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Applications invited for CSR Award

Staff Reporter

KRISHNAGIRI: The district administration has invited applications from eligible companies, partnership firms, sole-proprietorship firms and government / quasi government undertakings as well as associations of industrial, service and commercial establishments for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Award instituted by the State Government.

The CSR Awards to be given by the District Rural Development Agency in honour of five such establishments every year with effect from 2007-08 consists of Rs. 5 lakh and a certificate each. The establishments concerned may operate directly or through trusts / non-governmental agencies / other agencies.

However, exclusive trusts/ non-governmental agencies and clubs will not be eligible for this award. Activities within Tamil Nadu will be considered for the award, according to a release from Collector V.K. Shanmugam recently.

Rural development

While awards will predominantly be conferred for good works undertaken in the area of rural development, commendable works in urban areas, especially in urban slums, will also be considered.

Activities for promotion of agriculture, animal husbandry, education, health, sanitation, water supply, water harvesting, non-conventional energy, agricultural marketing, self-help groups and livelihood, children and youth welfare, tree plantation and social causes will be considered for the award. However, activities to promote religion will not be considered. Eligible institutions are advised to send their applications with complete details and supporting documents to the Collector, Krishnagiri.

The prescribed application forms and other details can be had from the Project Officer, District Rural Development Agency or browse website www.tnrd.gov.in.

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Subsidy for buying paddy transplanter

Staff Reporter

KRISHNAGIRI: The district administration is extending a subsidy of Rs. 75,000

for purchasing paddy transplanter, said Collector V.K. Shanmugam here recently. Inaugurating the demonstration of the transplanter equipment under the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), the Collector said paddy was being cultivated under the SRI method in the district in 27,000 hectares. To offset the scarcity of farm workers, the government had introduced mechanisation in paddy cultivation. The cost of the paddy transplanter equipment is Rs. 1.70 lakh. Of this, the government was providing Rs. 75,000 as subsidy. The equipment will take three hours to transplant paddy in an acre, for which in conventional method of cultivation, it needs at least 30 men or women. Usage of this equipment will save 70 per cent of the cost of transplantation, he added.

Later, Mr. Shanmugam distributed loan of Rs. 95,000 for purchasing paddy transplanter, for which Rs. 75,000 has already been released as subsidy to a farmer under the ATMA scheme through the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Bank. Officials of the Agriculture Department accompanied the Collector, says a release.

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Farmers worried about labour shortage as NREGS wage goes up

Karthik Madhavan

The District Rural Development Agency has hiked the wage from January 1

.— PHOTO: M.GOVARTHAN



Hard-hit: With the Government hiking NREGS wages from Rs. 80 to Rs. 100 a day, farmers are concerned about labour shortage, as the harvest season is just a fortnight away

ERODE: Hike in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) wage has got Erode farmers worried about labour shortage.

Following State Government's instruction, the District Rural Development Agency, which oversees NREGS implementation, hiked the wage January 1 onwards by Rs. 20 to Rs. 100 a day. Under NREGS below poverty line families get work for 100 days a year, which is mostly manual labour.

Farmers say the hike has come at a time when Erode is reeling under labour shortage and ahead of the crucial harvest season.

Harvest season

T. Subbu, district secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayeegal Sangam, Erode, says in a fortnight's time paddy on over one lakh acre will be ready for harvest, when the demand for labour will peak.

Ten persons will take four days to harvest three acres of paddy, he says and adds that for the work farmers spent around Rs. 8,000 an acre last year. The workers get a portion of the wage as paddy.

Erode farmers, during harvest, get a majority of their workforce from Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts and also from Dharapuram in Tirupur. The labourers migrate to Erode, Gobichettipalayam and paddy cultivation areas, where they camp till the completion of harvest season.

But this time, farmers like Mr. Subbu are worried if they will get adequate labourers or face shortage. And, the later means increase in wages. "If there is labour shortage, farmers will have to shell out more money to hire workers, which will push up the cost of harvest and cultivation. As a consequence, paddy will become dearer," he explains and says that this time around farmers may have to pay up to Rs. 10,000 an acre.

Kalingarayan farmers' association president V.M. Velayudham too echoes a similar view.

Soon after paddy, turmeric will be ready for harvest followed by other crops that require labour for maintenance, he says and fears that labour shortage will push up harvest cost.

This is also because the farmers here are more or less totally dependent on migrant labourers as the local labour force meets up only about 20 per cent of their requirement.

And, again farmers prefer manual harvest over machine because in the latter hay gets damaged.

"The machine comes with lots of disadvantages and one such is hay loss, which is significant given the good price hay fetches," says Mr. Subbu. Other problems include ability to use the machine effectively on small lands and where crop is bent. Sources in DRDA admit that labour shortage is an issue in the district.

The Agency understands the issue and has also received suggestions that Erode district should be exempted from NREGS implementation but the decision cannot be taken in Erode. More than one lakh families in the district have registered for work under NREGS.

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Farmers seek protection from wild boar menace

Staff Reporter

ERODE: Farmers from Kannapalli and Illipali villages near Ammapettai, Bhavani, have petitioned the district administration seeking assistance to protect their crops from wild boar.

In a release, the local head of Tamizhaga Vivasayeegal Sangam, K. Ramesh, says the 300-odd small and marginal farmers of the area, who cultivate groundnut, maize, thoor dal, tapioca, turmeric, etc, are suffering at the hands of wild boars, which destroy the crops.

He further says that their petitions to the Forest Department's Mettur wing for help to protect the crops have yielded no result, as the boars come down by Palamalai hillock, which comes under Mettur forest range.

Listing out the names of farmers who lost their crops in the past few days, Mr. Ramesh asks for assistance to erect solar fence and compensation for the crops lost.

He adds the farmers are totally dependent on crops and have got loans to raise them.

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Agri graduates told to work closely with farmers

Staff Reporter

SALEM: Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S. Arumugam called upon the agricultural graduates to work closely with farmers and equip them with skills to use modern cultivation methods to enhance productivity.

New technologies

Participating in a function organised by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Graduates' Association for the release of technical guide 2010 here on Sunday, the Minister said that a number of advancements were made in the agriculture sector in the world. Agricultural graduates should help farmers utilise the new technologies. He also called upon the graduates to bring in new technologies and also machinery which could be utilised to maximise the agricultural productivity in the State.

Food productivity

The food productivity in the State was 91.10 lakh tonnes in the last year. In the current fiscal, it was planned to achieve a target of 108 lakh tonnes.

Growth

The growth in the agriculture sector was 6.5 per cent in the State, which was higher than the national level growth, the Minister added.

Mayor J. Rekha Priyadarshini, Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business Commissioner Atul Anand, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor P. Murugesaboopathy, Director, Seed Certification and Organics Certification A. Karmugilan, Association president K. Napoleon and senior officials were present.

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Water level

MADURAI: Water level in the Periyar dam on Monday stood at 121.30 feet (136 feet) with an inflow of 246 cusecs and a discharge of 1,200 cusecs.

The level in the Vaigai dam was 53.64 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 599 cusecs and a discharge of 1,860 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 4,213 mft.



High jaggery price takes sweet out of Pongal

R Haldorai

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COIMBATORE: With less than 10 days left for the Pongal, the prices of jaggery have already soared indicating that this year the festival may be less sweet in Coimbatore. The price of jaggery has touched Rs 40 a kg ahead of Pongal. Next week its cost may go up by Rs 5 to Rs 10.

The rate is up at a time when the prices of sugar have shot up to Rs 39 to Rs 41 a kg from Rs 36. The reduction in local production is attributed to the rise in the prices of jaggery.

The 60-decade-old Coimbatore Jaggery Market, which once catered to the needs of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and northern states, is now receiving low arrivals to meet the local demands.

C Rajagopal, president, Coimbatore Jaggery Merchants Association, told Express, "As of now the price of jaggery at wholesale market at Range Gowder Street is Rs 33 a kg. The retail price has touched Rs 40. There is a possibility that the price may go up further a week before Pongal. The wholesale market functions on Mondays and Fridays. During these days, the arrival from the local producers is 500 to 1000 bags, each containing 30 kg. Before 1997 the arrival was about 50,000 bags. After the bomb blast in Coimbatore in 1998, the business

at the jaggery market had started falling.” The demand for jaggery is very strong during January as Pongal is celebrated in Tamil Nadu and Sankranti in the north.

According to Rajagopal, jaggery is purchased from Perundurai, Dharapuram, Palladam, Palani and Dindigul to meet the local demands during festival seasons.

The Coimbatore Jaggery Merchants Association had 60 members till two decades ago. Now the number had decreased to 20. However, only 10 members are active.

The merchants said that “they are surviving because of the support from Kerala.

About 70 per cent of jaggery reaching Coimbatore market is consumed in Kerala.

In Tamil Nadu, jaggery is used only for preparing payasam, pongal and prasadam during the traditional festivals and rituals. Once the Keralites stop consuming, the Coimbatore jaggery market will disappear.