam ahead of the ministerial conference in Indonesia in December.

"One important issue where India is very much involved is the food security proposal. Now what is behind that is because prices have been rising in the last few years, we see some countries like India for example getting very close to their commitments in the WTO," Azevedo said.

"They would soon be breaching their, what we call AMS (Aggregate Measurement of Support) commitments in the WTO. So, they are asking for some kind of actions in Geneva that could allow those programmes to continue to work unaffected," the WTO director general said.

India has passed a new Food Security Act that will legally entitle nearly two-thirds of the population to subsidised food grain.

"The negotiations are complex but there is an appreciation of legitimacy of food security and the associated concerns in India and other developing countries. Now, we have to work towards an acceptable formulations," commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma said.

In the absence of a broad-based agreement on the Doha round of trade talks that started in 2001, member countries are making a fresh attempt to build a consensus.

- See more at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/world-economy/Food-law-may-test-WTO-limits/Article1-1132256.aspx#sthash.54kqLGln.dpuf>

## **Key data this week will shape policy on rates, growth - See more at:**

Caught in a dilemma of an economic slowdown and persisting high inflation, anxious policy makers will hope this week for real clues whether talk of an industrial rebound are real or imagined, and whether there is scope to ease interest rates.

Three sets of data are expected over the next eight days—on factory output, retail price inflation and the benchmark wholesale inflation. While factory data will diagnose the urgency of the slowdown, a positive sign on inflation may offer signals for its cure.

High inflation, a falling currency and poor economic growth have hit the UPA government at the worst possible time — key state elections are less than two months away, and national polls less than a year distant.

Factory output data for August will be released on Friday. Inflation data (both retail and wholesale) for September are to be released on October 14.

Skyrocketing onion and vegetable prices and costlier staples such as rice pushed India's wholesale inflation to 6.10% in August. Food prices grew at 18.18% in August compared to 11.91% in July.

Retail price mirrored similar trends with shop-end prices of vegetables and cereals soaring by 26.28% and 13.65% respectively in July. Retail inflation was 9.52% in August, marginally lower than 9.64% in July.

Experts cautioned that vegetable prices are a worry.

“For inflation to fall off, we would need fruits and vegetables prices to fall, which are not as affected by monsoons,” Credit Suisse said in a recent report.

The index of industrial production, which measures factory output, grew 2.6% in July, expanding for the first time in three months triggering hopes of an industrial turnaround.

Analysts had cautioned that it may too early to see a sustained rebound, as heightened inflation risks will likely prompt the Reserve Bank of India to keep interest rates high.

“The build-up in underlying inflation pressures suggests that the RBI has to keep its inflation guards up,” said Leif Eskesen, chief economist for India and ASEAN at HSBC.

# Business Standard

Rubber imports surge 208% in Sep



[Rubber import](#) rose 208 per cent in [September](#) to a monthly record of 45,581 tonnes, according to Rubber Board data, due to much lower priced abroad. Cumulative import in April–September, the first half of this financial year, rose to 179,292 tonnes against 112,641 tonnes a year ago, a growth of 59 per cent. The sharp rise is mainly because of the lower prices in Bangkok, where the rate for the benchmark RSS-grade is lower by Rs 15-20/kg than the Indian market. Standard Malaysian Rubber [SMR-20], almost on a par in quality with RSS-4 in India, is available at even lower prices.

The ongoing fall in production continued in September, too; it hasn't reflected in prices because of the import. The local market is bearish, affected by the slowdown. On Tuesday, the local market quoted Rs 166/kg; in Bangkok spot trading, it was Rs 157/kg.

During April–September, production dropped 13.3 per cent to 343,000 tonnes against 395,700 tonnes a year ago.

During April–August, production dropped 15.5 per cent. Monthly production in September dropped to 78,000 tonnes from 82,000 tonnes in September 2012. Consumption is also down, by 2.7 per cent in April-September, at 489,015 tonnes as against 502,330 tonnes in the same period of 2012-13. The general economic slowdown and setback to the automobile manufacturing industry are the major reasons.

Despite the output fall, the Rubber Board says stocks are up. At the end of

September, the country had 230,000 tonnes of rubber (up from 210,000 tonnes at August-end) as against 225,000 tonnes in September 2012.

### Mustard crop to be mapped through satellites



Government alongwith a crop promotion body, will conduct a pilot project on [satellite](#)-based Geographic Information System (GIS) to map the production, acreage and crop condition of [mustard](#) from the coming [rabi season](#).

According to officials, the GIS will also be used to provide information on spatial distribution of mustard crop, production and estimates, weather forecasting, market price fluctuations in major mustard producing states such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

At present, a satellite-based crop estimation technique is used extensively for sugarcane by Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA). Officials said the Mustard Research and Promotion Consortium (MRPC) has been roped in as the nodal agency to manage and collate all the data generated from satellite sources as well as those from field studies.

"This technology will be based on maps/topo-sheets to identify the control points and other important agriculture related information of the respective districts," MRPC officials said . The department of biotechnology under the ministry of science and environment will provide the scientific support for the same.

Officials said if the pilot to map crop conditions, production and acreage is successful in mustard it will expanded to other crops as well.

India annually produces around 6-8 million tonne of mustard seed and ranks third in the world in production, having a market share of 11%.

"Decision support system for various applications in major oil seeds is still a big challenge in India and GIS would enable Indian mustard industry, crop advisory

agencies and various government departments to address this challenge," Dr Pragya Gupta, senior scientist and assistant director at MRPC said.

Political nexus behind sale of co-op sugar factories, says Anna Hazare

Alleging a nexus among some [Maharashtra](#) politicians in selling co-operative [sugar factories](#) to private players by deliberately declaring these distressed, social activist [Anna Hazare](#) on Tuesday demanded a judicial inquiry into these transactions.

"These factories were deliberately declared sick and sold to private players. We demand that a judicial committee be appointed to probe into the selling and purchasing of 40 such factories," Hazare told reporters at a press conference with Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar.

In spite of a government order restraining the selling of co-operative sugar factories in the red to private firms, one was sold to a politician recently, Hazare said. "The state government wants to bring the curtain down on the cooperative sector in the state. Though 35 sugar factories were allocated to run on lease in the last eight years, none of them registered profit," Hazare added.

Alleging a conspiracy, the anti-graft campaigner said politicians cutting across party lines ensured the control of such factories by entering into dubious deals with some private players to "convert their black money into white."

Patkar alleged the valuation of 40 sugar factories that have been sold ran into Rs 10,000 crore.

Candy for cooperatives, sweet nothings for private mills



Even as the stalemate between the [Uttar Pradesh](#) government and private [sugar mills](#) over sugarcane prices and dues continues, 23 cooperative units have cleared theirs and are readying for the [crushing season](#).

The repair of the cooperative mills is likely to be over by October-end.

“From November, we would be ready to start the operations, whenever the state gives its green signal,” UP Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation Limited Managing Director B K Yadav told Business Standard.

Cooperative mills account for 10 per cent of the crushing in UP. They have a capacity of 60,000 tonnes crushed a day (TCD) against 515,000 of the 100-odd private ones.

A defunct cooperative unit at Powayan in Shahjahanpur district, with 1,250-TCD capacity, has been outsourced to a private company for running. “This unit would be ready for crushing by November-end. This way, 24 cooperative units would participate in crushing.”

The cooperative units have cleared Rs 1,925 crore of their cane dues for 2012-13. The Akhilesh Yadav government had to provide budgetary support of Rs 475 crore to them for settling those.

Meanwhile, the private mills stand firm on their demand of a bailout before they even talk about operations.

<b>BITTERSWEET HARVEST</b>				
Crushing season	Area*	Output (mt)	Crushed (mt)	Pay (₹ cr)
2006-07	2.7	158.6	89.5	11,012
2007-08	2.9	160.9	74.7	9,354
2008-09	2.1	110.8	45.5	6,298
2009-10	1.8	105.1	56.7	13,251
2010-11	2.1	118.4	64.3	13,030
2011-12	2.3	133.6	76.9	18,038

\*million hectares

Source: UP Sugarcane Department

The private units are weighed by dues of Rs 2,400 crore (of the last crushing season). The subdued retail sugar prices compared to previous year's and uncertainty on cane prices for 2013-14 have pushed them to the edge.

UP Sugar Mills Association has been vocal about the crisis. The mills have given representations to the government seeking relief.

"It remains a wait-and-watch situation for us. We are facing an extremely difficult situation in UP. Under the prevailing circumstances, we would be producing sugar at over Rs 35 a kg and selling it at Rs 29 kg. No industry can survive in such a situation," a leading sugar company's executive said on condition of anonymity.

In the recent sugarcane reservation meetings, the state farmers' leaders had even demanded raising the state cane price to Rs 350 a quintal against Rs 280 a year ago due to the rise in input costs.

The private mills want the government to subsidise them over any cane price above Rs 240 a quintal. UP accounts for 30 per cent of India's sugar output.

# THE HINDU Business Line

## Cardamom supply outwits demand

Cardamom continued to lose its flavour as supply outstripped demand at auctions in Kerala and Tamil Nadu last week.

Of late, the average weekly arrival of new cardamom has been 650 tonnes. The volume is much higher than what it used to be at this time last season.

Market sources said it is a clear indication that the current crop is better than that of last year. Add to this, it is also the peak harvesting time of the season, they said. The arrivals at the market were absorbed because of good domestic demand for Diwali.

Exporters were not buying aggressively. However, they are estimated to have bought some 50 tonnes, sources said.

Unlike in the past, the growers were believed to be not holding back their produce fearing that prices may not move up given the reasonably good crop this year, they pointed out. "That is also a reason for the upsurge in arrivals and that also aided the price decline", they said.

Total arrivals at the Sunday auction held by KCPMC were the highest ever during the season at 120 tonnes up from 116 tonnes the previous Sunday and almost the entire quantity was sold out, P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*.

The maximum price rose to Rs 928 a kg and the minimum, Rs 421.

The auction average price declined to Rs 601 from Rs 603 a kg at the previous Sunday's auction.

Total arrivals from August 1 up to October 6, stood at 4,450 tonnes against 2,744 tonnes in the same period last season (as on October 24, 2012 as from September 24 – October 23 there were no auctions following withdrawal by traders from auctions).

The sales were at 4,346 tonnes and 2,573 tonnes respectively.



The weighted average price as on October 6 this year stood at Rs 618.17 as against Rs 742.08 as on October 24 in 2012.

Prices of all the graded varieties continued their downward trend last week on over supply and their prices in Rs/kg at last weekend were: AGEB 710-720; AGB 585-595; AGS 545-555; and AGS -1: 525-535.

Bulk was sold at Rs 420-930.

### **No sparkles this Diwali for UP's cane-growers**



It could be a dark Diwali for sugarcane growers in western Uttar Pradesh. Thousands of *kolhus*, or jaggery-making units, which traditionally provide money to cane growers before the start of the crushing season, are yet to commence operations.

The delay is because labourers have fled the region after the recent communal violence that rocked Muzaffarnagar and adjoining areas, claiming over 60 lives.

The jaggery season started about 10 days late this year. On Tuesday, around 250 quintals of jaggery arrived at the Muzaffarnagar market, which is much lower than the usual 1,500 quintals, said Arun Khandelwal, president, Gur Traders Association.

“Less than 10 per cent of the estimated 3,500 *kolhus* in the region have started their operations,” Khandelwal said, adding it may take some time for things to return to normal considering the trust deficit among various communities.

The sugarcane economy is integral to the western UP region that accounts for about 60 per cent of the cane produced in the State. Also, UP accounts for about 55 lakh tonnes of the 95 lakh tonnes of jaggery produced in the country. At an average price of Rs 30,000 a tonne, the jaggery industry in UP is estimated at Rs 16,500 crore.

Meanwhile, there have been couple of instances of cane fields being set ablaze triggering further panic in the region, says Sudhir Panwar, president of Kisan Jagriti Manch, a farmers' body.

“In the absence of enough *kolhus*, cane growers are totally at the mercy of sugar millers, which are yet to clear last year's dues,” says Panwar. Mills in UP owe farmers around Rs 2,500 crore.

Though *kolhus* normally offer a price lower than the State Advised Price for cane, the cash payment they make helps growers tide over their cash-flow requirements during the festival time of Dasara-Diwali, a farmer from Shamli said.

Khandelwal said the low arrivals have not impacted prices as yet because of adequate stocks. On Tuesday, gur prices ruled at around Rs 1,190 per 40 kg at the Muzaffarnagar market.

### **Spices Park comes up at Sivaganga in TN**

Spices Board has opened its fifth spices park in the country at Mattupetty in Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu.

Set up at an investment of Rs 20 crore on 30 hectares, the park is aimed at setting up of infrastructure and processing facilities for turmeric and chilli.

Tamil Nadu is the second largest producer of turmeric in the country which had netted an export revenue of Rs 540 crore from 80,050 tonnes during 2012-13. Speaking on the occasion, Anand Sharma, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, pointed out that the constant efforts of the Board had helped in increasing export of spices three-fold during the last few years. The total spices exports in 2012-13 had crossed the Rs 10,000-crore mark, registering a 22 per cent growth in volumes. The Minister pointed out that quality has become a benchmark for successful business operations in the present global environment and major consuming countries are demanding more quality compliance by the producing countries.

India was able to cope with the new stringent quality stipulations set up by these consuming countries in order to sustain and increase export share in these markets through quality improvement programmes, he said. . Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram exhorted the farming community to make full use of the facilities. He hoped that this will revolutionise the processing of turmeric and chilli grown in the region.

A. Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board, said that the Sivaganga park would facilitate processing of exportable surplus production of spices such as turmeric, chillies and pepper for which the Board has proposed an integrated project for development in Tamil Nadu for implementation under the National Horticulture Mission and State Horticulture Mission with the involvement of state departments.

### **Telangana crisis hits Bangalore's cut-flower business**



Cut flower consignments from Bangalore to Hyderabad have fallen drastically by 50 per cent due to crisis in Andhra Pradesh over bifurcation of the State.

“Normally after monsoon, daily shipment of cut flowers (mainly roses) to Hyderabad is around one lakh stems. Now, due to crisis, it is down to 30,000-50,000 stems,” said Jayaprakash Rao, General Secretary, South India Floriculture Association (SIFA).

“The flower consignments to Hyderabad are transported by road. Disruption in road transport from Bangalore due to bandhs and dharnas has led to confusion among the growers as to which market to cater and their confidence level has also down,” he added.

For Bangalore rose growers, Hyderabad is a major market followed by Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Mangalore and Kerala.

The loss of Andhra Pradesh market has led to the fall in cut flowers prices at the International Flower Auctions Bangalore (IFAB) as well. For the last two months, prices have fallen by 20-25 per cent. “Growers, on an average, get Rs 3 for a stem. Now, it is trading around Rs 2.25,” said Rao. “The growers are missing the marriage season in Andhra Pradesh but are busy making plans to cater to Chennai, Coimbatore, Kochi and Mangalore markets,” said senior official of IFAB. Other markets normally buy roses, but this year, they are flooded with tulips, gerberas and orchids. Karnataka’s annual cut flower production is estimated between 9-10 lakh stems. Of this, around two lakh enter the IFAB

auction platforms and the rest are traded in unorganised markets. In addition to loss of key market and fall in prices, severe power cuts in rural areas have also affected rose growers. “Rose growers, especially in and around Bangalore, are facing severe power cuts. This is hampering our farm operations,” said Rao. “For the last two-three weeks, we are experiencing dry weather conditions. We need power to irrigate the green houses and also to operate cold storage and pack houses,” he added. The flower growing belt of Doddaballapur, Bangalore rural and Chikkaballapur near Bangalore has been partially affected.

### **Tea Board’s new scheme to form mini factories**

The Tea Board has launched a revolutionary subsidy scheme to help small growers construct mini and micro factories. “This new scheme offers 40 per cent subsidy of actual cost of plant and machinery.

On an investment of Rs 60 lakh for a mini tea factory, the Board’s subsidy will be Rs 25 lakh.

Banks have come forward to offer loan without security for the balance Rs 35 lakh”, Tea Board member and President of Small Tea Growers’ Association of Southern India (STASI) S. Ramu told *Business Line*.

“When growers process their green leaves in their own factories, they will get at least Rs 5 a kg more for their green leaf. We expect an assured average return of Rs 25 a kg for green leaf. Besides, the margin in factory operation will remain with them. So, it is possible to take back the investment in less than three years. STASI will guide the growers in forming the factories”, Ramu said.

“These new factories will be exempt from the purview of the Tea Marketing Control Order. Those producing 22.5-225 kg made tea daily will be treated as micro and mini factories. It will be a boon to the two lakh small growers including one lakh in the South”, Tea Board’s Vice-Chairman Koshy Baby, who is also Vice-Chairman of STASI, said.

### **Pepper market sees good demand**

Pepper futures stayed hot on Tuesday on the national and regional exchanges and spot markets on good demand amid tight supply and consequently all the active contracts ended above the previous day’s closing.

Demand was forthcoming for Navarathri and Diwali requirements.

There was no selling pressure.

Only seven tonnes of farm grade pepper arrived and five tonnes were traded.

In the international market, all the origins except Brazil are reported to be facing a tight availability situation.

Dealers from Jharkhand, and interstate dealers were buying directly from growers at terminal market prices.

## **NMCE**

On the NMCE, October and November contracts increased by Rs 320 and Rs 298 respectively to Rs 43,900 and Rs 43,949 a quintal.

Total turnover decreased by 4 tonnes to 29 tonnes.

## **IPSTA**

On the IPSTA, October and November contracts went up by Rs 395 and Rs 394 a quintal respectively to close at Rs 43,900 and Rs 44,000.

Total turnover was at 49 tonnes down by 19 tonnes.

Spot prices also moved up by Rs 200 a quintal to close at Rs 40,800 (ungarbled) and Rs 42,800 (garbled) on good buying support amid tight availability.

Indian parity in the international market was up at \$7,350 a tonne (c&f) Europe and \$7,600 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained competitive.

Other origins were also reportedly firm.

**Prices of other origins c&f New York in \$/tonne were:** Vietnam Asta 3 per cent lights:7,560; Vietnam Asta 2 per cent lights: 7,650; Vietnam Asta steam sterilised: 7,935; Brazil Asta quoted: 7,100 c&f Middle East (traded last week 6,950-7,025 c&f US); B1 quoted: 7,025 c&f Middle East; Vietnam white pepper double washed: 9,825.

## **Coconut oil prices steady**

Coconut oil prices continue to rule firm both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu markets ahead of the Diwali festival season.

In Kerala, it ruled at Rs 94 a kg (Rs 90), while it touched Rs 90 in Tamil Nadu (Rs 85).

However, the price of milling copra is now witnessing a declining trend and trading at Rs 6,800 a quintal in Kerala (Rs 7,500) and it was Rs 6,600 in Tamil Nadu against Rs 7,300 quoted last week.

Prakash B. Rao, President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), attributed the price decline to fresh arrivals of raw coconuts to Tamil Nadu and Kerala markets from Karnataka for milling purpose.

He said that prices of coconut oil are likely to witness a correction following the commencement of winter season in north India.

Palm oil prices had also started cooling down to Rs 59 and palm kernel oil stood at Rs 62 after hitting a high of Rs 64 last week.

Thalath Mahamood, Director, COMA, said that coconut oil prices are now ruling firm with no signs of let-up for the time being.

However, corporates are not showing any interest in buying at these levels resulting in large-scale copra stocking by traders.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member, COMA, pointed out that the speculative trend in the market has really affected outstation demand. The surge in prices has also affected local demand for coconut oil, he said.

### **Spot rubber rules firm**

Rubber prices ruled firm on Tuesday. In spot, the market improved tracking the overall gains on the NMCE.

The volumes continued to be low while the arrivals were meagre.

Sheet rubber moved up to Rs 168.00 (Rs 167) a kg, according to traders.

The grade increased to Rs 167.50 (166.50) at Kottayam and Kochi, as quoted by the Rubber Board.

The trend was partially mixed.

October futures improved to Rs 171.45 (Rs 168.98), November to Rs 172.68 (Rs 169.39), December to Rs 174.79 (Rs 171.32), January to Rs 176.80 (Rs 173.80), February to Rs 176 (Rs 176) and March to Rs 178.01 (Rs 178) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) bounced back to Rs 157.15 (Rs 153.47) at Bangkok. The October futures closed at ¥249.2 (Rs 158.69) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

**Spot rubber rates Rs/kg were:** RSS-4: 168 (167); RSS-5: 162 (161); Ungraded: 158 (155); ISNR 20: 158 (157) and Latex 60%: 129 (129).

### **Chana moves up on festival demand**



Notwithstanding subdued demand and buying support, chana in Indore mandis for the past two days has been ruling high, primarily on rising futures.

On Tuesday, chana (kanta) ruled at Rs 3,175-3,200 a quintal, chana (desi) and Kabuli Bitki at Rs 2,900-3,000, while chana (mausmi) ruled at Rs 3,000-3,300 a quintal.

Compared to last week, prices were up Rs 50-75 .

Given the adequate domestic stock and the arrivals expected from Australia, long rally in chana appears unlikely in the coming days. However, with the increased demand for besan (chana flour) in the festival season, chana may report marginal gains, said Sanjay Agrawal, a trader here.

Spot chana also perked up its dal with chana dal (average) being quoted at Rs 3,450-3,550 a quintal, chana dal (medium) at Rs 3,650-3,800 and chana dal (bold) at Rs 3,850-4,150.

Dollar chana ruled firm at Rs 3,500-4,500 a quintal despite subdued demand.

Dollar chana (42/44 count) in container quoted at Rs 5,300-5,325 a quintal, 44/46 count around Rs 5,100, 46/48 count at Rs 4,900, 58/60 count at Rs 3,600, while (60/62 count) ruled at Rs 3,500.

Compared to last week, dollar chana in container is ruling about Rs 200 a quintal lower.

Five thousand bags of dollar chana arrived in Indore mandis on Tuesday against 18,000-20,000 bags in mandis across Madhya Pradesh.

### **Edible oils firm on bullish futures**



Edible oils ruled firm on Tuesday on higher festival demand and bullish futures markets. Imported palmolein and soyabean refined oil erased previous day's loss of Rs 3 as local refineries ncreased their rates. Firm reports from producing centres lifted groundnut oil by Rs 20, cotton refined oil by Rs 3, and rapeseed oil by Rs 2 for 10 kg. Stockists continued their inventory-buying to fulfil the Dasara-Diwali demand. Volumes remained high for the second day, said sources.

Sources said Liberty sold 1,000-1,200 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 557-559 for October. Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 559, super palmolein at Rs 590 and super deluxe at Rs 610, soyabean refined oil at Rs 665 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 800. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 557, soyabean refined oil at Rs 662 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 785. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs 560-564, soyabean refined oil at Rs 665 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 815.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil bounced back on higher demand. Prices were up by Rs 40 to Rs 1,360 (Rs 1,320) for telia tin and loose (10 kg) was higher by Rs 25 to at Rs 875 (Rs 850). Soyabean arrivals with old and new crops were 2.5-3 lakh bags and its prices were Rs 2,800-3,250 for new, Rs 3,250-Rs 3,450 for old crop ex-mandi and Rs 3,500-3,600 for plant delivery. Mustard seed arrivals were 80,000 bags and prices were Rs 3,180-3,750.

**On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange**, soyabean refined oil's November futures was up by Rs 14.55 to Rs 689.90 (Rs 675.35), December-13 higher by Rs 10.75 to Rs 680.10 (Rs 669.35) and January-14 inched up by Rs 8.75 to Rs 674.50 (R.665.75).



**Malaysia BMD crude palm oil's** November futures closed higher at MYR 2,353 (MYR 2,322), December at MYR 2,351 (MYR 2,318) and January at MYR 2,353 (MYR 2,318).

**The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg)**

**were:** groundnut oil 890 (870), soya refined oil 656 (653), sunflower exp. ref. 730 (740), sunflower ref. 785 (785), rapeseed ref. oil 715 (713), rapeseed expeller ref. 685 (683) cottonseed ref. oil 678 (675) and palmolein 558 (555).

**Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd** has quoted Rs.620 per 10 kg - for Malaysia super palm olein -October/Nov delivery

**Groundnut, cotton oils gain on festival demand**



Despite of higher crop estimate, groundnut oil increased on the back of fresh demand for festival.

Cotton oil also rose as buying activity gained.

Groundnut oil loose increased by Rs 30 to Rs 875-880 for 10 kg.

*Teliya* tin gained Rs 45 to Rs 1,355-1,360 for 15 kg.

And groundnut oil new tin improved by Rs 20 to Rs 1,515-1,520 for 15 kg as compare to last week's almost nil demand.

About 8-10 tankers were traded on Tuesday in Saurashtra's edible oil mills.

Similarly cotton oil wash was traded higher by Rs 7 to Rs 632-635 for 10 kg.

While cotton oil 15 kg tin remained flat on Rs 1,110-1,120.

About 45-50 tankers of cotton oil were traded here.

Traders said that both the edible oils reached the bottom level.

According to millers, price may gain further but in limited range as groundnut production is expected to be higher.

Saurashtra Oil Millers' Association (SOMA) has estimated about 24 lakh tonnes groundnut production in Gujarat for 2013-14.

According to the association, the groundnut production was about 6,00,000 tonnes last year in the State.

### **Sugar steady despite demand from bulk users**



Sugar prices at Vashi market ruled steady on Tuesday despite sharp drop in mill's tenders on increased selling, rise in freight rates by Rs 20 in the last 15-20 days on shortage of trucks and rise in demand from bulk consumers.

Mill tender rates declined by Rs 10-30, depending on quality.

Sentiment at producer level remained weak but in the physical market, prices ruled steady due to Dasara, said sources.

Jagdish Rawal of B. Bhogilal and Co., said with the start of new crushing season and higher carryover stocks (of about 85 lakh tonnes), the producers have started selling old stocks to maintain financial liquidity.

However, festival demand is picking up. .

In 2013-14, output is expected to be higher than local demand.

Indian market is facing over-supply situation since long.

Upcountry buying is negligible in Maharashtra, he said.

Meanwhile according to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), the country has opening stock of about 8.5 million tonnes.

The production estimate for 2013-14 is also more than the demand.

Arrivals at Vashi market continued to be 62–64 truck loads (each of 100 bags) while local dispatches were 61-62 truck loads.

On Monday, 18-20 mills offered tenders and sold about 54,000–55,000 bags at Rs 2,750-2,850 (Rs 2,780-Rs 2,860) for S-grade and Rs 2,900-Rs 3,000 (Rs 2,930-3,000) for M-grade.

**On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange**, sugar November futures ruled at Rs 2,895 (Rs 2,894), December was higher at Rs 2,899 (Rs 2,904) and January-14 was Rs 2,907 (Rs 2,908) till noon.

**Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were:** S-grade Rs 2,962– Rs 3,105 (Rs 2,962– Rs 3,105) and M-grade Rs 3,096 - 3,272 (Rs 3,102-3,272).

**Naka delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 2,890 -2,950 (Rs 2,910-2,950) and M-grade Rs 3,005 - 3,130 (Rs 3,005 – Rs 3,130).

### **Spot turmeric improves by Rs 300 a quintal**



Spot turmeric increased due to poor arrivals on Tuesday.

“Though traders have not received upcountry orders, they have quoted increased price and purchased 70 per cent of the total arrivals in the four markets. . But due to arrival of poor quality hybrid finger variety, the hybrid variety decreased by Rs 700 a quintal”, said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said this is the second year successively no Durga Puja order received from North.

The farmers brought limited stocks and 1,500 bags arrived on Tuesday and 70 per cent was sold.

The prices in all the markets increased Rs 300-400 a quintal.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs 3,506-5,569; the root variety Rs 3,299-4,709.

Salem hybrid crop finger variety fetched Rs 4,299-5,759, the root variety Rs 4,161-5,117. Of the arrival of 400 bags, only 98 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,666-5,769, the root variety Rs 4,010-4,869. Of the arrival of 486 bags, 473 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,689-5,840, the root variety Rs 4,469-4,796. All the 213 bags were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,711-5,869, the root variety Rs 4,077-5,029. Of the arrival of 152 bags, 137 were sold.

### **Wheat continues to rule firm**



After witnessing a good uptrend in the recent past, wheat dara prices witnessed some correction at lower levels.

Satish Kumar, a market expert, told *Business Line* that there is no particular reason behind the fall.

Domestic demand is good and stocks are easily available.

Alteration of Rs 5-10 a quintal wouldn't make much difference and market may continue to rule around current levels without much fluctuation in the coming days, he added. In the physical market, dara dropped marginally by Rs 5 and quoted at Rs 1,525-1,535 a quintal.

Around 1,000 bags of wheat arrived and stocks were directly offloaded at the mills.

Mill delivery was at Rs 1,525 a quintal while delivery at the chakki was at Rs 1,535 a quintal. Good quality stocks were ruling around Rs 1,550 a quintal. Wheat futures remained bearish on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange on Tuesday. Wheat for November contracts dropped by Rs 12 and traded at Rs 1,562 a quintal with an open interest of 2,240 lots.

The grain had touched a high at Rs 1,575 a quintal earlier in the day. November contracts have some support at Rs 1,560 while resistance at Rs 1,578 a quintal.

December contracts eased by Rs 4 and traded at Rs 1,586 a quintal. Situation of the market was anticipated and market may continue to witness a weak trend even in the coming days, said market experts. In the spot market, prices improved by Rs 5 and traded at Rs 1,545 a quintal.

Following a steady domestic demand, flour managed to maintain its previous levels and quoted at Rs 1,775 a quintal. Similarly, Chokar ruled flat and went for Rs 1,290 a quintal.

### **TNAU to set up food processing training, research centre**

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will set up a food processing research and training institute in Sivagangai district, according to a State Government press release. The Government has allocated Rs 49.32 lakh for building and equipments for the institute to come up at the University's research centre for rainfed crops. Processing will add value to agricultural commodities, increase shelf life of food products and augment income for farmers and entrepreneurs. The institute will provide training in grading and processing of fruits and

vegetables, recycle agricultural waste to make products such as animal feed and fuel. The institute will train and provide consultancy services to farmers, entrepreneurs, self-help groups and school drop outs.

## **Phase out "barren battery cages" in poultry industry: Swami Agnivesh**

Discontinue the extreme confinement of egg-laying hens in “barren battery cages”, say animal welfare activists, urging the Government to bring in timelines to phase out the use of such cages in Indian poultry farms.

In a letter to Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan, President of the World Council of Arya Samaj, Swami Agnivesh decried the poultry industry’s inhumane confinement of hens.

“An overwhelming majority of hens used in the egg industry are consigned to barren battery cages, which are so small that each bird is given a space no larger than A4 size sheet of paper. The battery cages prevent all forms of natural behaviours, such as nesting, perching and roosting, scratching and foraging, exercising and spreading their wings. I urge the Government of India to ban such a barbaric practice of confining egg laying hens,” he said, in a statement from the Humane Society International.

The HSI note further pointed out that the Animal Welfare Board of India has issued a directive that the practice of confining hens in barren battery cages violated the provisions of Section 11(1) (e) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Further, the confinement of hens in overcrowded and unhygienic battery cages facilitates the immune suppression in birds, providing a breeding ground for food-borne diseases like Salmonella.

N.G. Jayasimha, Managing Director of HSI/India urged the Government to move the Indian poultry industry towards being a global leader in animal welfare. “They should immediately establish clear timelines to phase out the use of barren battery cages in Indian poultry farms,” he said.