Date : 11.10.2013

THE HINDU

Farmers turn plant doctors

THANJAVUR

rooting out:Plant doctors offering advice to visitors in treating pests and diseases in paddy crops at a plant clinic at Rajendiram village near Thanjavur on Thursday.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

Plant doctors have come to the rescue of farmers in treating pests and diseases in paddy crops in Thanjavur district – thanks to the training given by Dr. M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation.

Village Resource Centre (VRC) of the foundation at Thiruvaiyaru has trained 30 farmers in diagnosing pests and diseases in crops and suggests measures to treat them. Christened as plant doctors, they attend plant clinics conducted by the centre in various villages and offer suggestions to farmers. One such plant clinic was held on Thursday at Rajendiram village near Thanjavur in which farmers trooped in with diseased paddy plants and got their issues addressed.

Experts from Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) from United Kingdom saw the activities. Mr. Shaun Hopps and Mr. Tim of the CABI said the body had been organising programmes worldwide to help farmers prevent pests attack in crops . Programmes are implemented in 35 countries world over including India.

“As plant doctors, these trained farmers would advice farmers on various pest and disease attacks in crops such as paddy. Farmers bring samples of the affected crops. Plant doctors diagnose them and provide solutions to contain them. We, in the CABI, collate all information from such plant clinics in our Knowledge Bank . Quality of advice offered by plant doctors would be judged and improvements would be suggested wherever required," they said. CABI works to develop sustainable solutions for agricultural and environmental programmes in the developing world through biosciences, information for development and publishing.

P. Saritha, a plant doctor at Thiruvaiyaru, said that paddy crops affected by leaf folder and stem borer were being brought to the clinic and suitable remedial measures were offered. R. Rajkumar, co-ordinator for plant clinics, and V. Palaniappan, adviser of VRC, Thiruvaiyaru, said that the clinics were conducted by the foundation at three locations in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and at Vidarbha in Maharashtra.

Water Level

MADURAI

Water level in Periyar dam was 120.50 feet with an inflow of 128 cusecs and discharge of 1,272 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 54.04 feet with an inflow of 744 cusecs and discharge of 1,260 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 5,077 mcft. Rainfall in Marudhanadhi was 7 mm and Kodaikanal recorded rainfall of 2.2 mm during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Thursday, PWD officials said.

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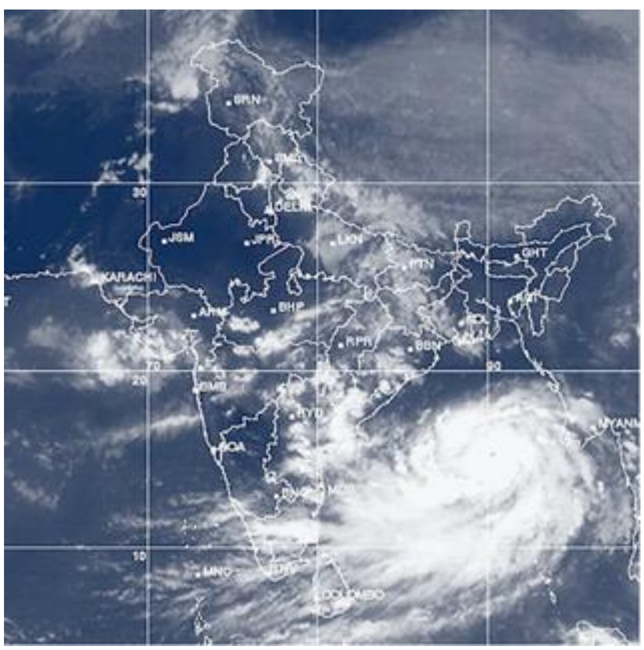
weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on October 10th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	35	25	0	5
New Delhi (Sfd)	36	24	0	7
Chandigarh	29	23	10	27
Hissar	35	23	0	4
Bhuntar	32	20	0	4
Shimla	22	15	0	65
Jammu	31	24	0	111
Srinagar	30	15	0	0
Amritsar	34	24	0	8
Patiala	32	25	0	6
Jaipur	33	23	0	tr
Udaipur	28	21	33	55
Allahabad	33	23	0	234
Lucknow	33	21	0	24
Varanasi	33	24	0	96
Dehradun	29	21	0	30
Agartala	31	23	0	115
Ahmedabad	28	24	4	63
Bangalore	28	20	0	29
Bhubaneshwar	31	24	10	75
Bhopal	31	23	0	26
Chennai	32	23	1	17
Guwahati	33	22	0	191
Hyderabad	32	21	98	106
Kolkata	28	23	24	161
Mumbai	32	26	0	23
Nagpur	32	21	17	156
Patna	33	25	1	41
Pune	30	18	0	4
Thiruvananthapuram	33	24	0	35
Imphal	27	15	0	48
Shillong	25	16	0	60

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 isolated places over Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly dry over the rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm. are: HARYANA: Chandigarh 1, JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Udhampur 2, PUNJAB: R.S.Dam

Site 5, Khanna and Sangrur 2 each and Barnala, Madhopur, Shahpurkandi and Adampur 1 each, EAST RAJASTHAN: Vallabhnagar 5, Sarara 4, Udaipur, Ghatol, Kanva, Chotisadri, Girva and Gogunda 3 each, Pinwara 2 and Mount Abu, Bhungra, Barisadri and Sabla 1 each, WEST RAJASTHAN: Bagoda 3 and WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Saharanpur 1.

MAXIMUM TEMPERTURE: The maximum temperature changed little over the region. They were above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, appreciably below normal in east Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 37.6ºC recorded at Sriganganagar (Rajasthan).

MINIMUM TEMPERTURE: The minimum temperature changed little over the region. They were largely above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, markedly above normal in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand, appreciably above normal in Haryana, Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh and normal in rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 19.8ºC recorded at Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST FOR REGION VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 12th OCTOBER 2013 : Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over east Rajasthan on 12th. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 12th OCTOBER 2013: Mainly clear sky becoming Partly cloudy sky.

Spurt in banana arrivals, but prices to rule steady

TIRUCHI

High quality banana is still in demand; A major portion of the arrivals is of medium and low quality

rosy picture:A worker unloads bananas from a truck at Gandhi Market in Tiruchi on Thursday

Arrivals of banana, which had come down sharply over the past few months owing to the drought condition, have picked up at Gandhi Market in the city over the past few days ahead of the festival season.

The price of the fruit, however, is expected to rule steady and not likely to come down owing to the festival demand, wholesale traders at the market said.

The price of good quality poovan, rasthali, pachai and karpoorvali varieties had increased by at least Re. 1 a fruit over the past couple of months as arrivals had trickled.

“Normally, we used to get about 5,000 to 10,000 bunches a day. But last month, it had come down to just about 4,000 bunches a day. But over the past few days arrivals have increased substantially. On Wednesday, we got about 20,000 bunches, thanks to the arrivals from Theni, Cumbum, Chinnamanur, Karur and parts of Tiruchi, and neighbouring districts. However, high quality banana is still in demand as medium and low quality fruits constitute most of the current arrivals,” said K.P.Palanivel of Plantain Traders Association at Gandhi Market.

Retail traders from different parts of the State purchase the fruit in auction from the wholesale market here every day.

Poovan variety accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the arrivals at the market.

But a major portion of the arrivals is of medium and low quality currently, said traders.

On Wednesday, a bunch of high quality poovan variety fetched about Rs. 550 a bunch.

However, traders said, the price had been ruling steady after witnessing an increase by about Rs. 100 a bunch about a month ago.

In the retail markets, the variety is sold at Rs. 4 a fruit. There was also good demand for G9 robusta variety and was being sold at Rs. 700 a bunch at the market, traders said.

Banana growers in the district have been complaining of extensive crop loss owing to the severe drought condition earlier this year. As per a report sent to the government by the district administration, banana crop in about 10,000 acres was damaged. However, farmers claim that the extent of the damage was much higher and have been demanding compensation.

Water level

TIRUNELVELI

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Thursday stood at 93.55 feet . The dam had an inflow of 441.02 cusecs and 1,502.25 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The water level in Manimuthar dam stood at 52.11 feet. The dam had an inflow of 31 cusecs and 25 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari

Water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 21.30 feet, 60.30 feet in Perunchani, 8.53 feet in Chittar I, 8.60 feet in Chittar II and 33.96 feet in Mambazathuraiyaru dam.

Hailstorm damages potato crops

UDHAGAMANDALAM

Torrential rains accompanied by hailstorm affected standing potato crops at Nanjanad and nearby places like Kappathorai, about 15 km, from here on Tuesday.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Wednesday, Joint Director of Horticulture N. Mani said that the hailstorm, which was unusual for this part of the year, badly damaged potato crops of about 250 farmers over 300 acres.

Pointing out that the crops were about two months old, he said that they had reached the bulking stage. In about 30 to 40 days, they would have been ready for harvest.

Though the rainfall recorded at the Nanjanad farm of the Horticulture Department was only 22 mm, the accompanying hail stones had broken the stems of the plants. Hence, chances of recovery were poor.

To a question, Mr. Mani said that the financial loss per acre would be about Rs.50,000.

He added that if the wet weather continues, potato crops in various places would be affected by late blight disease and tea bushes by blister blight.

In view of the weather, the main lawn of the Government Botanical Garden here will be cordoned off for about a fortnight.

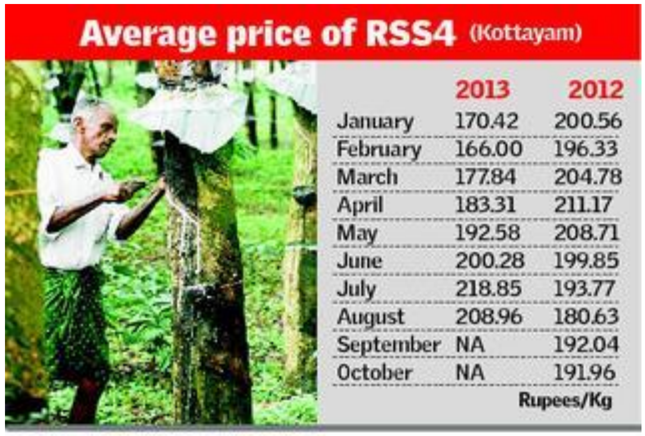
Heavy rains flooded low-lying areas at Pandhalur and surroundings like Athikunna. Storm water also damaged a few houses.

In about 30 to 40 days, the potatoes would have been ready for harvest, say farmers.

Farmers, industry spar over rubber import

KOCHI

Growers and users are pitted against each other over the import of natural rubber as prices continued to slide after rain-interrupted tapping resumed early in September.



Average price of RSS4 (Kottayam)

	2013	2012
January	170.42	200.56
February	166.00	196.33
March	177.84	204.78
April	183.31	211.17
May	192.58	208.71
June	200.28	199.85
July	218.85	193.77
August	208.96	180.63
September	NA	192.04
October	NA	191.96

Rupees/Kg

Natural rubber closed at Rs. 166.50 a kg in Kottayam on Thursday, continuing its slide from Rs. 168.50 a kg on October 1. The average natural rubber price in October 2012 was Rs. 191.96 a kg for Ribbed Smoked Sheets of grade 4 (RSS4).

In September the price ranged between Rs. 185.50 a kg as the month opened and Rs. 171 a kg on the month's last trading day. The price had peaked to Rs. 187.50 a kg on September 11.

Indian Rubber Growers' Association has expressed fears that rubber import into the country may go up to about three lakh tonnes after the Rubber Board released figures which put imports during the first six months of the current financial year at 1.79 lakh tonnes.

A representation by the Association early this week appealed to Union Commerce Ministry to suspend duty-free import of rubber and to increase duty on import to Rs. 34 for six months.

The Association's Siby Monippilly argued strongly for action to prevent more imports of rubber. He listed several reasons why the government should act on behalf of the growers.

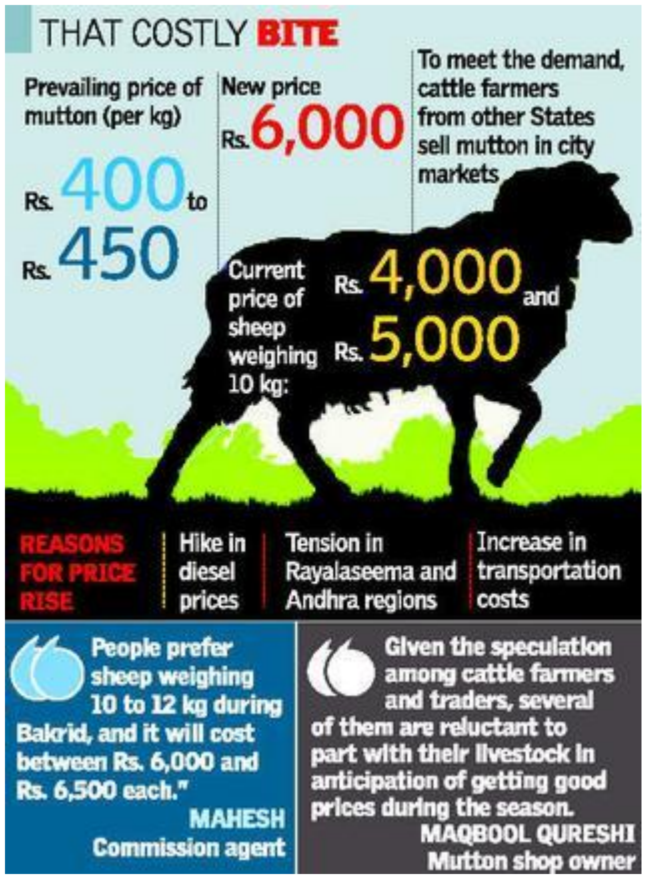
The rubber user industry has, on the other hand, opposed any move to hike duty. "Any hike in natural rubber duty will throttle the growth of NR-consuming industry (tyre and non-tyre) in India, which is already passing through a difficult phase due to a slowdown in the automobile sector," said Rajiv Budhraja, director general of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), in an emailed message from Delhi.

He claimed that any hike in duty on natural rubber would be unjustified on the grounds that there was a shortfall between domestic consumption and availability, "making imports imperative". Mr. Budhraja claimed that the domestic rubber prices were ruling much higher than the international prices. The prices he quoted were Rs. 167 a kg in the domestic market against the international RSS3 price of Rs 157 a kg.

A leading rubber trader said there was too much volatility in the market as was seen from the futures market. The October counter of NMC saw futures price fall by more than Rs. 7 a kg this week from Rs. 172 to Rs. 164.50.

Mutton prices go through the roof

HYDERABAD



This festive season, mutton prices are all set to go up thanks to the increase in the rates of goats and sheep.

The prices have escalated by a couple of thousands owing to huge demand for the upcoming Dasara and Bakrid festivals.

Meat consumption goes up phenomenally during these festivals. To meet the huge demand, cattle farmers from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and other States bring goats and sheep to sell in the city markets. The meat is currently priced between Rs. 400 and Rs. 450 a kilogram.

Sheep weighing about 10 kg, which is now sold for a price between Rs. 4,000 and Rs. 5,000, will be sold for around Rs. 6,000, while the price will be higher for livestock weighing between 12 and 15 kg.

“Generally, people prefer sheep weighing 10 to 12 kg during Bakrid, and it will cost between Rs. 6,000 and Rs. 6,500 each,” says S. Mahesh, a commission agent at the Jiyaguda sheep market.

The hike in diesel prices and tension in the Rayalaseema and Andhra regions will also impact the prices. Transportation costs are expected to drastically go up, and traders will eventually pass on the costs to the customers.

Given the speculation among cattle farmers and traders, several of them are reluctant to part with their livestock in anticipation of good prices during the season, says Maqbool Qureshi, a mutton shop owner.

Even as traders hope for better business in the coming days, customers, on the contrary, are worried over the rising prices. “At this rate, it will be tough to adjust our budgets, and we will have to cut down the requirement,” says Anzer Suleiman, a medical practitioner from Charminar.

Conserving the nearly extinct navara red rice organically

Mr. Narayanan Unny in his rice field. - Photo: M.J. Prabu

The Navara Eco farm is nestled on the banks of the quietly flowing Shokanashini river in Chittur, Palghat district, Kerala. The unique aspect of the farm is that it has the largest navara rice growing field (12 acres) in the State.

“Navara is a medicinal rice variety and its cultivation is almost extinct. Many reasons such as non-availability of pure seeds, low yield and high production cost are attributed for this. The speciality is that this is the only organically grown navara rice farm in the region,” says Mr. P. Narayanan Unni, a third generation marketing executive-turned-farmer, running the everyday activities of the farm.

Unlike other rice varieties, which are white in colour, navara is deep red and has been cultivated in the Palghat region for more than 2,000 years but in the last 40- 50 years it has come close to being completely wiped out due to several new hybrid varieties being introduced.

Focus

After taking over the farm’s management about 15 years ago, Mr. Unni decided to turn his attention to conserving native rice varieties in the region. He figured out that many of the traditional varieties are fast becoming extinct.

“I desired to work on conserving this specific rice because, apart from being a traditional variety, it is well known among the local farmers. After years of strenuous effort I was able to collect and segregate enough seeds and gradually moved into cultivating solely navara rice in my 12 acre farm,” he says.

Concept

During this time, he turned to organic farming in a serious manner and gradually evolved the concept of Navara Eco Farm.

“The journey was not easy,” says Mr. Unni and adds “conserving the variety proved an almost impossible task because sourcing pure seeds seemed uphill.

In some places the variety was already contaminated by other hybrid varieties. In addition the low yield (200 kgs from an acre) made the cultivation commercially unviable.

Added to this were problems faced during conversion to organic farming.

According to him, conversion to organic farming in navara rice was not very remunerative but his interest pulled him on.

Pest control proved a major challenge. “Tulsi and marigold were planted on the field bunds to repel the winged menace. Once pests damaged our four acres. For the next cropping season we trained our workers to catch the pests using nylon nets.”

Being a traditional variety it was grown organically but because of its poor yield and difficulties in controlling pests and diseases conventional method of farming was adopted by some interested farmers to conserve it.

Many moved away to growing other hybrid rice varieties.

The crop is sown for seeds directly in the main field during April and harvested in June. Once the seeds are collected and cleaned it is again sown in December and harvested in February (60 days crop)

Selling price

Approximately from an acre 200 -250 kgs are harvested. The variety is presently being sold for Rs. 400 a kg through personal contacts.

But why organic? Can we not grow this crop using fertilizers?

“Since it is a medicinal rice variety for consumption we decided to adopt only organic methods. We did not want the chemical residues in the harvested grains,” explains Mr. Unni.

Over the years the farm has been able to educate the labourers on effective farming methods specifically tailored for this type of rice farming. Today the workers guide other growers on the best practices being followed at the farm, according to Mr. Unni.

Several awards

The several awards and recognitions conferred by State, central governments and other leading agriculture institutions seem to prove the importance of his work.

Recently the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Authority conferred the second annual Plant Genome Saviour community recognition award on him.

“The farm has also formed rice clusters for navara and got it registered under Geographical Indication through farmer led initiatives. The entire farm is certified organic from 2006,” says Mr. Unni.

Many scientists, students, authorities of various government departments and agencies are visiting the farm to learn about this variety and its cultivation details.

For details interested readers can contact Mr. Narayana Unni at Navara Eco Farm, Karukamani Kalam, Chittur College P.O., Palakkad Dist, Kerala, India, Pin: 678 104, Phone: 04923- 221177 and 222277, email: unnysfarm@gmail.com, Mobile:09447277749.

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hindustantimes

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Sunny

Friday, Oct 11

Max		Min
34°	|	25°

Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:58
Humidity: 79	Sunset: 05:52
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast

Partly Cloudy

Saturday, Oct 12

Max		Min
33°	|	26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday **Oct 13**	Monday **Oct 14**	Tuesday **Oct 15**	Wednesday **Oct 16**	Thursday **Oct 17**
35° | 26°	32° | 25°	32° | 26°	31° | 26°	31° | 27°
Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Sunny

Airport Weather

Chennai Chennai

Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:58
Humidity: 79	Sunset: 05:52
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1009

THE HINDU Business Line

Spot rubber declines

Kottayam

Spot rubber declined on Thursday.

The commodity lost further following the absence of genuine buyers as major manufacturers continued to abstain from the market and the sharp declines in domestic futures.

Meanwhile, the key Tokyo rubber futures fell more than two per cent tracking an over night decline in oil prices.

Sheet rubber weakened to Rs 166 (Rs 168) a kg, according to traders.

The grade dropped to Rs 166.50 (Rs 168) at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board.

The transactions were in an extremely low key.

October futures declined to Rs 164.88 (Rs 168.56), November to Rs 166.29 (Rs 170.15), December to Rs 168.15 (Rs 172.11), January to Rs 170.02 (Rs 174.90) and February to Rs 173.36 (Rs 176) for RSS 4 while March futures remained inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) slipped to Rs 156.66 (Rs 156.80) at Bangkok.

October futures closed at ¥247.6 (Rs 156.55) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange

Spot rubber rates Rs/kg were: RSS-4: 166 (168); RSS-5: 160 (162); Ungraded: 156 (158); ISNR 20: 157 (158) and Latex 60%: 127 (128).

Mixed trend at Kolkata tea sale

Kolkata

The average CTC price posted a decline while the average orthodox price remained unchanged at Sale Number 41 this week at the Kolkata tea auction.

According to J. Thomas & Company Pvt Ltd, the tea auctioneers, the average CTC price was Rs 147 .10 a kg compared to Rs 148.23 last week at Sale Number 40.

The corresponding figure for orthodox was Rs 205.95 (Rs 205.79).

An estimated 73.51 per cent (75.10 per cent) of CTC and 84.78 per cent (80.96 per cent) of orthodox volumes offered were sold.

This week, the total offerings (packages) at the three North Indian auction centres at Kolkata,Guwahati and Siliguri were 3,21,064 compared to 4,57,602 in the corresponding sale (no. 41) last year. The offerings at Kolkata comprised CTC/dust 1,12,481 (1,57,657), orthodox 34,578 (27,533) and Darjeeling 11,517 (7,060). The corresponding figures for two other centres were : Guwahati 80,667 (1,44,588) and Siliguri 81,821 (1,20,784).

Liquoring Assam CTC teas maintaining quality were around last while remaining Assams were irregularly lower. Better Dooars were barely steady around last, while the remainder sold at irregularly lower levels. Tata Global was less active. 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. Exporters operated on fannings and large brokens. Orthodox tippy teas sold well in line with quality. Remainder was irregularly lower following quality.

The CIS and the 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 teas maintaining quality were readily absorbed. Plainer sorts sold around last levels.

Fannings met with strong demand and appreciated.

Traditional exporters were active.

Local dealers operated for cheaper sorts.

Tata Global and Hindustan Unilever operated selectively.

Better sowing prospects weigh down jeera prices

Rajkot

Jeera prices decreased on the back of good rains at the producing States.

Good rain in Gujarat, raised prospects of better sowing, while higher-than-expected spot supplies weighed on sentiment.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera November contract decreased Rs 120 to Rs 12,907.50 a quintal, with an open interest of 9,579 lots.

NCDEX December contract decreased Rs 145 to Rs 13,145, with an open interest of 2,334 lots.

At Unjha mandi of Gujarat, supplies were 6,000-7,000 bags of 60 kg each against expected 3,000-4,000 bags.

Best quality jeera moved down by Rs 30-35 to Rs 2,500-2,780 for 20 kg.

Medium grade jeera was traded on Rs 2,200-2,450.

Traders said that, rains have been good in Gujarat and it’s going to be beneficial for the winter crops.

Sowing of jeera is going to be better this season. The recent rains are also reportedly good for the sowing activities due to start after Dussehra in Gujarat.

The data showed that the current carryover stocks of jeera were reported higher at 12 lakh bags against 9-10 lakh bags that were reported last year on the same date.

According to Kedia Commodity report, jeera for next some session looks weak to test Rs 12,750-12,620 level as rains in top producer raised prospects of better sowing, but demand will support at lower level.

Portal brings farmers, buyers on same platform

Hyderabad

Farmers will now have another window to sell their food products to buyers and retailers in India and the US.

The same electronic window can also help farmers look for a suitable manufacturer and dealer of farm machinery, complete with details of the models, prices and user reviews.

e-fresh

This window was launched on Thursday by eFresh, a Nabard-supported multi-lingual private portal linking buyers and sellers of farm produce.

“Most of the farmers and suppliers are today facing problems in selecting the right market place, while buyers are facing problems in locating the suppliers.

Taking this into account, we have launched the electronic market linkage platform, providing visibility and connectivity between suppliers and buyers,” Srihari Kotela, Managing Director of eFresh Portal Ltd, told media persons here.

As of today, the portal contains a list of 4,500 suppliers of different food products, including organic food, based in India and the US.

“We will extend the list to other countries.

“We, however, will not help in making deals between suppliers and buyers or negotiating prices. It is only intended to bring the two parties on a common platform,” he said.

The portal is not charging any fee from its users for the first three months and later there would be an annual user fee, he added.

farm machinery

In the same portal, a farm machinery info bank has been included as farmers are increasingly going for mechanisation and are having problems identified the right type of equipment and the manufacturer/dealer. It has so far included a list of 120 manufacturers of farm equipment such as sprayers, tractors and harvesters, along with data on their dealers, service centres and spare parts outlets.

“We will soon include user reviews so that farmers or farmers groups can have first hand experience of the buyers of that particular farm equipment,” Srihari said.

Andhra Pradesh troubles may mar shrimp success story

The ongoing agitation in the Seemandhra region over the carving of Telengana out of Andhra Pradesh is a serious threat to the shrimp industry as the coastal Andhra region has in the recent years emerged as the nerve-centre of aquaculture.

Disruptions in transportation and other hurdles have upset the flourishing shrimp industry, says A.J. Tharakan, who recently took over as the President of the Seafood Export Association India (SEAI).

“The Andhra troubles have seriously affected the functioning of shrimp farms, processing units and exporting houses,” Tharakan told *Business Line*.

“Every aspect of the shrimp industry has been hit — shipments, feed supplies and production.” He is worried that the agitation would reverse the massive advances made by the shrimp industry in the past five years.

He noted that the vannamei shrimp farming had leapfrogged in Andhra Pradesh in the past three years. Production had gone up from 1 lakh tonnes to three lakh tonnes.

“We are aiming to increase the production to 5 lakh tonnes in a year,” he said. Tharakan noted that more than half of India’s seafood export earnings came from shrimp aquaculture. The seafood export sector, on the back of the shrimp industry, was hoping to increase exports to 5 billion dollars by 2016.

“The shrimp industry has been performing extremely well over the past three years,” he said.

“Shrimp is one export item that has registered impressive and consistent growth.” This was particularly important against the backdrop of the country’s widening current account deficit.

“Things are really looking up for the shrimp industry and everybody is gaining — the farmer, the dealer and the exporter.”

Tharakan pointed out that global demand was going up along with sharp rise in price. Because of the shrimp diseases in Thailand and Vietnam, there was a shortfall in global supply which was pushing up the demand and price of Indian shrimp.

The US is the largest export market for India.

The recent lifting by the US International Trade Commission of the countervailing duty imposed by the Department of Commerce on Indian shrimps (along with shrimps from other countries) would add to the competitiveness of the Indian produce on the US market.

He said in the past three years coastal Andhra farmers had taken to shrimp farming in a big way.

“Andhra’s enterprising shrimp farmers are now getting a decent price for their produce,” he said. A farmer could now get Rs 600 a kg of shrimp; this was up from Rs. 300 two years back. As a result, more farmers were opting for the vannamei shrimp. Farmers in Orissa, West Bengal and Gujarat were following suit.

“But I am afraid the agitation will hurt the growth of the shrimp industry,” Tharakan said.

Selling pressure dissolves sugar

Sugar prices dropped by Rs 5-10 a quintal for fair quality in Vashi market on Thursday on higher selling pressure. Maharashtra's mills sold the commodity at Rs 10-20 lower on eased local demand and absence of upcountry buying. *Naka* rates were unchanged for fourth consecutive day on routine activities.

Domestic futures prices were steady with thin volatility. More than sufficient supply and stock at market level kept the morale weak, said sources.

An observer said that in spot prices for fair quality declined by Rs 5-10 on need-based volume.

Maharashtra's mills continued their selling in local market as neighbouring States such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and eastern States have turned to Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka due to favourable price parity considering freight and other costs. Arrivals at Vashi market were 62-63 truck loads (of 100 bags each) while local dispatches declined to 59-60 truck loads.

On Wednesday, 15-16 mills sold about 48,000-50,000 bags at Rs 2,740-2,830 (Rs 2,750-2,850) for S-grade and Rs 2,880-2,980 (Rs 2,900-3,000) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 2,952-3,100 (Rs 2,962-3,100) and M-grade Rs 3,092-3,246 (Rs 3,096-3,271).

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

Uttar Pradesh rates were: Muzzafarnagar Rs 3,225.

Imported oils rally on stockists' support

Edible oils rose for fourth consecutive day tracking extended gain in futures market and higher festival demand.

On the Bombay Commodity Exchange, imported palmolein and soyabean refined oil increased by Rs 3 and Rs 5 each, cotton and rapeseed refined oil inched up by Rs 5 and Rs 2 respectively. Groundnut and sunflower oil ruled unchanged on steady report from producing centres.

Local refineries have raised their rates for soyabean oil by more than Rs 10 and stopped quoting it late evening on good buying support from stockists and bullish futures. Refineries have sold more than 3,000 tonnes of palmolein, soya and sunflower oil during the day, said a broker.

Sources said that stockists continued fresh buying as demand for Dussehra and Diwali festivals is on peak. Local refineries hiked their rates. During the day, Liberty sold 1,200-1,300 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 564-567. Ruchi sold 1,000-1,200 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 562-565, soyabean refined oil 300-350 tonnes at Rs 671-680 and sunflower refined oil 80-100 tonnes at Rs 785. Allana sold 350-400 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 563-565. Soyabean refined oil 80-100 tonnes at Rs 675.

Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 567, super palmolein Rs 605 and super deluxe Rs 625, soyabean refined oil Rs 690 and sunflower refined oil Rs 800. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 565, sunflower refined oil Rs 785. Allana was quoting palmolein Rs 567 and sunflower refined oil Rs 820.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled steady at Rs 1,400 for *telia* tin and loose (10 kg) at Rs 900 . Total soyabean arrivals were 2-2.50 lakh bags and its prices were Rs 3,000-3,200 (new) and Rs 3,200-3,500 (old) ex mandi and Rs 3,450-3,600 for plant delivery. Mustard seed arrivals were 65,000 bags and its prices were Rs 3,350-3,775.

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil's November futures settled higher at MYR 2,389 (MYR 2,368), December at MYR 2,391 (MYR 2,369) and January at MYR 2,394 (MYR 2,370).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: groundnut oil 900 (900), soya refined oil 675 (670), sunflower exp. ref. 730 (730), sunflower ref. 785 (785), rapeseed ref. oil 722 (720), rapeseed expeller ref. 692 (690) cottonseed ref. oil 685 (680) and palmolein 563 (560).

Pepper continues to stay hot on supply squeeze

Pepper prices – both futures and the spot – continued to stay hot on strong demand amid tight supply.

As the market is moving up day by day, the sellers, who are holding the material, were staying away from the market that is said to have put the buyers in a panic situation, market sources told *Business Line.* Leading local brokers who are also doing inter-State business were also approaching processors for the material. Only day traders were seen active while hedgers were worried and staying away, they said.

On the spot, 12 tonnes of pepper arrived and of this 10 tonnes were sold. The material arriving from the plains was "highly mouldy and with higher level of moisture" and hence the processing would take more time and involve higher cost, they claimed. Rise in prices coupled with strengthening of the rupee has pushed up the Indian parity and as a result it is becoming out priced, they said.

On the IPSTA activities were comparatively more. All the three contracts increased substantially. Oct, Nov and Dec contracts went up by Rs 500, Rs 400 and Rs 397 respectively to close at Rs 44,500, Rs 44,700 and Rs 44,326 a quintal. On the NMCE, Oct was not opened while Nov went up by Rs 374 to Rs 44,326 .

Turnover on the IPSTA was at 13 tonnes while that on the NMCE was four tonnes, they said.

Spot prices also soared by Rs 500 to Rs 41,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 43,500 (garbled) a quintal .

Indian parity in the international market was up at $7,450 (c&f) Europe and $7,700 a tonne (c&f) for the US .

Lack of quality arrivals grinds turmeric

Erode

Turmeric prices decreased for want of quality and limited arrivals.

"Traders and exporters are getting negligible number of upcountry orders and so they are buying limited stock of turmeric by quoting lesser price. The traders are expecting fresh orders after one week," said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said that there is no major improvement in price and also the arrival was only 1,642 bags of which 50 per cent was sold.

Due to arrival of medium variety hybrid finger turmeric, the price was decreased by Rs 100 a quintal. But the price of the root variety was showed an increase of Rs 100 due to quality.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,209-5,817; the root variety Rs 3,517-4,821.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 4,727-6,309; the root variety Rs 4,474-5,439. Of the 429 bags arrived, only 87 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,969-5,944; the root variety Rs 4,499-5,304. All the 324 bags found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,712-5,995; the root variety Rs 4,617-5,040. All the 200 bags were traded.

Mustard outlook brightens as soya oil turns dearer

Indore

Improved demand and bullish trend in soya oil and seeds have added to the bullish trend in mustard oil and seeds for the past few days with mustard oil in Indore mandis on Thursday being quoted Rs 7 up at Rs 665 for 10 kg.

Similarly it ruled Rs 5 higher in Moorena at Rs 670, while it was Rs 10 up in Neemuch at Rs 660.

Rally in mustard oil continued in Rajasthan and Gujarat mandis as well on improved demand and buying support. While it was quoted Rs 10 up each in Kota and Ganga Nagar where it ruled at Rs 680 each, it ruled Rs 5 higher in Jaipur at Rs 690. In Gujarat also, mustard oil ruled Rs 10 higher at Rs 655 for 10 kg.

Even as the country has adequate carryover stock in mustard seeds, expected rise in mustard oil consumption during the winter season in northern States, rally in soya oil and damage to soyabean crops in Madhya Pradesh and other soya growing States, will likely to support the uptrend in mustard oil in the coming days, said a trader .

Improved demand and rise in soyabean prices have also lifted mustard seeds in Indore mandis by Rs 200 a quintal in the past one week with its price on Thursday being quoted at Rs 4,200-4,400. Similarly, raida has also gained Rs 200 in the past one week to Rs 3,100-3,200.

In futures however, slack demand and buying support dragged mustard seeds prices with its October and November contracts on the NCDEX closing lower at Rs 3,528 (down Rs 16) and Rs 3,599 (down Rs 8). Plant deliveries of mustard seeds for Jaipur line were quoted higher at Rs 3,680-3,700 on improved demand and rise in mustard oil and seeds.

Arrival of mustard seeds across the mandis in country on Thursday was 95,000 bags (76,000 bags last week).

Rice market seen ruling tight

Sharbati and PR-14 varieties may lose their current levels while all the other aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties may continue to rule around current levels for the next few days, said trade experts.

With the trading being lukewarm, prices of aromatic and non-basmati varieties ruled almost unchanged on Thursday.

Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that only need-based buying is taking place in the market and the situation of the market was anticipated.

New rice variety, Pusa-1509 (sela) entered the market this week with a small consignment and quoted at Rs 7,000 a quintal.

Arrival of new rice is putting some pressure on the market but it is unlikely to see any major fall in prices currently, he added. Market may continue to rule in a tight range with marginal fluctuations even in the coming days, said Amit Chandna.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) sold at Rs 7,800-7,900 , while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 7,200-7,300 .

Pure Basmati (Raw) quoted at Rs 11,000. Duplicate basmati (steam) sold at Rs 6,300-6,400. For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Dubar quoted at Rs 3,700, Tibar sold at Rs 4,400 while Mongra was at Rs 3,100 .

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati (Steam) sold at Rs 4,500 while Sharbati (Sela) quoted at Rs 4,200-4,250. Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,350-2,400 , Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,300 , PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 2,900 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,700-2,750. PR14 (steam) sold at Rs 2,850 .

Paddy arrivals

About 1 lakh bags of PR paddy arrived and quoted at Rs 1,320-1,380, around 5,000 bags of Pusa-1509 arrived and sold at Rs 3,200 , 2,000 bags of Pusa-1121 at Rs 3,250 , while 18,000 bags of Sharbati arrived and sold at Rs 2,100-2,250 .

Around 5,000 bags of Duplicate Basmati arrived and went for Rs 3,020 a quintal.

Business Standard

Maize set to glisten on rains

Summer and winter crop expected to total 25 million tonnes, 10% higher than last year's

Riding the wave of a good monsoon, the maize crop in 2013-14kharif and rabi together is likely to have a record production. Industry and farmers are putting the total crop at 24.5 to 25 million tonnes, by the indications available.

According to data from the ministry of agriculture, the sowing area of maize as on October 2 (kharif) had risen by 11 per cent to 8.22 million hectares against 7.4 million hectares in the year-ago period. Rabi production is 20-25 per cent of total production.

Lured by the high remuneration (Rs 1,350-Rs 1,750 a quintal against the minimum support price of Rs 1,175 a quintal last year) the farmers in all maize-growing states have increased the sowing area.

Experts are expecting an increase of at least 10 per cent in the output this year.

According to Raju Choksi, vice-president (agri-commodities), Anil Nutrients, a higher-than-normal monsoon across major growing states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh is likely to further push rabi acreage this financial year. By the first advance estimates of the ministry of agriculture, production is expected at 17.8 million tonnes compared to 16 million by the fourth estimates for 2012-13.

“Production is likely to surpass all records this year. We expect bumper crop as the kharif production may cross 18 million tonnes by the time the ministry comes out with the second advance estimates, as the first estimates are usually very conservative," he said. Choksi added the rabi production last year was 6.25 million tonnes despite a bad monsoon and so this year production was likely to be higher.

The projections of a higher acreage and yield is music to the ears of the starch industry, operating under thin margins. Many units had closed due to high cost.

Indian pepper exports in soup

High price and supply crunch are reasons

India is literally out of the global pepper mart as it currently offers the highest price along with Indonesia. General shortfall in supplylead to the sharp increase in prices. Both India and Indonesia now offer US $7,450/tonne for ASTA grade pepper. Business is brisk only in Brazil since that country offers the lowest tags across the global markets. India is only likely to export about 1,000 tonnes in September which is also because gains reaped from dollar appreciation. According to leading exporters, exports from India were weak in the current financial year on higher prices, poop supply conditions and quality related issues.

Global demand is also weak owing to slowdown in major European economies and in the US. Exporters told Business Standard that India could export hardly 6,000 tones in the April – September period of the current financial year. According to them, this is the right opportunity for India as Vietnam and Indonesia, two largest exporters in the world, are literally not exporting pepper because of short supply. But India is missing this opportunity due to higher prices and a supply crunch.

Global pepper market, including black and white pepper is likely to remain tight for the rest of this year as leading producing countries are having very thin stocks. Vietnam is not even releasing indication prices as the country's stock position is very bad. On the other hand, Indonesia is only giving indication prices at $7,450/tone.

Vietnam, world's largest producer of the spice, has already shipped 110,000 tones by the end of last month and the balance is in a range of 10,000 -15,000 tones only. For the first time in recent years, Vietnam traders are not even quoting prices in this week.

According to experts world demand is being met by Brazil as crop season is at its peak now. Both European and US buyers are active there since they offer the lowest tags across the world markets. Brazil offer B1 grade at $6,850/tone and $6,950 for B-ASTA. Importers from Europe and USA contract for low volumes because of the general economic slowdown and they depend mainly Brazil market. Major producers like Vietnam, Indonesia and India are not in picture as the prices are too high for the importers.

Meanwhile, domestic production is likely to be lower in the next season that commences by December. Prolonged monsoon season has damaged the flowering of pepper wines in major producing centers of Kerala like Idukki and Wynad. Growers of Idukki district told Business Standard that production will be lower this time by 40%. The situation is more or less the same in Wynad also. Benny Chacko, a Kattappana based grower said that there was continuous rainfall for around 90 days during monsoon which affected the flowering very badly. In most cases flowers were damaged, so only leaves were grown abundantly, he added.

So in the next season Indian market has to depend mainly on crop from Karnataka. According to latest projections, market is likely to be hot during next year also as there will be an overall production shortfall to the tune of 20%. If production drops in Karnataka situation will be more worse.

During 2012, total production of pepper in Indonesia was around 75,000 tones comprising of 55,000 of black and 20,000 tones of white pepper. Along with the carry over stock a volume of 62,500 was exported in 2012. In 2013 production of black pepper is estimated to be significantly lower by around 25-30%, particularly in Lampung region. In the absence of catch crop during the current year, the limited carry over stock from 2012 crop has fully utilized for export during the first six month of the current year, according to a report of the International Pepper Community [IPC]. Recent estimates indicate that this year’s output is hardly 30,000 tones.

Odisha's rice procurement target pegged at three million tone

The state government has set rice procurement target at three million tonne for the kharif marketing season of this fiscal.

Out of the total target, at least 2.5 million tonne will be procured by government procurement agencies including Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the balance 0.5 million tonne through levy collection.

The Government of India has fixed minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1,310 per quintal for common paddy and Rs 1,345 per quintal for Grade-A paddy during this kharif season.

The food & procurement policy for the kharif marketing season for 2013-14 was approved by the State Cabinet.

The state agencies- Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd (OSCSC), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED), Odisha State Cooperative Marketing Federation (MARKFED) and Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (TDCC) will procure paddy in the state, either directly from the farmers or with the help of Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS), Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and pani panchayats.

The government agencies will be allowed to procure paddy from market yards of regulated market committees (RMC) along with miller agents. The millers can also collect paddy at their mill gates. Emphasis will be on opening a large number of paddy purchase centres to be run by PACS, SHGs and pani panchayats on behalf of state agencies. The PPCs will be spread evenly through the state.

Superior quality paddy brought by the farmers will be auctioned in the RMC yards where millers, traders and other agencies will participate.

The district cooperative central bank (DCCB) will be the nodal agency for the PACS to coordinate with OSCSC. By using PACS, OSCSC will get Rs 31.25 per quintal of paddy as commission to societies which will be passed on to PACS through DCCBs. This is expected to strengthen PACS and DCCB as well as facilitate immediate payment to the farmers.

Payment to the farmers by government agencies and miller agents will be made through A/C payee cheques or online transfer wherever such facilities are available. The farmers will be identified through Kisan Credit Cards, land pass books, record of rights and farmer identity cards. The state agencies will submit a computerised list of farmers from whom paddy has been procured along with details on a daily basis to the concerned collectors.

The district collectors have been instructed to prepare a district procurement plan for ensuring even spread of PPCs, availability of equipment at PPCs, quality control training and publicity through media, pamphlets and hoardings.

Rice procurement target pegged at three million tone

Out of total target, at least 2.5 MT will be procured by govt procurement agencies

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Out of the total target, at least 2.5 million tonne will be procured by government procurement agencies including Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the balance 0.5 million tonne is to be procured through levy.

The Government of India has fixed minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1310 per quintal for common paddy and Rs 1345 per quintal for Grade-A paddy during this kharif season.

The food & procurement policy for the kharif marketing season for 2013-14 was approved by the State Cabinet.

The state procurement agencies- Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd (OSCSC), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED), Odisha State Cooperative Marketing Federation (MARKFED) and Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (TDCC) will procure paddy in the state, either directly from the farmers or with the help of Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS), Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and pani panchayats.

The government agencies will be allowed to procure paddy from market yards of regulated market committees (RMC). Miller agents will also procure paddy from RMC yards and at their mill gates. Emphasis will be on opening a large number of paddy purchase centres to be run by PACS, SHGs and pani panchayats on behalf of state procurement agencies. The PPCs will be spread evenly through the state.

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Crude palm oil up 0.5% on firm global cues

Oil for October delivery increased by 0.46%

Crude palm oil rose by Rs 2.70 to Rs 517.80 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators indulged in expanding their positions on strong demand in the spot market.

The sentiment improved further on tight supplies from the overseas market against strong demand.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for delivery in November rose by Rs 2.70, or 0.52%, to Rs 517.80 per 10 kg, with a business turnover of 132 lots.

The oil for October delivery increased by Rs 2.40, or 0.46%, to Rs 521.90 per 10 kg, with trading volume of 158 lots.

Marketmen attributed the rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade to higher spot demand and a firming global trend. Oil climbed to USD 738 a tonne on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange.

Coriander up 2.9% on spot demand

Increased buying by speculators on pick up in spot market demand against tight stocks on restricted arrivals from producing belts influenced coriander prices

Coriander prices rose by 2.99% to Rs 6,814 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions, supported by rising demand in the spot markets against restricted arrivals.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, coriander for November delivery gained Rs 198, or 2.99%, to Rs 6,814 per quintal with an open interest of 20,420 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in October traded higher by Rs 192, or 2.99%, to Rs 6,612 per quintal, with an open interest of 7,000 lots.

Market analysts said increased buying by speculators on pick up in spot market demand against tight stocks on restricted arrivals from producing belts mainly influenced coriander prices to rise at futures trade.

Cardamom up 3.9% on restricted arrivals

Spice for delivery in November edged up by 0.23%

Cardamom prices hit daily upper limit of 3.99% to Rs 692.50 per kg in futures trade today on brisk buying from exporters and upcountry buyers in spot markets.

Sentiment improved further on restricted arrivals from producing regions.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in October spurted by Rs 26.60, or 3.99%, to Rs 692.50 per kg, with a business turnover of 152 lots.

The spice for delivery in November edged up by Rs 1.80, or 0.23%, to Rs 752 per kg with a trading volume of 892 lots.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

After storm in a T-cup, Andhra Pradesh braces for real one on Saturday

NEW DELHI: A severe cyclone with gusts of wind at 200 km an hour is forecast to smashthe coast of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh on Saturday, which could cause widespread damage in the coastal districts, hit paddy and cotton crops, and heighten tension in the region that already faces protests and power blackouts.

The weather office said the storm has crossed the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, causing some damage to thatched huts as well as power and communication lines. It is forecast to intensify significantly into a severe cyclone and strike the mainland on the evening of October 1. It said strong winds with speeds of 175-185 km an hour with gusts of 200 km per hour would lash the coast.

In Andhra Pradesh Rvenue Minister N. Raghuveera Reddy employees, who are on strike against the proposed creation of Telangana, have agreed to cooperate in the state's efforts to deal with the cyclone. In Orissa, the government has called back workers from the Puja holidays. "It appears to be a very serious cyclone storm," the state's disaster management commissioner T Radha told ET.

The state's Chief Minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy has reviewed the situation and asked the administration in coastal districts to be ready with helicopters, boats and services of the Coast Guard in advance. In six coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh 80% of the standing crop is paddy, followed by groundnut, sugarcane, pulses and other horticulture crops.

"Paddy covering 10.77 lakh hectare of agriculture land is expected to be hit by the cyclone. We have advised farmers in Krishna and West Godavari to start harvesting the standing crop at the earliest. In other coastal districts of East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Srikulam and Vizianagaram the paddy crop is still in tillering and panicle initiation stage so would not be majorly impacted," said J Dharma Naik, joint director agriculture, Andhra Pradesh. He added that water logging would lower yield of standing crop from paddy to cotton to maize.

Farmer and agriculturists were hoping against hope of no major flooding, as it would wipe the standing paddy crop. "We just hope the rivers in southern Odisha and even Mahanadi don't swell. Over 24 lakh hectare land under long duration paddy is in panicle initiation stage and if storm comes there is no problem, but if floods comes then it will be affected,"said SN Pasupalak, dean of the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology.

In the states out of 61 lakh hectare kharif crop over 40 lakh hectare was under paddy crop. Harvesting of paddy in some districts have started and farmers were being advised to harvest over 4 lakh hectare paddy which was in the maturing stage at the earliest.

Sericulture labour integrated with MNREGA

NEW DELHI: Keeping in view the shortage of skilled labour in sericulture, the Rural Development Ministry has agreed to integrate the workers in this sector with the employment guarantee scheme, MNREGA.

"I am happy to inform you that just yesterday Minister for Rural Development Jairam Rameshhas agreed to integrate sericulture workers, where the farmers are marginal and small scale, with the benefits of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)," Textiles Minister Kavuru Sambasiva Rao said today.

He was talking to reporters after chairing 'Conference of State Ministers of Textiles.'

"The purpose of the MNREGA is to provide jobs, but now we will also provide skills to workers," Rao said, adding that the shortage of skill is a major issue in textiles and unless this requirement is met, the sector will not grow.

Recently, Rao had written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh seeking the sector's linkage to MNREGA.

He had said that linking the programme under the MNREGA with the sector will help train about 15 lakh workers in the next three years.

MNREGA, which was launched in 2006, guarantees 100-day employment to the poor in rural areas every year.

The principle aim of the scheme is to provide employment to people who do not get jobs during the off-season periods and by linking the scheme to textiles sector these people will also be trained.

Rao said: "We have not only given responsibility of skill development to public institutions but also to private ones. We will give them Rs 10,000 per trainee to train them."

About 45 million workers are employed in the textiles sector. During 2012-13, textiles exports were USD 34 billion. For the current fiscal, the government has set an export target of about USD 43.5 billion.

The US and Europe together account for almost 65 per cent of India's textiles exports.

On sericulture production, Rao said the Ministry has decided to increase the production in sericulture sector from 23,000 tonne to 33,000 tonne by the end of 12th Plan (2012-17).

"We want to motivate people so that they can cross this production limit and take it to 40,000 tonne. This will reduce our dependence on silk imports from countries like China and help us in becoming self-sufficient," he said.

Cotton output at 370 lakh bales this year, exports may be flat

NEW DELHI: Cotton production is estimated to be 370-375 lakh bales in 2013-14 season, while the fibre's exports are likely to remain flat at 100 lakh bales this year, Textiles Minister K S Rao said today.

The Agriculture Ministry has pegged the cotton output at 353 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) for this season.

"This year cotton production is estimated to be 370 lakh bales or 375 lakh bales and our requirement is only about 270 lakh bales in the current cotton season, so there will be excess of cotton of 100 lakh bales which we have permitted under the Open General License (OGL) with registration," Rao said.

He was talking to reporters after chairing a conference of state ministers of textiles here.

In the last cotton season (October-September), the natural fibre production was around 340 lakh bales. The domestic consumption was 260 lakh bales and exports were at 100 lakh bales.

"We want to motivate cotton growers and suggest the best practices adopted by developed countries in the area of cotton production. In India, yield per acre of cotton is much less compared to developed countries and we want to do R&D in this regard," Rao said.

The CAB, which is under the Textiles Ministry, has not come out with its latest review on cotton for this season.

The Board, which usually meets every quarter to estimate cotton output, consumption, exports and imports, has not come with any review since April this year.

The increase in the natural fibre output in this year is likely to be on account of good monsoon mainly in cotton growing states and increase in acreage.

On the proposed Cotton Distribution Policy, Rao said, "This has been referred to a Group of Ministers (GoM) who are expected to meet in a couple of days."

The GoM comprises Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, Commerce Minister Anand Sharmaand the Textiles Minister, among others.

Due to differences of opinion among key ministries, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had on September 12 deferred a decision on the cotton distribution policy that proposed a 10 per cent export duty on on cotton beyond a declared exportable surplus.

Currently, there is neither any export duty nor restriction on quantity of shipment of cotton after registering contracts with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

Under the policy, the Textiles Ministry had recommended an export duty of 10 per cent ad valorem at freight on board (FOB) or Rs 10,000 per tonne, whichever is less, for all cotton exports exceeding the declared/revised exportable surplus.

India is the world's second-largest cotton producer and exporter. Of the country's total natural fibre exports, China accounts for about 75 per cent.

TRA launches Tocklai mobile application for the tea industry

The app will help people seek information on Indian tea on the go on their mobile devices and all planters/ small growers to ask questions realtime.

KOLKATA: In today's world, information is the edge for a successful venture, be it business or research. Keeping that in mindTea Research Association has launched it's mobile application named TRA Tocklai onAndroid and IOS platform . The app which was originally conceived by Joydeep Phukan, Secretary, TRA was officially launched by MGVK Bhanu , Chairman Tea Board of India.

The Tocklai Tea Encyclopedia is regarded as the bible for all R&D work done in the past 100 years and is more 1000 pages in book form. All the contents of the Tocklai Tea Encyclopedia has been uploaded in this app. Phukan stated that there is a provision for all planters/ small growers to ask questions realtime . He said that if they are in an estate and wants an answer, they can click a photo of the issue or type in their question and upload the same to get an answer from the relevant scientist.

This application will help people associated with the tea industry to seek information on Indian tea on the go on their mobile devices.

Pepper prices remain high due to low supply, high demand

The estimated pepper production of 55,000 tonne for 2012-13 is off the mark feel the exporters.

KOCHI: Dwindling arrivals and good demand are keeping the pepper prices high even as the trade is awaiting a decision by the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) on 6,300 tonne of pepper it had seized from the Kerala warehouses ofNCDEX on complaints of mineral oil contamination. Though it had found 850 tonne to be adulterated and wanted to destroy it, the trade was against the decision saying it could be cleaned and exported.

Meanwhile, it is continuing to test the rest of the stock. India parity in the global market is around $7,700 per tonne to the US. Other major origins like Vietnam and Indonesia are selling around the same level. However, Brazil prices are lower. "Since Brazil is selling it for a lesser price, the buyers have turned to that country," said Kishor Shamji, a leading exporter.

In the last few weeks, the arrivals used to average 35 to 50 tonne daily as farmers, who were disappointed by lower prices of rubber, liquidated their pepper stock, he said. But this flow was mainly from the plains and not from the hill ranges. But that seems to have thinned out leading to a shortage, he added. The local pepper prices are hovering at around Rs 428 per kg.

The estimated pepper production of 55,000 tonne for 2012-13 is off the mark feel the exporters. "The production should be below that. Except for the time when the rupee value depreciated, the Indian pepper exports have not been high this year," said Jojan Malayil, CEO of Bafna Enterprises.

The crop in Indonesia had also dropped paving way for limited stock in the world market as well. According to Geojit Comtrade, since the availability of stock at major sources is limited, the price is expected to remain high in the next few months.

Any changes may take place after the upcoming crop in India and Vietnam by early 2014. Though futures trade in pepper in NCDEX has been stopped after the seizure of adulterated stock, the Kochibased India Pepper and Spice Trade Association has received sanction from FMC for the new season contracts up to June 2014.

IPSTA is also aggressively marketing itself and upgrading its infrastructure and capabilities for a pan-India presence.

Sugar turns bitter: Cargill India tries to get right sugar production data in Maharashtra

Cargill India had to bear losses in some of its sugar deals due to sugar production going wrong, especially for Maharashtra, said trade sources.

PUNE: Cargill India is currently exploring alternative ways to get reliable data aboutsugarcane and sugar production estimates for the country's largest sugar producer, Maharashtra, according to sources.

The company had to bear losses in some of its sugar deals due to sugar production going wrong, especially for Maharashtra, said trade sources. "Cargill representatives met us to talk about how to get accurate estimate of sugar production for the state," said a source from Maharashtra government. There was no confirmation from Cargill despite repeated attempts to contact them.

As the 2013-14 sugarcane crushing season in top producer Maharashtra is just a month away, the state government is still giving out a projection of 74 lakh tonne sugar production, lower by 5% than the expectation of industry.

"Availability of sugarcane is less by about 20% this year. We will be able to crush 645 lakh tonne sugarcane and produce 74 lakh tonne sugar," said state cooperation minister Harshvardhan Patil, at a recent press conference.

The state government officials informally accept that the sugar production can touch 78 lakh tonne, close to the estimate of industry body Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).

Maharashtra's sugar production estimates have gone wrong time and again.

In August 2012, the state government had projected production of 63 lakh tonne sugar in 2012-13 due to diversion of sugarcane for use as fodder in the drought-hit regions. However, the actual production was higher by 26.6% at 79.8 lakh tonne. "Sometimes the estimates are deliberately kept low. Last year, projections of lower sugar production had helped firming up of domestic sugar prices," said an industry source.

Similarly, when the retail sugar price had become Rs 50/kg in 2009, the country's sugar production estimates went hey wire. It led to the government taking policy decision of duty free import of sugar.

Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar had openly blam-ed wrong reporting of sugarcane area estimates to be responsible for wrong policy decisions.

Oil rises to near 1-month high on Israeli attack tweet

NEW YORK: Oil prices extended gains on Thursday to hit a near month high, rising by more than $2 per barrel after a Twitter post started a false rumor of a new attack by Israel on Syrian airports, adding to concerns about oil supplies in the Middle East.

Several traders said after the tweet by theIsrael Defense Forces, which recounted an event 40-years ago during the Yom Kippur War, talk of an Israeli strike on Syrian airports to halt a Russian arms shipment swept through markets, mirroring the Israeli attacks against Syrian airports to prevent Soviet arms deliveries during the war.

Oil markets had already been trading higher on news that Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was captured and held for several hours by former rebel militia.

Brent crude prices added more than a dollar of gains on the talk of the Israeli attack to trade as high as $111.66 a barrel, its highest since Sept. 13.

By 12:01 p.m. (1601 GMT), Brent crude was trading up $2.50 to $111.56. U.S. crude was $1.56 higher at $103.17.