

Agriculture innovations showcased at conference



A scientist from Punjab testing a treadle pump promoted by KVK, Wayanad, at an exhibition in Bangalore recently.

KALPETTA, October 28, 2013 : The eighth national conference of Krishi Vijnan Kendras (KVKs) which concluded at Gandhi KVK in Bangalore on Saturday showcased innovative findings of agriculture scientists from various KVKs in the country.

As many as 200 selected KVKs of the 624 KVKs participated in the conference with their own inventions.

The annual conference is aimed at sensitizing KVK scientists on developments in the agricultural sector and to help in lateral learning among KVKs. The KVKs under the Kerala Agriculture University (KAU) also participated in the four-day conference.

The inventions showcased included a treadle pump promoted by KVK Wayanad, Integrated vertical farm model of KVK Kannur, homestead farming model of KVK Kollam, Integrated farming system models of KVK Kottayam, technological women empowerment models of KVK Thrissur and KVK Malappuram.

The exhibition also brought to light the scented rice varieties of Wayanad Jeerakasala and Gandhakasala as well as medicinal rice variety 'Navara'.

The conference provided ample opportunities to learn modern technologies developed by various KVKs and research institutions in the agriculture sector, P.K. Abdul Jabbar, assistant professor, Agriculture Extension, KVK, Ambalavayal, who attended the seminar told *The Hindu*.

Many promising technologies for diversification of agriculture in the State such as macro propagation in banana, an innovative technology developed by the Tiruchirappally KVK in Tamil Nadu, iceless refrigerator, a low-cost vegetable storing technology of the Ambala KVK in Haryana; a low-cost portable vegetable preserator from National Institute for Climate Resilient Agriculture, New Delhi; bitter gourd cultivation on standing maize crop as live trailing material; and Arka Mangala , a cow pea variety developed by the Indian Institute of Horticulture, Bangalore were displayed, he said .

“Seven KVKs under the Kerala Agriculture University and the Kasaragod KVK under the Indian Council of Agriculture Research participated in the seminar from the State.

KAU Director of Extension Dr.Jose Mathew led the team.

Farmers rue shortage of labour for farm work

MADURAI, October 28, 2013 : Millet food that was served at the Gandhi Memorial Museum on Sunday during the Food Day celebrations.— Photo: G. Moorthy

Farmers who participated at the Food Day celebrations in the Gandhi Memorial Museum here on Sunday urged the Union and the State governments to supply labour for farming activities through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

Advocate T. Gurusami, president of the Joint Action Committee of Agricultural Associations, Tamil Nadu, said that all the village panchayats in the State should pass resolutions urging the government to supply labour for agricultural activities.

According to him, farmers who cultivate millets in small land holdings are affected because of labour shortage. He also added that the Food Day celebration was aimed at creating awareness among the public on the importance of taking healthy and traditional food.

K. Revathi, the owner of a millet snack manufacturing unit, said that patronising millet food could be the only way to revive the livelihood of farmers affected due to emergence of fast food culture.

Puliyur Nagarajan, president of farmers association in Tiruchi, insisted that the government should consider supplying labour under the NREGS scheme for farming activities.

To spread the awareness of healthy eating, food items such as ragi puttu, ragi murukku, varagu kozhukattai, ada dosai made of minor and major millets, thinai arisi payasam and sukku malli coffee were served to the participants.

Farm ponds converted into fish ponds in Pudukottai

Officials say it will increase the supplementary income of farmers

PUDUKOTTAI, October 28, 2013 : A couple of farm ponds set up under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the district have been converted into fish ponds for fetching additional revenue to the farmers.

The ponds built at Ulavayal in Kulathur Nayackarpatti village panchayat in Gandarvakottai union and Manamadai village in Sengamedu village panchayat in Karambakudi union were converted into fish ponds. High quality fishes developed at the Fish Rearing Centre in Thattamanaipatti were let out into the ponds on Saturday.

“The programme aims at a comprehensive economic development of farmers. Fish farming in the pond will help ensure proper maintenance and upkeep of the farm ponds,” says C. Manoharan, District Collector, who inaugurated the programme at the ponds.

The ponds were set up at an expenditure of Rs. 93,000 each. The pond was developed with a length of 25 metres and 15 metres wide.

Three types of fishes were reared at the ponds. The farmers would be able to harvest the fish in six to seven months.

Each fish now weighs between 500 gram and 700 gram and at the time of harvest would weigh anywhere between 150 and 200 kg, bringing adequate profit to the farmers, he said. The Collector appealed to farmers to ensure that the water level in the ponds had been maintained without any serious depletion.

The Fisheries Department sanctioned a maximum subsidy of Rs. 17,500 to encourage fish rearing, he said.

The farmers were advised to properly feed the fishes; the bran and groundnut cake should be in proper proportion of 2:1.

K. Sakthivel, Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, and Philomin Thiyagarajan, Assistant Director of Fisheries, advised the farmers on fish farming.

📌 **25m x 15 m ponds built at a cost of Rs. 93,000 each**

📌 **Fish can be harvested in six to seven months**

Farmers seek 10 marketing centres



Lack of marketing centres in major region leads to post-harvest losses of banana

V. Rajaram, executive president of Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, addressing the association's executive meeting in Tiruchi on Sunday. — PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

TIRUCHI, October 28, 2013 : The Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association has urged the State government to set up banana markets at 10 centres across Tamil Nadu for ensuring immediate returns to banana growers, eliminating post-harvest loss.

Speaking at the association's executive meeting held here on Sunday, V. Rajaram, its executive president, said although a large volume of banana was produced, a good part of it was lost because of poor post-harvest techniques.

The association has identified Erode, Coimbatore, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Krishnagiri, Villupuram, Karur, Vandalur, Tiruchi, and Thanjavur as the 10 centres.

Banana fibre was found to be ideal for manufacturing garments, and a garment manufacturing unit should be set up in Karur, Mr. Rajaram said.

Bifurcate district

G. Kanagasabai, president of the association, said the Tiruchi district should be bifurcated, with Srirangam as the headquarters of the new district.

Through the composite Tiruchi district had been trifurcated with Perambalur, Pudukottai, and Karur as respective district headquarters, the geographical area of Tiruchi district still justifies for a bifurcation for an efficient administration.

The move would facilitate the rapid development of Tiruchi district. He suggested that the Tiruchi be declared as the second capital of the State.

S. Balasubramaniam and N. Natarajan, both patrons, emphasised the need for linking the barrage across the Mayanur with the Karur-Tiruchi highway on the southern side, and Namakkal-Tiruchi highway on the northern end.

The link, they said, would serve as a direct route between Erode and Chennai.

P. Rangasamy, secretary of the association, moved resolutions in support of these demands which were adopted later.

Welfare benefits reach farmers

TIRUVARUR, October 28, 2013 : R. Kamaraj, Food Minister, gave away welfare assistance estimated at Rs. 1.59 crore to 1,828 beneficiaries under the farmers protection scheme at a function held here on Saturday.

The Minister gave away marriage assistance to the tune of Rs. 10.26 lakh to 115 beneficiaries, educational assistance of Rs. 25.76 lakh to 1,145 students, free house site pattas estimated at Rs. 1.10 crore to 474 men and women, accident relief assistance of Rs. 3.07 lakh to three persons, assistance for the final rites to the family members of those who suffered natural death of Rs. 6.12 lakh to 49 and house site pattas to 42.

S. Natarajan, Collector, presided over the function. Jayalakshmi Ambikapathi, District Panchayat president, Ravichandran and Uma Maheswari Krishnamoorthy, municipal chairpersons, were present.

Farmers pinning hopes on monsoon

TUTICORIN, October 28, 2013 : Lack of rain has put farmers in a fix. Agriculture has been affected by delayed monsoon. Pinning hopes on the monsoon, which was expected from October 21, many rainfed farmers have already started sowing blackgram, greengram, maize and sorghum in Ottapidaram, Kovilpatti, Vilathikulam and a few tracts in Srivaikuntam taluks.

K.P. Perumal, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said that 70 per cent of farmers is dependent on rainfed cultivation in the district.

“With 662 mm being the annual average rainfall in the district, only 171 mm rainfall has so far been recorded this year. Various stations in the district witnessed a short spell of rain but that was insufficient to raise a crop,” he told *The Hindu* here on Sunday.

Citing Tuticorin as a drought-prone district, he said only 450 mm to 460 mm rainfall was recorded against the annual average of 662 mm in 2012. As a result, 95 per cent of rainfed cultivation suffered. Irrigation-based cultivation saw only a 30 per cent yield.

Mr. Perumal pointed out that 37 per cent deficit in annual rainfall was witnessed in 2012.

But it was much better in 2011 with a record of 643 mm from January to December. In October, 295.22 mm rainfall was recorded against the average rainfall of 150.70 mm.

During a nine month period from January to September only 91 mm was recorded but in the month of October alone 295.22 mm of rain was recorded. Unlike the previous two years, the district received a good amount of rainfall in 2010 surpassing the annual average record.

Of the 711 mm record of rainfall in the year, the district realised a considerable amount of rainfall during November and December. Hence, the farmers are keeping their fingers crossed now for a downpour, Mr. Perumal said.

During the last week, 600 cusecs was released from the Papanasam dam for pishanam season in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin farmers.

Farmers to stage protest today

BELLARY, October 28, 2013 : Farmers under the banner Jan Sanhram Parishat (JSP) will stage a demonstration on Monday protesting against the inordinate delay on the part of the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) in releasing the compensation amount of Rs. 1.24 crore. The demonstration will begin from Bhujanganagar and culminate in Sandur, convenor of the taluk unit of JSP Mulimani Earanna, said.

Folk art, the stress buster for distressed farmers



Self-help: Villagers performing the 'Jada koppu' at Jamdapur in Adilabad on Sunday.-PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

ADILABAD, October 28, 2013 : Neither cinema nor television is a match for good old folk traditions when it comes to providing succour to distressed souls in rural confines. If it is the vigorous Kolatam in the plains, it is the rhythmic Dandari and the Ghussadi folk dances in tribal areas of Adilabad which are acting as escape valves for the emotionally charged farmers in the backdrop of the

debilitating onslaught by weather this year.

Though the evenings in rural areas in the harvest season are usually lively as villagers perform folk dances, the tradition has acquired a special relevance in this instance.

"It is helping us forget our problems at least for the time being," says farmer Pasula Devanna of Jamdapur village in Adilabad mandal of the current significance of the cultural aspect as he is among those who suffered crop damage owing to inclement weather.

The rainfall has had such a devastating effect on the farming community in the district that collective activities like folk dances started taking place on a low key. Villagers however, gradually seem to be waking up to the assuaging quality of their culture which has resulted in these dances being organised in many a village now.

Atram Raju, a Kolam tribe leader and a former sarpanch of Daboli gram panchayat in the agency mandal of Jainoor reveals that there is a marked lack of enthusiasm among his people towards the evening folk performances this season. "I had to motivate them to come together for the dandari," he says wanting to throw light on the plight of the farmers. The dwindling folk tradition, including dances and dramas, is actually a form of entertainment more observed on either side of Diwali festival and coincides with the harvesting season. "A good harvest gives us reason for celebrating festivals like Dasara and Diwali with much gusto," says Bodipalli Raja Reddy.

A proper study to establish a connection between farmer suicides and folk tradition has not been done but there is a possibility of such a link being in existence. It has been observed that villages where people have given up cultural activities, like Ankoli village in Adilabad mandal, the incidence of suicides was on the higher side.

Farmers in dire straits



YSR Congress honorary president Y.S. Vijayamma interacting with farmers whose crops were damaged due to recent rains in Krishna district at Jaggayyapeta on Sunday.

JAGGAYYAPETA, October 28, 2013 : It was just a week ago that 60-year-old B. Seetaramulu, a BT cotton farmer at Sher Mohammedpeta in Jaggayyapeta mandal, was staring at his crop from an elevated platform and hoping to make some good money to clear his debts. The

standing crop looked good and yield was much better than the previous year, today all his hopes are shattered and he stares at his damaged crop with a forlorn look.

The recent rains, caused by the North East monsoon, have washed the hopes of many farmers be it BT cotton growers, chilli, maize or vegetables. "We were yet to recover from last year's loss due to Nilam cyclone and this year the tragedy again struck us. That makes two consecutive years. Where do we go from here," he said.

As per the initial assessment of the agriculture department, out of 5,200 hectares of maize about 1,200 hectares are damaged and in case of BT cotton of 54,409 hectares over 23,600 hectares of crop stands damaged. With regard to paddy of the 2.5 lakh hectares about 21,389 hectares are damaged and groundnut of 1,430 hectares about 845 hectares stand damaged.

Most of the farmers said they were very happy with yield till a week ago and were hoping to cover up last year's Nilam's loss, but this year the damage was even bigger as 80 to 100 per cent of the crops were damaged and BT cotton growers were the worst hit, as the crop grows only once a year and this was the harvest time.

According to Gauramma of Anumanchipalli village in Jaggayyapeta mandal, who cultivates BT cotton in a three-acre leased land, the entire crop was damaged. "Apart from paying a lease rent of Rs. 15,000 per acre, we invested about Rs. 35,000 per acre and now we will not get a single rupee back," she said.

YSR Congress leader Samineni Udaya Bhanu who was accompanying party's honorary president Y.S. Vijayamma during a tour of the affected mandals, said farmers anyway do not make a great deal of money as the MSP (minimum support price) for BT Cotton set by the government this year was Rs. 4,000 per quintal when the production cost was Rs. 5,950 per acre and yield per acre ranges from two to three quintals, but at least they make some money now even that hope is washed away.

YSR Congress farmer's leader Nagi Reddy, said the government was yet to clear last year's input subsidy for the Nilam cyclone loss and they have duped the farmers by reducing the acreage. "We have to wait and see what action they take in this year," he said.

Mallu promises relief to flood-hit farmers of Madhira



Deputy Speaker Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka interacting with cotton farmers at Bonakal in Khammam district on Sunday. —PHOTO: G.N. RAO

KHAMMAM, October 28, 2013 : Standing paddy crops spread in around 35,000 acres in five mandals under Madhira constituency were reportedly damaged under the impact of heavy rains that lashed the district in the last few days. According to preliminary estimations,

maize crops ready for harvest in 5,000 acres and chilli in 5,500 acres were damaged in Madhira constituency due to nature's fury, sources said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka visited the rain ravaged cotton and maize fields at several villages in Chintakani and Bonakal mandals on Sunday.

The rain hit farmers narrated their tale of woe to Mr Vikramarka and urged his intervention to provide compensation for the crop losses.

Mr Vikramarka assured them that he had already apprised Chief Minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy of the extensive loss of crops due to heavy rains.

The government will provide succour to all the rain-hit farmers at the earliest, he said.

Bifurcation will lead to water disputes, says farmers' leader

'Centre could do little to reconcile the differences'

VIJAYAWADA, October 28, 2013 : Expressing resentment over the hasty manner in which Congress high command sought to divide the State, Confederation of Indian Farmers' Associations founder member Akkineni Bhavani Prasad said bifurcation was bound to give rise to new river water disputes.

No existing river dispute was solved by a host of tribunals and the Central government could do little to reconcile the differences. Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh would give rise to disputes between Seemandhra and Telangana over sharing of Krishna and Godavari river waters.

If bifurcation becomes inevitable, the Centre should take over the projects through an Act of Parliament and allocate water in consultation with either the Central Water Commission so that no animosity was created among people of the two regions, he observed.

Addressing a meeting on "Issues arising in sharing of Krishna and Godavari river waters on bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh" organised by Friends on Same Wave Length, city-based community service forum, on Sunday,

Mr. Bhavani Prasad said the farmers of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema were rightly concerned with the threat bifurcation posed to their livelihood as sharing of waters from Nagarjuna Sagar, Srisailem and Pulichintala projects which are situated on the borders of Seemandhra and Rayalaseema would become extremely cumbersome. It's a situation where two governments would be vying with each other for allocations from each one of the projects.

Polavaram

The national project status to Polavaram would serve no purpose as funds might come from the Centre but dealing with submergence of 1 lakh acres in Khammam district, thousands of acres in Chhattisgarh and Odisha too would be a formidable task. Power supply sharing will also be a problem. FOSWL city president M. Lingeswara Rao, advisor T. Sobhanadri, treasurer K. Narendra Babu and others spoke.

Water level

Madurai

Water level in Periyar dam stood at 118.50 feet on Sunday with an inflow of 389 cusecs and a discharge of 800 cusecs.

In Vaigai dam, the water level was 49.41 feet with an inflow and discharge of 514 cusecs and 1,460 cusecs respectively. No rainfall was recorded in the region, according to the Public Works Department here.

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 85.77 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 7,767 cusecs and the discharge, 5,004 cusecs.

Papanasam

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 78.20 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 361.74 cusecs and 602.25 cusecs is discharged. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 50.92 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 10 cusecs and 25 cusecs is discharged.

Nagercoil

The level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 19.60 feet, while it was 58.80 feet in Perunchani, 8.20 feet in Chittar 1, 8.30 feet in Chittar 11 and 36.01 feet in the Mamabazathuraiyaru dam.

Navalur Kuttappattu gets 16 mm rainfall

TIRUCHI, October 28, 2013: Navalur Kuttappattu received the maximum rainfall of 16 mm. in the last 24 hours that ended at 8 a.m. on Sunday, followed by Ponnaniyar Dam 11.8 mm.; Sirukudi and Lalgudi 7 mm. each, and Vathalai Anicut 6 mm.

Egg rate

The National Egg Coordination Committee egg rate was Rs. 3.61 on Sunday. – Staff Reporter

Concern over fall in prices of rubber

KOTTAYAM, October 28, 2013 : A sharp fall in natural rubber prices is causing concern in Kerala, which accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic production of the commodity. Farmers, local traders, and political parties hold the steady increase in import of rubber by the industry tapping on low tariff rate as the main factor for the declining prices for the domestic output.

According to Jose K. Mani, MP, the Centre is yet to fulfil its promise of raising the import tariff from 20 per cent. The Finance Ministry was yet to give its nod to this proposal forwarded by the Commerce Ministry on pressure from Kerala, he said.

The growers, many of them medium and small holders, were also hit by the hike in input cost, especially the wages, and factors such as rotting of trees due to excessive rain and paucity of experienced tappers.

The farmers, who mostly route their output through local traders, said the actual price they received was less than the official estimates. "Last week alone the price fell by Rs.30 a kg, which is the severest in recent times," a farmer said. The plummeting prices have left a telling impact in Kottayam, Idukki, and Pathanamthitta districts, which have the largest concentration of small and marginal rubber growers apart from several big and medium sized plantations.

According to the Rubber Board, the domestic price of RSS-4 slipped to Rs.15,900 last week from Rs.18,113 a quintal. Many of the farmers are apprehensive that if the import continued at the current level, the prices will dip further.

Local dealers said that it had often been the practice of the industry to manipulate the domestic prices by increasing import during the peak yielding season of October-December. Political parties and farmers' outfits alleged the present situation was the result of the Centre going back on the promise of enhancing the import tariff to stave off the price crash. Farmers said that there had been a mismatch between the input cost and the price they fetched.

"The wage for tappers was fixed when the rubber price was at its peak. While the price has come down since but the labour cost remains the same," said another rubber cultivator. The excess rainfall received in the rubber growing areas in the State this year has also added to the distress of the farmers in the form of large-scale rotting of trees, they said.

Cool season vegetable cultivation to start



For warm winters: The cool season vegetable nursery of the Seed Processing Plant, Alathur, Palakkad under VFPCK.

PALAKKAD, October 28, 2013 : The cool season vegetable cultivation in the plains of the district will start next week and end in February.

During the period, the Seed Processing Plant at Alathur, under the Vegetable and Fruit promotion Council, Keralam (VFPCK) will supply 10 lakh seedlings of cabbage and cauliflower to popularise

cool-season cultivation using safe methods.

In the last five years, VFPCK had been engaged in the commercial production and supply of cabbage and cauliflower seedlings in the district. The Seed Processing Plant had bagged an order for the supply of 5 lakh seedlings from the State Horticulture Mission. Last year, due

to adverse climatic conditions, the desired result could not be obtained, VFPCK officials said. This year, with a good monsoon, the situation is more favourable, they said.

VFPCK had introduced radical changes in production methods this year. Till last year, the seedlings were raised in green houses, a relatively old technology. This year, new poly houses were being used.

The potting mixture used to raise seedlings is a combination of coir-pith supplemented with trichoderma or pseudomonas. Now, perlites and vermiculites will also be used. (Vermiculite is a mineral that holds and absorbs water. Perlites does not absorb water).

This was adopted following the technical guidance provided by Narayanankutty, Scientist, Agricultural Research Station of the Kerala Agricultural University, Mannuthy.

Through these measures, the vigour and vitality of seedlings could be improved, VFPCK sources said. The seedlings are on sale at the Alathur plant at Rs.2 per seedling. For details, contact: 0492-222 2706 or 9446 022440.

Rice Millers offering less than MSP to face action



*Minister P. Sudarshan Reddy inspecting a measuring device at the agriculture market yard in Nizamabad on Sunday.—
PHOTO: K.V. RAMANA*

NIZAMABAD, October 28, 2013 : Minister for Major Irrigation P. Sudarshan Reddy has asked the authorities to take serious action against the rice millers who are cheating farmers in weighing paddy and

payment of the MSP.

Warning the rice millers against offering price lesser than MSP, he said Rs.1,345 per quintal has been fixed as the MSP for BPT variety and Rs.1500 for lesser quality produce (big size grain). "If the traders are found guilty of paying less than the MSP, they would attract punishment," he said after inaugurating a paddy purchasing centre at the Nizamabad agriculture market yard on Sunday.

Mr. Reddy inspected the electronic weighing machines and moisture meters at the yard and advised the farmers to bring only properly dried-up grain for sale. Meanwhile, the DCCB decided to open at least 200 paddy purchasing centres under the PACS across the district. In all, the administration wanted to set up 264 purchasing centres to procure 8 lakh quintals of paddy.

The rest of 64 centres would be opened under the IKP.

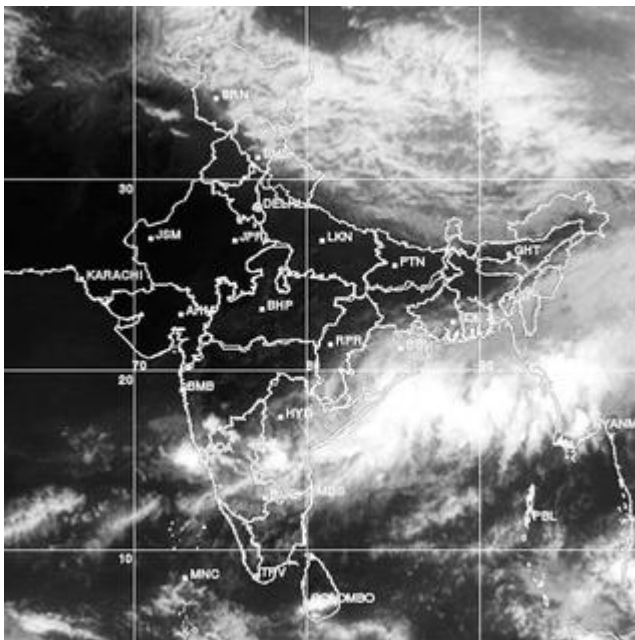
Crop damaged in 22,000 hectares

With crop damaged in more than 22,000 ha and 25,000 people moved to 47 relief camps, the district is reeling under the impact of torrential rain due to a low pressure area in the Bay of Bengal.

According to district Collector S. Solomon Arokiaraj, two persons were missing in Kasimkota mandal and a shepherd injured when boulders fell on him at R. Killipalem in Munagapaka mandal.

As many as 82 minor irrigation tanks breached and it is estimated Rs.5 crore was needed to restore them. Besides 266 km of R&B roads incurred a loss of Rs.6.8 crore, 75 km of panchayatraj roads will need another Rs.2 crore. The Collector said on Sunday a team of the NDRF was kept under the RDO of Anakapalle for taking up rescue operations.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on October 27th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	31	19	0	52
New Delhi (Sfd)	31	18	0	73
Chandigarh	31	17	0	29
Hissar	32	15	0	4
Bhuntar	28	10	0	5
Shimla	21	9	0	66
Jammu	30	17	0	122
Srinagar	23	6	0	15
Amritsar	30	17	0	77

Patiala	31	16	0	9
Jaipur	32	18	0	2
Udaipur	30	15	0	55
Allahabad	31	21	0	300
Lucknow	31	18	0	42
Varanasi	31	19	0	141
Dehradun	29	16	0	34
Agartala	25	21	1	185
Ahmedabad	33	19	0	63
Bangalore	29	20	23	70
Bhubaneshwar	28	22	9	671
Bhopal	31	19	0	26
Chennai	34	27	1	158
Guwahati	28	21	0	213
Hyderabad	27	22	1	239
Kolkata	23	21	49	530
Mumbai	32	26	0	66
Nagpur	29	22	tr	168
Patna	32	22	0	194
Pune	32	22	0	25
Thiruvananthapuram	32	23	0	212
Imphal	20	18	3	64
Shillong	17	14	1	75

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

Rainfall: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over east Uttar Pradesh. Weather was dry over the rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm. are: EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Lakhimpur Kheri 2.

MAXIMUM TEMPURTURE: The maximum temperature changed little over the region. They were above normal in Jammu and Kashmir, below normal in east Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 36.0°C recorded at Phalodi (Rajasthan).

MINIMUM TEMPURTURE: The minimum temperature changed little over the region. They were appreciably above normal in east Uttar Pradesh, above normal in Haryana and Uttarakhand and

normal in rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 14.5°C recorded at Nazibabad (Uttar Pradesh).


FORECAST FOR REGION VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 29th OCTOBER 2013: Light rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir on 27th & 29th October-2013. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 29th OCTOBER 2013: Mainly clear sky. Mist/Shallow fog in the morning.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather


 **Monday, Oct 28**

Cloudy

Max	Min
32°	26°

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 06:01
Humidity: 84 Sunset: 05:43
Wind: normal Barometer: 1010






Tomorrow's Forecast

 **Tuesday, Oct 29**

Cloudy

Max	Min
32°	26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Oct 30  33° 26° Cloudy	Thursday Oct 31  29° 26° Overcast	Friday Nov 1  27° 26° Overcast	Saturday Nov 2  28° 26° Overcast	Sunday Nov 3  27° 26° Overcast
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Inflation in India being fuelled by rural riches

Represented on a graph, India's food inflation over the past six months looks as if it has scaled a mighty peak: from 6% in April to 18% in September. Onions alone rose 322%. While prices are bad enough to make consumers fret, the clue to pricey food could lie in their own wallets.

When weighed against manufactured products, whose prices are falling or aren't rising as fast, food prices look fairly entrenched in a clutch of items, such as proteins, vegetables and

fruit. Cereals too are trending up, despite plentiful stocks. Cement, on the other hand, has fallen 3%; iron has dipped 8% and metal prices are down 2%, an indicator of slower economic activity.

Former chief economic adviser and current World Bank chief economist Kaushik Basu gave this “skewed” divergence in prices a curious name: “skewflation”. Economists are now looking beyond textbook theories to uncover the reasons for India’s persistently high food prices.

Traditionally, food prices in India have been stoked by droughts. They typically begin dropping with a good monsoon.

After the 2009 drought, the worst in three decades, former Reserve Bank deputy governor Subir Gokarn sensed that rates of food articles were defying usual trends by not falling back to their previous levels even with normal rains. His study demonstrated that one of the reasons Indians were paying the highest food prices in a decade had to do with their radically changed diets.

Gokarn’s research points to a dramatic — though provisional — finding. Between 2004-05 and 2009-10, over 200 million Indians are estimated to have crossed two thresholds of monthly expenditure — Rs. 580-690 for rural dwellers and Rs. 1,100-1,380 in urban areas — at which consumption shifts to more nutritious food.

“We could be really understating the role of rural-income growth in inflation,” said Planning Commission member Abhijit Sen.

Rural incomes have continued to rise, clocking 13.1% in August 2013, although this is significantly lower than an 18% rise in 2012 and 23% in 2011. “Rising real rural wages have both supported rural demand and increased the cost of production, thereby making inflation sticky,” said Sonal Varma, the India economist of Japanese investment firm Normura Holdings.

Several factors have pushed up rural consumption, such as the rural-employment guarantee scheme, which has also made farm labour pricey, and better rural wages aligned with retail inflation.

Cereals have become costlier due to successive hikes in minimum support prices (MSP), which have risen 15% on average over the past six years. MSP is the assured base price government offers to farmers, which boosts farm income. A 10% hike in MSPs raises short-term wholesale inflation by one percentage point, according to an RBI study.

Prices of fruit and vegetables have seen huge swings because cultivation is concentrated in a few states and there’s no supply backup if crops fail in one. For example, Maharashtra alone accounts for 45% of onions and UP for a fifth of India’s mangoes.

The current spiral of onion prices will ease sooner than later, as new harvests roll in, but the bigger question about food inflation haunting economists is whether “high is the new normal”. Better wages are raising demand and cost of production both. It’s what economists call a ‘wage-price spiral’.

Are genetically modified seeds secretly given to farmers?

MARGAO: Are genetically modified seeds clandestinely made available to the farmers in the state? This question came to the fore at the gram sabha of the Navelim village panchayat held on Sunday after a farmer voiced his doubts after observing unusual characteristics of certain seeds which, he said, are promoted as "high breed" varieties.

"These types of seeds give good yield, but if one goes to sow the seeds of the crops obtained from such high breed seeds, they fail to germinate. There is a possibility that such seeds may have been genetically modified and supplied to farmers under the label of "high breed seeds" or "seedless" variety of certain crops, a gram sabha member said, demanding that the panchayat take up the issue with concerned authorities.

Paddy farmers face staff crunch

DINDIGUL: If it was lack of rain that was bothering the farmers in Dindigul till now, it's lack of labourers that has become an issue of concern for the farmers now. Though the sudden shower raised their hopes, the demand for high wages by the labourers has put farmers in trouble.

Women play an important role in replanting the saplings in field. But, according to some farmers in Dindigul, it has become difficult for them to find women for their work, as they demand wages as high as Rs 300 per day.

Moreover, women in the villages around Chinnalapatti and Athoor have now formed a group for the purpose of replanting saplings in paddy fields. Gowri a villager, said, "We gather in groups and wait near the bus stop where farmers come in search of labourers. Our group has six women and we demand Rs 2,000 per day as salary with food." The women also claim that they are capable of planting crops in one acre of land a day. Another labourer, Shanthi, who seemed to be happy about the sudden showers, said that the rain has come at a very good time. "It would help us to earn some money before the festival and I can buy some good clothes for my children," she said.

However, when compared with the 100-day work scheme, some labourers like Lalitha have a different opinion. "In the 100 day scheme, we have to wait for about a month, but here we get paid immediately," she said.

There has been a widespread rainfall in the district and people in villages like Kathirayankulam, Kuttathupatti, Konor, K Pudukottai, Kannivadi, Silvarpatti, who largely depend on agriculture for their livelihood, sowed paddy in their land as soon as it rained. "After last year's experience, we did not want to take any risk and hence, we sowed immediately," said Karuppiah, a farmer. He said that even though his son's were earning well in the metro cities, only a good harvest could give him hope. "Last year, all of us faced a heavy loss due to the drought," he added. Thangapandian, a farmer from Kathirayankulam, feels that finding labour is their biggest problem these days.

Moreover, most of these farmers are sentimental about using machines in their fields. Though agriculture officials are promoting the use of the seed planting and mowing machines, they say that doing it the traditional way is good for the field. Seeman a farmer says that he has not yet used a machine on his field. "We consider it auspicious to have women toiling in our fields as it is a sign of prosperity. They usually sing and chat at work, which is beneficial for the paddy crops," he adds.

They are now in the process of planting a paddy variety known as IR 45 which has been promoted by the department of agriculture. The only thing that is now lacking is labourers. If we are able to source the same, we can cultivate it on a larger area, say these farmers.

Farmers set up fourth direct veg market in Pokar Colony

NASHIK: Devnadi Valley Farmers Producer Company Ltd, started by a group of small-time farmers based in Sinnar, launched its fourth centre in Pokar colony, off Untwadi road on Sunday. The farmers supply vegetables directly to consumers at 10% less than the market rate.

The farmers who had joined hands during various agricultural and water-related projects of the Yuva Mitra, an NGO, had established the company to provide good quality produce to consumers by skipping the middlemen. This practice not just reduces the price of vegetables as compared to other markets, but also gives the customers value for money. Over 1,000 farmers are part of this company.

The farmers started selling their produce through chain markets from last month and in a month alone, they have been able to open four centres. The fourth centre was opened in Pokar colony, off Untwadi road. The other three vegetable markets are located at Patil Park in Dongre Vasatigruha, Suyojit Lawns in Mahatmanagar and near the Tibetan market. These markets will be open from 2 pm to 7 pm every Thursday and Sunday.

The quality is maintained as these vegetables are brought to the market within three hours of plucking from the fields. Besides, no chemicals are used for growing the vegetables; they are grown with the help of natural manure.

The volunteers of the Yuva Mitra, who were present at the markets, said, "The vegetable market at Pokar colony will be open from 2 pm to 3 pm, the ones at Patil Park and near Tibetan market will be open between 3.30 pm to 4.30 pm or 5 pm and from 5 pm onwards the market will be open at Suyojit Lawns."

Yuva Mitra, along with another NGO, Atma, helped the farmers open these markets in the city. "The quality of vegetables is good as they are brought to the market only after proper grading, sorting and packing," said the volunteers.

"The farmers sell around 25 types of fresh vegetables. They vegetables are brought to Devnadi Valley Farmers Producer Company, which in turn, takes the produce for selling in the city," founder of Yuva Mitra Sunil Pote said.

Pote said that by directly selling vegetables to the consumers, the farmers get Rs 2 to Rs 2.5 extra per kg of the produce, in addition to saving money for commuting to the markets.

Farmers want Mehsana Dairy board disbanded

VADODARA: Vipul Chaudhary, chairman of the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) that markets brand Amul may have got a breather from the Gujarat high court giving him a temporary relief from the no confidence motion which was moved against him by a majority of GCMMF directors. But, Chaudhary has started facing fresh troubles at Mehsana Dairy, where he is chairman.

Based on allegations of financial irregularities to the tune of Rs 1,864 crore, milk producers (farmers) associated with the Mehsana Dairy are approaching Gujarat chief minister [Narendra Modi](#), state agriculture minister Babu Bokharia, district and state registrar of co-operatives demanding that the entire board of Mehsana Dairy should be disqualified.

It is worth mentioning here that Mehsana Dairy's management is facing unrest from the farmers, who have so far taken out four huge protest rallies demanding higher price for their produce.

The agitating milk producers are now demanding that as the members of the Mehsana Dairy's board have committed a breach of confidence put by the members of the union and have acted in contravention to the interest of the members, the state government should start proceedings under section 76(b) of the Gujarat Cooperative Societies Act for removal of the board members.

"We want the state government to take action against the board members of the dairy union including chairman and vice-chairman under sections 76 (b) which pertains to

removal of members from the board and section 93 which pertains to recovery from the board members," Ramesh Chaudhary, former director of Mehsana Dairy and ex-sarpanch of Rampura village said.

The milk producers are demanding that since the Mehsana Dairy has supplied cattle feed worth Rs 22 crore free to Maharashtra, the state government should start the recovery process from the board members.

"With whose consent had the dairy decided to provide the cattle feed free? Why should we bear the burden of their mismanagement? We want the state government to initiate recovery from the board members so that farmers do not lose their hard-earned money," he said.

Vijayamma demands waiver of crop loans

VIJAYAWADA: YSRCP honorary president [YS Vijayamma](#) has demanded waiver of all [crop loans](#) in the [flood-hit areas](#) of the state. She also demanded that fresh loans be granted to bolster the morale of affected farmers.

Vijayamma visited flood hit areas in Jaggaiahpet and Nandigama Assembly constituencies in the Krishna district on Sunday and interacted with farmers at many villages.

"Farmers were the worst hit in the recent rains. Unless people at the helm reacted quickly and extended support, it is difficult for farmers to come out of the shocking losses," she observed.

She said as an immediate measure, the state government should announce waiver of crop loans either on its own or with permission of the Centre. She said cotton, maize, and paddy farmers received massive losses due to heavy rains and inefficiency of the government.

"Unfortunately, there is no governance in the state except for a bunch of people sitting in constitutional chairs. They should respond to the plight of farmers and support them in the hour of crisis," she demanded.

Crops in north coastal districts take a beating due to downpour

VISAKHAPATNAM: Heavy rains piled up misery for farmers in the north coastal region who were already reeling under the affect of the recent Cyclone Phailin. Nearly 20% of crops

have been damaged in the past week with Srikakulam being the worst affected.

Officials of agricultural and horticulture departments are collating reports of damage to various crops in the three districts.

In Srikakulam, more than 7671 hectares of horticulture land was affected by both Phailin and the rains that followed soon after. [Agriculture department](#) sources said nearly one lakh hectares of crop were inundated, out of which 80,000 hectares was paddy. In the cyclone, more than 5079 hectares of coconut, most of it in the Udhanam belt of the district, 283 hectares of banana, 929 hectares of cashew, 1598 hectares of vegetable crops were inundated. In Visakhapatnam, the damage to agricultural crop extended over 10% of the planted area, while 1000 hectares of horticultural plantations got hit, which pegged the losses at Rs 3 crore. More than 1,41,918 hectares of paddy got inundated, while 3,981 hectares of sugarcane, 1212 hectares of cotton, 107 hectares of maize, 102 hectares of green gram, 250 hectares of red gram, 400 hectares of rajma and 36 hectares of ground nut were inundated.

Speaking on the losses, joint director, agriculture, K Lakshman Rao observed, "I cannot peg the losses at a particular figure, because the report as on today is preliminary. However, it is definitely extensive."

Reports of damage were mostly from the southern portion of the district towards East Godavari. The vegetable crop destroyed was chiefly from the Agency areas such as Paderu and Araku.

In Vizianagaram, the damage was relatively less in comparison but paddy was the worst hit with more than 2027.2 hectares under water while 1328.9 hectares of maize, 1619.2 hectares of cotton, 52.2 hectares of sugarcane, 140.4 hectares of green gram, 2.5 hectares of ragi, 1.4 hectares of korra and 30.8 hectares of ground nut suffered damage. Agency mandals such as Pachipenta were the worst hit. Korra Appala Naidu, a cotton farmer from Kesali village, said, 'All my 18 acres of cotton went down the drain. I do not really know how to recover my losses. All the while I was worried about the pests.'

Scientists decode kiwifruit genome



Scientists observed a high percentage of similarities within the kiwifruit DNA.

NEW YORK: Scientists have decoded the DNA sequence of the kiwifruit and found that the fruit has many genetic similarities between its 39,040 genes and other plant species, including potatoes and tomatoes.

The study also unveiled two major evolutionary events that occurred millions of years ago in the kiwifruit genome.

"The kiwifruit is an economically and nutritionally important fruit crop. It has long been called 'the king of fruits' because of its remarkably high vitamin C content and balanced nutritional composition of minerals, dietary fibre and other health-benefits," said Zhangjun Fei, a scientist from the Boyce Thompson Institute at Cornell University.

Fei contributed to the study, which was conducted by a team of plant scientists from the US and China.

"The genome sequence will serve as a valuable resource for kiwifruit research and may facilitate the breeding programme for improved fruit quality and disease resistance," Fei said.

Scientists observed a high percentage of similarities within the kiwifruit DNA. The data revealed two unusual mishaps that occurred in the process of cell division about 27 and 80 million years ago, when an extensive expansion of genes arose from an entire extra copy of the genome, followed by extensive gene loss.

"The kiwifruit genome has undergone two recent whole-genome duplication events," Fei said.

When genes are duplicated, the extra genes can mutate to perform entirely new functions that were not previously present in the organism.

This process, called neofunctionalisation, can occur with no adverse effects in plants and, in the case of kiwifruit, was quite beneficial.

"The duplication contributed to adding additional members of gene families that are involved in regulating important kiwifruit characteristics, such as fruit vitamin C, flavonoid and carotenoid metabolism," said Fei.

For the sequencing, the scientists used a Chinese variety called "Hongyang," which is widely grown in China, to produce the draft sequence.

They then compared kiwifruit to the genomes of other representative plant species including tomato, rice, grape and the mustard weed *Arabidopsis*. They uncovered about 8,000 genes that were common among all five species.

The comparison revealed important evolutionary relationships, including the development genes related to fruit growth, ripening, nutrient metabolism, and disease resistance.

The study was published in the journal *Nature Communications*.

Onions 20 cheaper than market rate

NASHIK: The farmers of Sinnar have been selling [onions](#) for Rs 20 per kg less than the present market rate ever since the prices skyrocketed and still have been able to make profits for themselves.

The members the [Devnadi Valley Farmers Producer Company Ltd](#) are known to sell their good quality agricultural produce at lesser prices than others.

"Till date, our selling price for onions has not crossed Rs 60 per kg," founder of [Yuva Mitra Sunil Pote](#) said, who helped the farmers establish the company. The company is managed completely by the farmers who sell their produce directly to the consumer. This has enabled them to keep a profit margin for themselves.

Pote said, "Only the highest prices of onions at the Lasalgaon market are flashed, based on which, farmers increase their rates. The actual rate is between Rs 1,800-6,000, but since only the highest is quoted, and onion price is fixed at Rs 60 per kg. On Saturday, the rate was fixed at Rs 6,111. While others sold the crop for Rs 60, we sold it at Rs 50-55 kg. We too get good quality onions and manage to keep some profit for the farmers, despite quoting lower rates."

Throughout the hike in prices, farmers of the Devnadi company have not crossed the margin of selling onions at Rs 60.

Once beaten, BJP plans to bank on onions now

DELHI: BJP, which had once lost the Delhi assembly polls on costly onions, is trying to cash in on the issue in the December elections. Delhi BJP president [Vijay Goel](#) said on Sunday that party workers had been asked to harp on the spiraling price rise during the campaigning.

"The way Congress had made onion a political issue in 1998, we too have asked our workers to do so. I have already told the district presidents to send party workers to each and every house and organize protests against the onion price," said Goel.

The party's chief ministerial candidate, Dr [Harsh Vardhan](#), said given a chance, his government would take all steps to prevent hoarding that leads to price rise. "BJP will constitute a food price commission. It will be directly under the chief minister-free from political and bureaucratic interference-and monitor mandis to keep a check on food prices," he said.

Vardhan also accused the Congress government of colluding with hoarders. "The

government is protecting them. How many hoarders have been arrested in Delhi since the onion crisis began?"

He also criticized the Congress-led UPA on inflation, saying it was caused by the central government's "inaction, corruption and ineptitude". However, he added that "the state governments should have the capacity to check its effect on people".

Vardhan said if BJP is voted to power, his government would create "Delhi Model" on food security as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen had said the government's prime duty is to provide affordable food to people.

The leader of Opposition in the Delhi assembly, V K Malhotra, said 99% times, price rise is caused due to hoarding.

Delhi govt responsible for rise in onion prices: Harsh Vardhan

NEW DELHI: BJP's chief ministerial candidate Harsh Vardhan on Sunday held Delhi government responsible for rise in onion and food prices saying its failure to act against hoarders led to the situation even as the agriculture produce was good.

Vardhan, flanked by Delhi [BJP](#) chief [Vijay Goel](#), leader of opposition in Delhi assembly V K Malhotra and other senior leaders, said price rise is caused 99 per cent times due to hoarding while demand and supply was only one per cent reason.

"If voted to power, BJP will constitute a Food Prices Commission, free from political and bureaucratic interference, directly under the chief minister to monitor mandis to keep a check on food prices," he told reporters.

The BJP leader said that [inflation](#) has increased in the country despite a good agriculture produce. Accusing the Congress of colluding with hoarders, he said, "and the government was protecting them, how many hoarders have been arrested in Delhi since the onion crisis began."

He also criticised the Congress-led [UPA](#) on inflation and said Union ministers say it is the responsibility of state to check prices but it was caused by Central government's "inaction, corruption and ineptitude".

"But state governments should have the capacity to check their effect on the people," he said, adding after all what is the role of state government.

Vardhan said [food inflation](#) affects food security and if BJP is voted to power, Delhi would create a model on food security that would be known as "Delhi Model" as Nobel Laureate [Amartya Sen](#) had said that government's prime duty is provide affordable food to the people.

Tomato joins onion in price race, gravy in trouble

AHMEDABAD: Now, curries are in the [inflation](#) soup! After onions, which nowadays are selling at Rs 80-90 per kg, it is the turn of tomatoes - the other key ingredient of the staple brown and red gravy - to turn pricey. Tomatoes are now selling at a retail price of Rs 60-70 in areas like Vastrapur, Navrangpura and Satellite. The wholesale price of tomatoes is Rs 25-30 a kg.

"Gravy have become an expensive proposition. I generally substitute onions with tomatoes to make gravy but if I have to cook a Punjabi vegetable, the raw ingredient for the gravy alone costs Rs 50 for a meal of three," said Savita Prajapati, a [Satellite](#) homemaker.

The current prices of vegetables as compared to their rates in October 2012 are higher by about 30-40%. This year it was [the heavy](#) rains which first led to a rise in vegetable prices. The extended monsoon pushed them still higher - the rates of a majority of vegetable shot through the roof to over Rs 100 a kg. Strangely, the prices show no sign of a rollback. The steep rise in prices has also hit vegetable vendors too as they have started keeping fewer vegetables now.

Cluster beans (guvar) which were available in the retail market at this time last year for Rs 20-30 per kg are now selling at Rs 90 a kg in Satellite. Not just guvar but the prices of almost all vegetables have skyrocketed. Officials of Jamalpur wholesale market said that even okra (bhindi) which once cost Rs 30-35 in the retail market, now comes for Rs 60-70 per kg.

Deepak Patel, secretary of APMC, Jamalpur, says there has been a drop in income from vegetables in the market. "The heavy rains in the first week of October damaged the crop in South Gujarat and Saurashtra. They damaged vegetables too and caused a shortage. We expect the market to settle down by [the middle](#) of next week. However, much depends on the flow of fresh vegetables," he said.

Patel further said that earnings from vegetables are declining and will further go down as there was less agriculture land near the cities. "With land prices increasing, farmers are selling their agricultural land. This has led to vegetables being brought from far off places. This, in turn, increases the transportation cost," he said.

The rise in vegetable prices has sent [household budgets](#) for a toss. Ruchi Shah, a resident of Maninagar, says that she used to purchase vegetable in September for nearly Rs 600 that lasted the whole week. Today she has to spend no less than Rs 1000 for a week's vegetables for a family of four.

'Encourage youth to take up agriculture'

More youth should be attracted to consider career opportunities in agriculture, K V S Prasad, executive director, AME Foundation, said on Saturday.

He was speaking at a seminar on a sustainable system for food security and nutrition at the Institution of Agricultural Technologists here. Prasad referred to a recent study which quoted 200 youth as saying they were willing to take up agriculture if it raised their self-esteem and gave them a chance to achieve targets.

He noted that farmers face very a high risk when it came to their income security. "Farmers must be recognised and supported so that, at least for the next 30 years, they need not be absorbed into any other sector," he said.

Prasad emphasised the crucial role farmers play in ensuring food security in the country and called for more youth to join it.

H B Shivaleela, professor of nutrition at University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), said food security has to be combined with nutritional security.

"Agriculture is increasingly becoming economy-oriented rather than nutrition-oriented. Due to pressure of exports and other economical reasons, farmers have given up growing nutrition-intensive crops like ragi," she observed.

Business Standard

Dry fruit prices decline 6-11% as Diwali demand tapers off

Consumers have shifted towards chocolates, low priced-sweets

[Dry fruit](#) prices have seen a decline in the range of 6-11% as demand for [Diwali](#) festival has tapered off.

Consumers' shift towards chocolates and other low-priced sweets as the dry fruit prices were very high about a month ago has led to drop in demand for dry fruits.

"The demand for dry fruits has declined almost 30% in the last one week as most of the purchases for Diwali festival is over. The demand from corporate buyers, who were using dry fruit hampers as gift for the festival has come down alarmingly this year due to very high

prices a month ago. The softening of prices in the international markets has also impacted the domestic prices this year,” said Rahul Kamath, Partner, Bola Surendra Kamath & Sons, a Mangalore-based trader of dry fruits.

The prices of Almonds have declined 6-8% to Rs 595-610 per kg as against the peak price of Rs 645 per kg about 15 days ago. Similarly, Cashew kernel prices for W240 grade have seen a drop of 7-11% to Rs 625-650 per kg compared to the peak price of Rs 700 per kg a fortnight ago in major markets of Delhi, Mumbai and Mangalore.

“Indian domestic market moved up during Sept but has been steady for the last 2-3 weeks. There is good demand for quality product – wholes as well as brokens. We can expect slow down during end of October or early November. But there should be revival of buying by traders after mid-Nov for the marriage season, depending on retail offtake in the festival season, which will end by early Nov,” said Pankaj Sampat of Samsons Traders, a Mumbai-based commodity brokerage house.

The prices of W320 grade cashew kernels have declined from \$3.35 per lb about a fortnight ago to \$3.10 per lb. Similarly, almond prices have dropped from \$2.70 per lb to \$2.40-2.45 per lb last week.

“Orders for gift boxes close a month prior to Diwali. This year, due to very high prices, the corporate houses have shifted their preference for dry fruits to other items like chocolates, biscuits, low-priced sweets and other items like glassware. The prices of dry fruit gift boxes were almost double this year compared to last year. As a result, the demand for assorted dry fruit boxes has come down as much as 30% this year,” Kamath said.

The traders in mandis of Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai and Bangalore are holding enough stocks of dry fruits but are unable to sell at profitable prices due to sudden drop in demand. Unless some last minute purchases happen, mainly from sweet makers, the stockists may have to incur losses this year, he added.

According to traders, a couple of months ago, prices of most of dry fruits had surged due to multiple reasons including rupee depreciation, increased demand and short supply in the domestic market among others.

Rice mills oppose Karnataka govt's new levy order

There are 1,800 rice mills in Karnataka which have been asked to supply rice at subsidised rates

Rice mill owners in Karnataka have strongly opposed the recent levy order of the state [government](#) stating that it is detrimental to the interests of the industry.

The chambers of commerce have appealed to the government to immediately withdraw the

new [rice levy order](#), which allows the government to collect the levy rice quantum from the millers.

The state government recently issued an order, which will come into effect from November 1, 2013, asking the mill owners to supply rice at Rs 22.10 per kg to meet the requirement of rice for supply to below poverty line (BPL) card holders.

The government had introduced its ambitious 'Annabhagya' scheme, under which it supplies 30 kg rice per month at Rs 1 per kg to BPL families. There are 9.83 million BPL cardholders in the state that are eligible to buy rice under the scheme. The state government gets 177,000 tonnes of rice from the Central government, while it intends to procure 1.35 million tonnes from the [rice mills](#) in the state.

The rice mill owners have unanimously opposed the levy order and said it is not feasible to accept the government order in its present form. If implemented, each mill owner will incur a loss of at least Rs 10 per kg.

"The mill owners would incur a huge loss in hulling the paddy if they were to give levy as per the new government order. The total loss is likely to be in the order of Rs 500 crore," said R Shivakumar, President, Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI).

He said there is no logic in enhancing the levy, which was earlier fixed at 200,000 tonnes.

"If the government is committed to provide subsidised rice to poor people, it should procure rice at a reasonable market price from the open market and fulfill its promise rather than harassing mill owners," he said.

The rice mill owners are operating with very meagre margins of 2-3 per cent and this additional burden will make the rice mills left with no money even to buy the paddy. Considering the market price of rice at Rs 35 per kg, this action on the part of the government will hit the rice mill trade and the owners will have to look into alternative business resulting in loss to the state exchequer, Shivakumar added.

There are 1,800 rice mills in Karnataka which have been asked to supply rice at subsidised rates even when the procurement from Chhattisgarh costs Rs 26-27 per kg including transportation.

Karnataka State Rice Millers' Association has stated that the state government did not consult rice mill owners before fixing the levy quantity this year. The government normally consults the mill owners every year before fixing the levy price.

"Most of the mill owners in Karnataka crush Sona Masoori variety, which is sold at Rs 33 a kg in the market with just 2-3 per cent profit margins." Srinivas said.

The government is asking us to supply this superior quality rice through the levy mechanism,

which will be a loss making proposition to the industry," said N R Srinivas, secretary of the association.

Poor packaging erodes Dussehri mango's market value

Expert claims the fruit could fetch almost 10 times its current value of Rs 10 a piece to growers with corrugated box packaging



The world famous [dussehri mango](#) of Lucknow would taste sweeter for growers with proper [packaging](#) and branding.

Dussehri growers in the mango belt of Lucknow, consisting of Malihabad, Kakori and other parts of Uttar Pradesh, could benefit immensely if proper packaging material, especially [corrugated box](#), was used for sorting

at farms.

“Dussehri could fetch almost 10 times its current value to growers with corrugated box packaging. While, [Alphonso](#) mango sells for almost Rs 1,200 kg at the start of season, dussehri goes for as cheap as Rs 10 a piece due to poor packaig,” Indian Institute of Packaging director N C Saha told Business Standard.

The Institute had started a project about 10 years back in Malihabad for proper packaging of dussehri to enhance its market value. “However, the project could not take off due to lack of support and interest in the state,” he lamented.

Dussehri, which was also granted [Geographical Indication](#) (GI) registration in 2009, is known for its unique sweetness, texture and liltng aroma. Situated on Lucknow-Hardoi highway, Malihabad town in Lucknow district is famous for mango plantations, especially dussehri.

The mango belts in UP, include Lucknow (Lucknow, Malihabad, Bakshi-ka-Talaab), Saharanpur and Sambhal-Amroha-Muzaffarnagar districts.

Lucknow mango belt spans 25,000 hectares. In 2013, UP mango production was estimated at about 1.5 million tonnes, much lower than 3.8 million tonnes last year.

Meanwhile, Saha demanded incentives for encouraging the packaging industry in UP.

The state imports over 80 of its total packaging requirement annually from other states, mainly Delhi and Mumbai. Kanpur has about 250 corrugated box manufacturing units. Some units are located in Lucknow as well.

The Institute is organising a national workshop on packaging of fresh and processed foods for cottage, micro, small and medium entrepreneurs here tomorrow.

The domestic packaging industry is currently estimated at over Rs 1,25,000 crore and growing at 15 per cent annually.

THE HINDU Business Line

Rubber planting to be covered by rural jobs scheme in N-E

Kochi, Oct. 27: The Union Ministry of Rural Development, by accepting a Rubber Board proposal, has allowed small, private rubber farmers to use the labour force under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREG) scheme.

Rubber Board Chairperson Sheela Thomas told *Business Line* that the Rural Development Ministry, by bringing the labour-intensive rubber cultivation under the MGNREG scheme, sanctioned a pilot project to plant rubber on 500 acres in Kerala and Assam.

Depending on the outcome of the pilot project, the scheme would be extended to other States, especially in the North-East, where rubber plantations are coming up in a big way, Sheela Thomas said.

Kerala produces around 90 per cent of natural rubber, while Assam is fast emerging as a rubber-friendly State. Tripura, with around 60,000 hectares under rubber, is now the second-largest producer. But the area under cultivation has almost saturated in the North-East State.

Registered private small-holders in the pilot project area could make use of the MGNREG workers for free.

Panchayats will pay the wages, and the Rubber Board will offer technical advice to the farmer and monitor the work.

Sheela said the free labour service under the MGNREG would be available only to private cultivators for raising plantations and not for tapping.

The domestic demand for natural rubber has been rising and last year's production topped nine lakh tonnes.

The board has been aggressively pushing rubber cultivation in the North-East over the past decade, as Kerala does not have much scope for expansion.

The new scheme will help expand cultivation in the North-East and other emerging States such as Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

However, international prices of rubber have come down drastically in the recent past, following the global economic slowdown.

This has affected domestic price, too, which is now below Rs 160 a kg (for RSS-4 grade).

Demand to ban rubber imports revives as price drops below Rs 160/kg



Sensitive: The Centre had, back in February, made a decision to impose 20 per cent import duty on rubber, but that had been put in cold storage.

Kochi, Oct. 27: With natural rubber prices falling to Rs 159 a kg (RSS-4 grade), from around Rs 240 this time last year, farmers organisations and political parties in Kerala have demanded a ban on import of rubber.

The Opposition Left Democratic Front (LDF) has called for a hartal on October 30 in Kottayam district, the rubber heartland, to press the Union Government for a ban on the import of natural rubber.

Earlier this week, the farmers wing of the Kerala Congress (Mani), which is a partner of the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF), took out a march to the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram seeking an end to rubber imports.

“We want the Centre to stop import of rubber altogether for now,” M.T. Joseph, the Kottayam district convenor of the LDF, told *Business Line*. “When the domestic price crosses Rs 200 a kg, the Government could consider limited imports.” He said that the Centre had, back in February, made a decision to impose 20 per cent import duty on rubber, but that had been put in cold storage.

The rubber price has always been a sensitive political issue in Kerala because of its importance in the State’s economy and the clout of the socio-religious groups associated with rubber cultivation and trade. And, the rubber price level to a large extent determines the consumption pattern of a significant section of people – a decline in the price easily gets reflected in the sale of consumer durables and white goods.

The long rainy season this year, preceded by a long spell of drought, coupled with the price downfall has exasperated the economic condition of the smallholders who make up the huge majority of rubber farmers in Kerala, who produce close to 90 per cent of India’s rubber. International prices of rubber have fallen too, in the wake of the global slowdown, especially in the automobile industry. Since the international prices have been ruling lower than the domestic prices (around Rs 156 a kg now), Indian tyre manufacturers prefer imports. In the past eight months, 1.70 lakh tonnes were imported. In August, imports shot up to a record monthly high of 42,500 tonnes. “If the imports continue at this rate, the domestic prices will tumble,” says Joseph. “The only way to arrest the price fall is a total ban on imports.”

He said that though the Government had decided to impose 20 per cent customs duty on rubber imports in February, following the constant pressures by the Kerala Government and political parties, the Finance Ministry had not notified it. basheer.kpm@thehindu.co.in

Tea prices crash to 1-year low at Coonoor sales

Coonoor, Oct. 27: Teas worth Rs 4.72 crore remained unsold at Sale No: 43 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction as there were no takers for 37 per cent of the offering. This is despite a drop in the average price to Rs 78.07 a kg – the lowest level so far in 2013. Prices dropped on an average by Rs 2 a kg over last week, but Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, gained Rs 8 to top CTC market when Komal Enterprises bought it for Rs 186 a kg. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 178, Crosshill Estate Rs 176, Shanthi Supreme Rs 173 and Hittakkal Estate Rs 171. In all, 50 marks got Rs 125 and more a kg. Chamraj topped orthodox market at Rs 231 followed by Highfield Estate at Rs 210, Kodanad Rs 205, Chamraj, Coonoor Tea and Corsley Rs 195 each. In all, 54 marks got Rs 125 and more a kg.

Pakistan was active in the range Rs 62-80 a kg, but with excess teas in global market, importers from all countries showed no interest to bid high.

“Floods of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha have blocked transportation. Besides, teas are available at lesser prices in North Indian auctions which have re-opened after holidays. So, upcountry buyers are procuring teas there itself which has reduced our demand at Coonoor,” a buyer told *Business Line*.

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

Spot pepper seen heading towards Rs 500/kg on tight supply



Kochi, Oct. 27: If the current market trend is any indication the spot prices might cross Rs 500 a kg level in the coming days.

The futures market also soared last week with all the active contracts on the National and Regional exchanges ending higher.

The domestic demand has been so strong that every body has turned a buyer. Industrial users, consumer market dealers, expert processors were all buyers.

Selling pressure was not much. Thus, the demand outstripped supply last week.

Exporters having commitments with selected markets and those having business with West Asian countries were all trying to mop up the material wherever it was available. At the same, the supply scenario in the international market was also reportedly tight and consequently all the origins firmed up except that of Brazil which was slightly easier. Those who were anticipating the release of an estimated 6,800 tonnes of pepper held in the warehouses as “tainted pepper” for a long time and hence were postponing their buying had no other alternative now other than entering the market and buy at prevailing prices. As the stocks have dried up in Karnataka, those having some stocks were quoting Rs 485-495 a kg on cash and carry basis and this phenomenon said to have driven upcountry buyers to Kerala.

Thus, there has been an upsurge in demand from all the major north Indian markets that has in turn was pushing the spot prices up every day, market sources told *Business Line*. They said that Karnataka-based exporters were buying from expert processors in Kerala 550 GL pepper. The latter reported to have collected the material from various dealers and were processing it and selling, they claimed.

On the NMCE, Nov and Dec contracts increased by Rs 2,073 and Rs 2,094 respectively during the week to Rs 47,220 and Rs 46,950 a quintal . Similarly, on the IPSTA, the active contracts rose by Rs 2,797 and Rs2,000 respectively to Rs 48,500 and Rs 47,500 . Total turnover on the NMCE increased by 18 tonnes to 103 tonnes. Total open interest moved up by one tonne to 19 tonnes.

Spot prices rose by Rs 3,500 during the week on strong demand amid tight supply to Rs 46,400 (ungarbled) and Rs 48,400 (garbled) .

Indian parity in the international market moved up further to \$8,350 (c&f) Europe and \$8,650 a tonne (c&f) for the US. All the origins are reportedly firmer as the supply scenario continued to stay tight world over, they said.

Tomato arrivals likely to remain sluggish

Karnal, Oct. 27: Tomato prices may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuations in the coming days, say trade experts.

Vikas Sachdeva, a market expert, told *Business Line* that steady domestic demand coupled with lower arrivals in the market helped tomato to remain in positive territory. The market has been ruling in a tight range since the beginning of October and may continue to rule around current levels on account of steady demand and lower arrivals, he added.

Around 700 crates (of 25 kg each) of different varieties of tomato arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted between Rs 2,100 and Rs 3,500 a quintal.

Around 1,300 crates of varieties such as Lalsona, Himsona and Hybrid were received in the markets of Karnal district.

Out of total arrivals, about 20 per cent stock was of low quality; around 60 per cent stock was of medium quality while just about 20 per cent of total arrivals were of superior quality. Prices of superior quality improved by Rs 200 and quoted at Rs 3,350-3,500 . The prices of medium quality produce went up by Rs 180 and quoted at 3,050-3,220 while low quality produce was at Rs 2,100-2,400 , Rs 150 up from previous levels.

According to the market sources, fall in arrivals from Himachal is the prime reason behind the lower stocks and arrivals are likely to remain sluggish even in the coming days. Local arrivals are likely to begin after Diwali but the quality of the stock will be lower, said sources.
