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## **Brinjal seeds project awaits Centre's nod, says Minister**

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's project for developing a breed of brinjal seeds is awaiting the Centre's approval, Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S. Arumugam told the Assembly on Friday.

The project relates to raising brinjal crop that will not rot or breed worms. A committee of experts had cleared the project and forwarded its recommendations to the Centre.

Answering questions on genetically modified crops during Question Hour, the Minister said the government had not received reports on the adverse effects of the use of Bt cotton. Even in 1996, on the advice of Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, trials were conducted by the university along with the firm manufacturing Bt cotton. No adverse effects were noticed.

After the commercial release, there were instances of failure in some places and the company had attributed them to the quality of groundwater.

Making it clear that the Centre, not the State government, was concerned with the commercial release of GM crops, the Minister said if any crop adversely affected farmers, the government would take action.

But, he was not averse to advancements in science, he said. The Minister said that the price of Bt cotton was reduced to Rs.750 a kg after the issue was taken to the Supreme Court. Till then, it was Rs.1,500.

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## **“Waive loan arrears of big farmers”**

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: The president of the agricultural wing of Tiruchi District Congress and Ad hoc committee member of Tiruchi District Congress Committee, Puliur Nagarajan, on Thursday urged the Centre and State Government to take immediate steps to write off the arrears of loans advanced to big farmers as was done to the small farmers for loans granted in 2008.

In a memorandum sent to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi and Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, Mr. Nagarajan had stated that while the Government had waived the loan arrears of small farmers cent per cent to the tune of Rs.70,000 crore, only 25 per cent of the loan arrears was waived for other farmers who were asked to repay the remaining 75 per cent by December 31, 2009.

### Notices

He pointed out that the banks had now started sending notices to the big farmers for the recovery of their remaining loan arrears as the prescribed time limit was over.

He said that agriculture was worst hit in the last two years affected by drought and flood all over the country.

Mr. Nagarajan said that the farmers were now not in a position to repay their loan arrears and pointed out that any repressive measures to collect the arrears would result in thousands of farmers committing suicide .

He appealed to the Government to waive the loan arrears of big farmers and announce incentives to enthruse them to take up farming in a committed manner to increase food production and ensure food security for the millions of people in the country.

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### Farm implements distributed at subsidised price

Special Correspondent

VILLUPURAM: Collector R. Palanisamy distributed farm implements worth Rs 14.35 lakh at subsidised price to farmers at a function organised by the Agricultural Engineering Department here on Friday.

The implements include mini-tractors and spare parts, power tillers, sowing and harvesting machines, and, submersible motors.

The Collector warned that if any farmer happened to sell the implements, the subsidy amount would be recovered and criminal proceedings initiated against him.

District Revenue Officer C.Kathiravan and Executive Engineer of Agricultural Engineering Department Khader Mohideen were present.

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## Operations hit in vegetable market

K.Lakshmi and Deepa H Ramakrishnan

*Row over unloading at Koyambedu*

— Photo: K. Pichumani



**TENSE: Police personnel posted at the Koyambedu market, following a dispute between traders and labourers on Thursday morning.**

CHENNAI: Operations at the wholesale vegetable market in Koyambedu came to a standstill on Thursday after a dispute between traders and labourers belonging to a few trade unions over unloading of cargo from the trucks. Over 50 trucks laden with potatoes, onions, yam and green vegetables could not be unloaded till late evening.

Traders said that the labourers had picked a quarrel with the employees of a wholesale vegetable dealer around 4 a.m. The labourers forcefully unloaded a lorry that brought consignments for one trader. In the melee that ensued, one of the employees was injured.

The practice in the market is that labourers who are part of the trade unions unload trucks that bring vegetables meant for more than one trader. If the vehicle contains perishables meant for one trader, then persons employed by him would only unload the cargo.

After a brief halt following the skirmish, the unloading resumed but by noon it came to a grinding halt. Traders held a demonstration condemning the forceful unloading by the labourers. Sources in the market that the labourers and traders were at loggerheads for sometime on the issue of unloading.

A posse of policemen had been posted in the market, where a tense atmosphere prevailed. A few employees of traders said they feared an attack by those belonging to the trade unions and did not even go out for lunch. “When we are accosted by 100 men what can we do? For two or three days we have been moving in groups but still the incident happened this morning,” said a worker.

Chennai Metropolitan development Authority’s Market Management Committee’s Chief Administrative Officer M. Rajendran said that a meeting of traders and union representatives was held in the afternoon with senior police officials and it was decided to allow trucks to be unloaded. “We will ensure that vegetables are unloaded and we have asked for additional police force to be present there to ensure smooth functioning of the market.”

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Anna Nagar) Ganesh Moorthy said a police force

had been posted at the market to prevent any untoward incident.

There are over 300 wholesale traders in the market and each of them employs about 15 workers. Each day, about 400 vehicles carrying 7 to 10 tonnes of vegetables are unloaded. Work starts around 1 a.m. and workers unload sacks of vegetables, weigh and classify them and repack bags to be sent to retail markets.

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## **Arrivals at Koyambedu market decline**

Staff Reporter

*Echo of the dispute between traders and labourers*

CHENNAI: As the news spread about the dispute between traders and labourers belonging to some trade unions at the Koyambedu wholesale market, the arrivals of vegetables from other States declined on Friday.

Relatively less loads of vegetables, including beans, cauliflower and drumsticks, came from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, sources said.

According to traders, the market received only 320 trucks of vegetables as against the normal supply of 400. Some vehicles have been withdrawn following doubts over smooth functioning of the market.

A meeting between the traders and the workers would be held in a few days to evolve a consensus on the unloading of consignments. A scarcity situation, however, was avoided as several loads of perishables that could not be unloaded on Thursday were cleared. The price of a few vegetables shot up. In particular, the cost of beans touched Rs.18 a kg on Friday as against Rs.12 a kg on Thursday.

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## **Farmer uses organic manure, reaps good yield**

Special Correspondent

*10 tonnes of paddy yield per hectare possible with SRI method*



***Bounty: The paddy raised under SRI method using organic manures in Edayapatti being harvested.***

TIRUCHI: A farmer in Tiruchi district has achieved a good yield of paddy by raising the crop under organic farming adopting the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique.

Andichamy of Edayapatti village in Marungapuri block, harvested the paddy crop cultivated by him in 30 cents of land during the 'Harvest day' celebrated on Wednesday in the presence of N. Ponnusamy, Joint Director of Agriculture, Ramkumar, Deputy Director, R. Pandiarajan, Assistant Director, and farmers of Marungapuri block.

The farmer had achieved 1,100 kg of paddy in 30 cents of land (3,666 kg per acre or 9,166 kg per hectare).

He pointed out that no inorganic fertilizers and pesticides were used and the crop was cultivated purely with organic manure under SRI method of cultivation.

The biometric observations revealed that though the number of tillers was less, all of them were productive tillers.

Mr. Ponnusamy said that as the farmer had adopted SRI technologies and applied two tonnes of well decomposed organic manure, biofertilizers and vermicompost as basal and had four times of Conoweeder operations at an interval of 10 days with top dressing of organic manure, it had enhanced the growth of roots which absorbed nutrients from the soil and enabled all the tillers to bear panicle.

For pest and disease control, the farmer used pseudomonas fluorescence and neem seed kernel extract.

He also said that about 10 tonnes of paddy yield per hectare could be achieved by adopting System of Rice Intensification method and application of more organic manures in paddy cultivation.

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**Mettur level**

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 87.04 feet against its full level of 120 feet on Friday. The inflow was 2,177 cusecs and discharge 11,998 cusecs.

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## **Water level**

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Friday stood at 119.40 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 263 cusecs and a discharge of 1,096 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was feet 54.40 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 871 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 3,969 mcft.

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