

Minister promises MSP for medicinal plants

Staff Reporter

— Photo: E. Lakshmi Narayanan



Great demand: Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S. Arumugam releasing a book on Medicinal crops production at a seminar in Salem on Thursday. Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare S. Gandhiselvan (left) is in the picture.

SALEM: The State government will take steps to fix the price of medicinal plants for encouraging farmers to take up cultivation of such plants on a larger scale, Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S. Arumugam said here on Thursday.

Inaugurating a State-level seminar on cultivation of medicinal plants and exhibition, he said that efforts would be taken to announce minimum support price (MSP) for different types of medicinal plants. If prices in open market go below MSP, steps would be taken to procure medicinal plants through the government's Medicinal Plant Farms and Herbal Medicine Corporation Limited.

The country had a huge demand for medicinal plants. Currently, the demand was estimated to be around 3.20 lakh tonnes per year. The size of the world market for medicinal plants was around Rs.3,000 crore and was growing fast. The country exported medicinal plants valued at Rs.1,250 crore.

Earlier, medicinal plants were obtained from forests. As a result, a number of varieties were on the verge of extinction. The best alternative method to protect the rare varieties was to cultivate them properly. This would also help farmers enhance their income, he said.

Medicinal plants were being cultivated on over 10,000 hectares in Tamil Nadu. A majority of these plants were exported, he said and called upon the farmers to adopt modern methods of cultivation.

Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare S. Gandhiselvan said the country ranked second after China in export of medicinal plants. A sum of Rs.1 crore had been allocated for cultivation of medicinal plants in Salem and Namakkal districts and Rs.2.5 crore for Erode district.

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Intensify research

Special Correspondent



Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University P. Murugesha Bhoopathy delivers the Republic Day address at the university.

Coimbatore: The Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, P. Murugesha Bhoopathy, has exhorted students to intensify agricultural research. In his Republic Day address, he pointed out that the achievement in agriculture was considered the most important milestone in India.

In 1947, the food production was only 53 million tonnes while the population was 34 crores. Thanks to the Green Revolution, India could become self-sufficient in food production. At present, the population was 110 crores for which “we are able to produce 230 million tonnes of food grains. Self-sufficiency in food is the most important requirement for an independent nation.”

According to a university release, he asserted that the agricultural scientists had the important responsibility to raise the food production to higher levels. He also explained the giant strides the country had made in various fields including medicine, space, defence and education.

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Over 40 villages hit by low voltage, complain farmers

Staff Reporter

‘Problems can be solved if the transformer at Andheripatti village is upgraded’

Photo: N. Bashkaran



In one voice: A farmer making a point at the grievances meeting in Krishnagiri on Thursday. —

KRISHNAGIRI: Over 40 villages in and around Uthangarai get only low voltage (140 to 160 kv).

This has hit irrigation works, complained farmers at a grievances meeting held here on Thursday.

The farmers said the problem would be solved if the transformer at Andheripatti village was upgraded.

Presiding over the grievances meeting, District Revenue Officer P. Prabhakar directed the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) officials to send a proposal for the upgradation of the transformer and rectify the low voltage problem immediately.

They also said overhead tanks could not be filled because of power fluctuations. They said some of them had to trek at least 3 km to fetch drinking water.

A farmer from Konepalli village at Veppanapalli Union complained that though he had registered for free power connection for his pumpset in 1988, he was yet to get any information from the TNEB.

Some farmers complained that the TNEB office at Uthangarai refused to register applications for power connection citing computer failure.

Uzhavar Santhai

Farmers also demanded construction of additional shops at the recently-inaugurated uzhavar santhai in Denkanikottai as 15 tonnes of vegetables arrived in the market every day. Water in the borewell at the santhai was not potable and the farmers urged the district administration to provide protected drinking water.

THADCO loan

Though the district official of Tamilnadu Adidraavidar Corporation (THADCO) sponsored applications for loan to Adi Dravidars, some of the nationalised banks in

the district refused to give loans, the farmers complained.

District Manager, THADCO, Meenakshisundaram, said he could release the subsidy only after the sanctioning of the loan by the banks concerned.

Ramagoundar of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam said more than 30 cows in Kaveripattinam, Alasapatti and Kettur died owing to mysterious diseases. He demanded animal husbandry officials immunize cattle to prevent diseases.

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Technology holds future for agriculture

Staff Reporter

Increasing productivity through mechanisation is the solution, says Veerapandi S. Arumugam

Photo: M. Moorthy



SOLUTION: Minister of State for Finance S.S. Palanimanickam (second right) handing over a copy of the souvenir to Agriculture Minister Veerapandi S. Arumugam at the valedictory function of Agri Expo 2010, organised in Tiruchi. —

TIRUCHI: Attributing to adoption of new farm technologies the possibility of attaining production of 110.59 metric tonnes of food grains and pulses in Tamil Nadu during 2009-10 despite impeding factors like agricultural area shrinkage and inundation of fields caused by unfavourable monsoons, Minister for Agriculture Veerapandi S. Arumugam said that increasing productivity through mechanisation was the solution in the situation of receding manpower.

The production was 91.11 lakh metric tonnes last year.

Sound augury

The prevalent demand for purchase of hi-tech farm implements with attractive subsidy component was a sound augury, the Minister said addressing the valediction of the four-day Agri Expo 2010 organised by *Dinamalar* here on Sunday.

Of the 131 stalls featuring the latest farm technologies, 24 were put up by

Government departments and allied entities.

Awards presented to best stalls

Mr. Veerapandi presented awards to best stalls on the occasion in the presence of Union Minister of State for Finance S.S. Palanimanickam, Transport Minister K.N. Nehru, Forests Minister N. Selvaraj, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University P. Murugesaboopathi, Director of National Research Centre for Banana M.M. Mustafa, and Chairman of Tamil Nadu State Agricultural Marketing Board K.P.T. Ganesan.

Paddy output enhancement

Through the system of rice intensification, it was possible to enhance paddy output from 9,000 kg to 13,000 kg per hectare.

Likewise, precision farming led to three-fold increase in the output of vegetables and fruits, he said.

Offers support

Referring to the desire expressed by associate editor of *Dinamalar* R. Ramsubbu, earlier to enhance the scale of the third edition of the fair next year to feature farm technologies at the global level, Mr. Arumugam committed the support of the State Government.

He sought to drive home the point that the State Government would always stand by the farmers while describing Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's assertion of rights to fix the price for sugarcane. He wanted model farmers to avail themselves of the various benefits like construction of link roads and priority in registration for power that were inherent in the State's new industrial policy.

Adequacy of stocks of fertilisers and seeds, pro-active field staff of the Agriculture and allied departments, and access to new technologies were among the favourable factors Mr. Arumugam cited to instil hope in the minds of farmers.

About 70,000 people were estimated to have visited the various stalls during the expo.

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Minimum support price for medicinal plants promised

Staff Reporter

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Alternative method

Earlier, medicinal plants were obtained from forests. As a result, a number of varieties were on the verge of extinction. The best alternative method to protect the rare varieties was to cultivate them properly. This would also help farmers enhance their income, he said.

Medicinal plants were being cultivated on over 10,000 hectares in Tamil Nadu.

A majority of these plants were exported, he said and called upon the farmers to adopt modern methods of cultivation.

Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare S. Gandhiselvan said the country ranked second after China in export of medicinal plants. With alternative medicine gaining popularity in India and abroad, the demand for medicinal plants had increased.

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Grievance day meeting disappoints farmers

Staff Reporter

KARUR: Farmers' grievance day meet was held here on Wednesday. Many of the ryots' demands could elicit no more than just a reply as officials cited technical or practical reasons for non-implementation.

Farmers discussion group convener Kulithalai A.V. Gopaladesikan wanted the officials to fix salvage percentage at three to five for the coconut trees uprooted for widening and developing National Highway 67. Agriculture Department officials said the salvage percentage was being fixed based on the age and other factors and not randomly, disappointing the farmers.

National Agriculturists Movement district secretary R. Selvaraj pleaded with the

TNSTC officials to direct Madurai-Salem bound buses plying on NH 7 to enter Aravakurichi, just a few kilometres off the NH.

But the officials said that if there was a request from travelling passengers, then long route buses halted and offloaded passengers on the NH itself.

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Delayed frost leaves tea growers worried

Special Correspondent

There is a marked change in weather pattern this year

Udhagamandalam: Delayed frost has given a jolt to tea growers in some parts of the district.

Though usually by this time of the year the intensity of the frost would have come down considerably, this year there has been a marked change in the weather pattern.

Heavy rain

Following the heavy rain in November, some parts of the district had experienced wet conditions even in December.

Consequently, it was felt that the winter will not be harsh.

However, contrary to expectations, for the past few days Udhagamandalam and its surroundings have been experiencing moderate to severe frost.

Though it is bright and sunny during the day it gets very chill between dusk and dawn.

It has become a major source of concern in many of the tea gardens in the frost-prone areas. Sources in the Department of Horticulture told *The Hindu* that the yield in most of the frost-hit tea estates was likely to come down considerably till there was a change in the weather. The small tea growers in the frost-affected areas have been advised to go in for plant protection measures like top shading with ferns and mulching with locally available materials.

Meanwhile the demand for warm clothes has gone up and bonfires at street corners have become a common sight.

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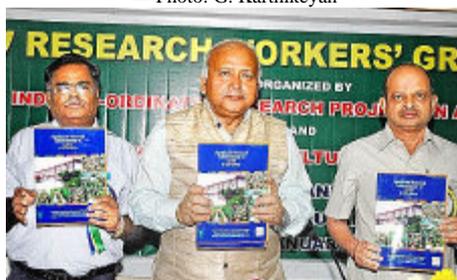
<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/01/29/stories/2010012957310300.htm>

Call to strengthen crop monitoring mechanism

Staff Reporter

Horticulture best option to meet need for food: ICAR official

— Photo: G. Karthikeyan



Details: H.P. Singh, Deputy Director General (Horticulture), centre, releasing a book at a workshop in Periyakulam on Thursday. P. Subbian, Register, TNAU, Coimbatore, right, and V. Ponnuswamy, Dean (Horticulture) look on.

THENI: Technology driven fruit production, integrated approach, mechanisation, enhancement and utilisation of wastelands and efficient post harvest management and technology would meet the challenges faced by horticulture, said H.P. Singh, Deputy Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi.

He was inaugurating the XV Group Meeting of All India Coordinated Research Project on Arid Zone Fruits held in Horticultural College and Research Station at Periakulam on Thursday.

Declining land and water resources, climate change and post harvest loss were some major challenges faced by horticulture. We have to develop path breaking technical programmes to produce more from declining land and water, amid climate change and to meet changing dietary needs and ever growing population. Sustainability will depend on improving competitiveness, reducing impact on environment, quality assurance and food safety and capability of communities engaged in horticulture, he noted.

Attention on low productivity, poor quality and high costs was required. Development of improved cultivars with high quality characters, pest and disease resistant and high nutrient and technologies for improving water efficiency and reducing pre and post harvesting loss were needed. Crop monitoring mechanism should be strengthened, the DDG advised.

Eco-region specific technology based on water, soil fertility and climatic condition, IT-based enabling mechanism for technology transfer, holistic approach for water, nutrient, pest and disease management would bring the desired change. Locally available inputs should be given to get maximum returns in minimum investment. Proper management of available resources bring success in arid horticulture, Dr. Singh added.

Emphasis should be on effective bio-molecules for management of biotic stress and eco-friendly pest managements. New area of research should be on development of hybrids, production technology mitigating problematic soil and value addition. Organic farming, protected cultivation and bio-technology needed special emphasis, the DDG pointed out.

Horticulture has emerged as best option for diversification to meet need for food, nutrition and health care besides providing better returns, he added.

TNAU Registrar P. Subbiah appealed to DDG to including horticultural college for research on Jamun and Pomegranate.

HC&RI Dean V Ponnusamy introduction of arid crops will help in diversification of cropping and land use pattern that will bring out higher income per unit area.

TNAU horticulture Dean N. Kumar spoke. The DDG released three books on this occasion. ICAR Director T. A. More briefed project to participants.

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Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 76.81 feet on Thursday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 906 cusecs and the discharge, 8,000 cusecs.

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Certificate courses for urban dwellers in TNAU

Special Correspondent

The courses will be useful for housewives, building contractors and unemployed youth

The duration is six months for each course and there is no age limit

Applications can also be downloaded from the university's website www.tnau.ac.in.

Coimbatore: The admission for certificate courses for urban dwellers for 2010 has commenced in Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

Eligibility

According to a release from V. Valluvarparidasan, Director, Open and Distance Learning of the university, the courses will be useful for housewives, building contractors, interior decorators and unemployed youth in urban areas.

Those who can read and write English are eligible to join the course.

Courses offered

Following are the certificate courses offered through this open and distance learning mode: landscaping and ornamental gardening (will cover topics on identification of suitable plants for outdoors, landscaping principles, styles of gardening, importance of irrigation, utility of fountains, ponds, waterfalls); nursery technology (will deal with preparation and layout of nursery beds, seed treatment, soil sterilisation aspects, propagation methods, laying and bedding, maintenance and display of plants).

Commercial horticulture (will cover indoor plants, landscape gardening, kitchen gardening, seed production, pollination control, package and practices of flower and vegetable crops) and mushroom cultivation (covering varieties, cultivation.

Input requirement

Input requirement, processing, preparation of different mushroom dishes and business outlook); solid waste management (will cover topics like solid waste, properties of solid waste, farm ,cattle, and urban waste and waste from agro industries, waste recycling, methods of vermi composting and factors influencing vermi composting).

Medium of instruction

The duration is six months for each course and English will be the medium of instruction. There is no age limit.

Free of cost

Applications can be obtained free of cost from the Director, Open and Distance Learning, TNAU, Coimbatore- 641 003 by sending a self-addressed envelope with Rs 5 stamp. Applications can also be downloaded from the university's website www.tnau.ac.in.

Details

For details and other particulars interested candidates can call 9442111047\9442111048 or email to odl@tnau.ac.in

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Water level

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Thursday stood at 114.90 (136 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 213 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 46.76 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 235 cusecs and a discharge of 310 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 2,148 mcft.

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Pollution control: India ranks 123rd

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WASHINGTON: India and China rank 123rd and 121st in pollution control respectively, reflecting the strain rapid economic growth imposes on the environment, according to the 2010 Environmental Performance Index (EPI).

However, among the other newly industrialised nations Brazil and Russia rank 62nd and 69th, suggesting that the level of development is just one of many factors affecting pollution control.

Iceland leads the world in addressing pollution control and natural resource management challenges, according to the index produced by a team of environmental experts at Yale University and Columbia University.

Presented Thursday at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2010, the EPI ranks 163 countries on their performance across 25 metrics aggregated into ten categories including environmental health, air quality, water resource management, biodiversity and habitat, forestry, fisheries, agriculture, and climate change.

Iceland's top-notch performance derives from its high scores on environmental public health, controlling greenhouse gas emissions, and reforestation, according to a media release from Yale University. Other high performers include Switzerland, Costa Rica, Sweden, and Norway.

One-day fast against Bt brinjal

Jan 28 2010

Kolkata: Some scientists, academics, members of civil society groups and farmers across India will observe a one-day fast on Saturday to protest against the possible release of the genetically modified crop Bt Brinjal for commercial cultivation.

The central environment ministry is now holding public consultations in various Indian cities to decide if it will allow commercial release. Last October, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee of the government had cleared it. But a member of the committee, Pushpa Bhargava, has alleged that all necessary tests were not carried out before the decision was taken.

As part of the protest, scientists and activists here will observe the fast at a stall at the ongoing Kolkata Book Fair, which began here Jan 25.

'We have decided to stage a token fast Jan 30, protesting against the introduction of Bt Brinjal. Organisations like Greenpeace International and Earthcare have already agreed to participate in the protest,' Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC) secretary Anshuman Das told IANS Thursday.

He said the protest programme would be carried out across India.

'We are also trying to bring some farmers from the rural parts of West Bengal who will participate in the day-long fast at the book fair stall Earthcare,' he said.

Hundreds of farmers and scientists protested against the introduction of Bt Brinjal during a public consultation held in January in Kolkata in the presence of central Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh.

Several scientists and green groups also raised the issue of bio-technology and environmental friendliness of this new agricultural produce, citing fears over health security.

'Most of the people have already rejected Bt Brinjal because of several reasons. Yesterday (Wednesday), a public consultation was held in Nagpur where almost 70 percent participants rejected the proposal of introducing this genetically modified crop cultivation,' Das said.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/latest-news/one-day-fast-against-bt-brinjal-524>