

28.06.2016

THE HINDU

Banana prices skyrocket in Tiruchi



Traders sorting out bananas at Gandhi Market in Tiruchi on Monday.— Photo: A.Muralitharan

Price of Poovan variety has shot up by about three times

At a time when there is a huge demand for banana in view of Ramzan fast and wedding season, the price of banana have spiralled in Tiruchi market.

Poovan variety, which is often referred as a poor man's fruit, was quoted at Rs.30 a kg in the wholesale market on Monday. In the plantain market, one of the big commission markets in the region, one bunch of well grown Poovan, weighing 30 kg, was auctioned for Rs.800. Small Poovan bunch, weighing 20 kg, was sold for Rs.500.

In normal circumstances, one bunch of Poovan (first quality) would cost Rs.200 to Rs.250. It means that the current price of Poovan has shot up by about three times. In the retail market, a dozen of poovan variety was sold at between Rs.50 to Rs.60.

The price of Rasthali, another popular banana variety, was priced at Rs.600. Similarly, Sevvazhai, which is being brought from Sathiyamangalam in Erode

district and Andhra Pradesh, is sold at Rs.900 (25 kg). The prices of Rasthali and Sevvazhai have gone up correspondingly in the retail market.

R. Arun Kumar of S.R. Plantain Commission Mandi, Tiruchi, said that the prices had gone up as there was a mismatch between supply and demand. There was a heavy demand for banana on account of ongoing Ramzan fast and marriage season. The current supply was insufficient to meet the demand. He said the Tiruchi market would receive 15,000 bunches on an average. However, it had been receiving just between 3,000 and 5,000 bunches a day.

Mr. Kumar said that there was hardly any supply from main supply centres such as Thottiam, Lalgudi and Musiri. The demand was being managed by the arrival from Pudukottai. However, the prices would come down from the third week of July as supply would pick up.

‘Ensure completion of paddy transplantation by July 25’

Highlighting the need for encouraging paddy farmers towards early transplantation, Collector H. Arun Kumar on Monday asked the officials of the Agriculture Department to ensure that the paddy transplantation be completed in the district by July 25.

At a meeting with the officials of various departments here, Mr. Arun Kumar said the district had registered adequate rainfall in May and June and there was no question of water shortage for the paddy transplantation. He said early plantation of paddy would save the standing crop from possible cyclones in November.

The Collector said irrigation canals had been opened in central delta and eastern delta on June 15 and there was every possibility of an increase in the water levels in the Godavari and the irrigation canals as well.

De-silting of drains

Of the 87 revenue drains in the Amalapuram revenue division, de-silting was completed in 60 drains and steps would be taken to complete the works in the remaining drains too at the earliest, he said.

Sheep and wool development federation to be set up soon



For sheep farming: Panditrao Chidri, Chairman, Karnataka State Sheep and Wool Development Corporation, addressing presspersons in Vijayapura on Monday.— Photo: Rajendra Singh Hajeri

Panditrao Chidri, Chairman, Karnataka State Sheep and Wool Development Corporation, has said that within a fortnight, the sheep and wool development federation will come into existence.

Addressing presspersons here on Monday, he said the process for the formation of the federation was in the final stages.

Mr. Chidri said that around 600 cooperative sheep associations had been constituted in the State, of which, around 200 had registered with the federation. Soon, the remaining associations would be registered, for which Rs. 5 crore had been set aside, he said.

The federation would help organise development programmes for sheep rearers.

He said that the corporation had decided to take a loan of Rs. 2,000 crore from the Union government, for which a guarantee from the State government was required. The federation would not only help increase meat production, but also enable the government to set up dairies for packaging goat milk for sale. The medicinal benefits of sheep and goat milk would be mentioned on the packages, Mr. Chidri said. He added that sheep and goat produced the best organic manure, and it would be packed and sold in urban areas for farmers. To meet this target, a fertilizer unit would be set up.

The corporation was also thinking of setting up a leather unit to manufacture bags using goat and sheep skin, Mr. Chidri said.

Weighing machines had been procured by Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees to measure the precise weight of the animal, and the weight tag would be fixed around the neck of the sheep.

Mr. Chidri said that a centre for training rearers on scientific ways of sheep rearing had been set up at Malavalli village of Mandya district. Earlier, the farmers had to travel to Hissar in Haryana to learn about the trade.

Learn nuances of technology, agri varsity VC tells farmers

“Agriculture sector’s contribution to country’s economy has been pivotal”



Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor T. Ramaswami presenting seed money cheques to members of a women farmer group at a meeting in Agricultural College and Research Institute in Madurai on Monday.— Photo: R. Ashok

Considering the steady decline in cultivable area across the State, it was high time farmers learnt the nuances of technology in farm activities, said Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasami here on Monday.

Inaugurating a one-day awareness-cum-interaction programme for progressive farmers on system of rice intensification (SRI) technique, he said that despite limitations, agriculture sector’s contribution to country’s economy had been pivotal. A look at the five year plans indicated that there had been vast improvement from the third five-year plan to the seventh five-year plan in terms of production of foodgrains.

In the event of changing trends, farmers were compelled to learn new techniques and advancements which would ensure that the sector survived, Dr. Ramasami said and added that sharing success stories and learning through seminars and interactions with scientists at agricultural universities and research stations would certainly help farmers to a great extent.

Distributing cheques for Rs. 10,000 each towards seed money to various women farmers' groups from the district on the occasion, he urged them to look for value addition to their produce to attract more consumers.

In his presidential address, H. Philip, Director (Extension), said that students and farmers were the two eyes of the agricultural university. Through the Krishi Vigyan Kendras, research activities were on in full pace. "New techniques attracted youngsters and by roping them in to take up agriculture, the State can bring in more awards and rewards," he noted.

AC and RI Dean I. Muthusami and Home Science College Dean C. Parvathi offered felicitations. Earlier, Joint Director (Agriculture) S. Kanagaraj welcomed the gathering and programme coordinator P. Subburaj proposed a vote of thanks.

SRI technique

Later, in a brief chat with reporters, he said that presently, eight lakh hectares in the State were covered under SRI technique and it had been decided to cover 12 lakh hectares shortly. Out of 58 lakh hectares covered under the cultivable area in the State, 12 lakh ha had been held by corporate houses and industries for non-agricultural purposes. As a result, the farmers were compelled to adapt modern technologies and use machines to speed up the process and reap in profits as well as step up productivity.

On July 5, a scientific workers' conference would be held at Coimbatore in which new varieties developed by scientists would be presented, he said.

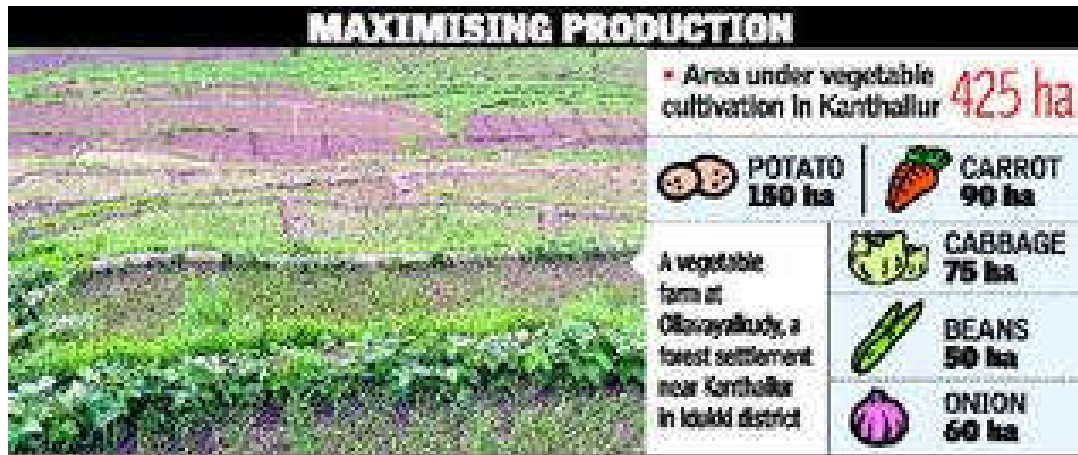
Vegetables from tribal areas for Onam sale

Pesticide-free vegetables are grown with support of Agriculture Department

Pesticide-free vegetables from tribal settlement areas in Kanthallur will reach Onam markets this year as the Agriculture Department has brought more areas in forest settlements under cultivation.

According to Kanthallur Krishi Bhavan, 65 hectares in Ollavayalkudy and 14 ha in Mangaparakudy, 15 km and 18 km respectively from Kanthallur, have been brought under vegetable cultivation.

Though potato and beans are mostly cultivated there, carrot, cabbage, and onion are also being grown.



Kanthallur agriculture officer Murugan told *The Hindu* on Monday that the aim is to maximise vegetable production in tribal settlements.

It ensures pesticide-free and high-quality vegetables. The Krishi Bhavan gives the support and farmers follow their traditional method of cultivation.

A sum of Rs.22,500 has been given to the farmers under the Additional Tribal Sub-Plan scheme of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) for each hectare. The tribal people, mostly women, are engaged in farming — from clearing the land to harvesting the crops.

This provides additional income to the families and ensures timely harvesting.

The climatic condition of the area is suited for vegetable cultivation in two seasons. Though it is in a rain shadow area, it receives two seasonal rains.

“The southwest monsoon is the best suited for vegetable cultivation as it rains mildly,” he said adding that the main cool season cultivation starts during this season.

The vegetables for the Onam market is the prime business in Kanthallur.

It has been found that the soil and climatic conditions in the tribal settlements are also suited for fruit production, he said adding that lemon, apple, and plums sapling developed by the horticulture research stations at Kodaikanal and Thandikudi are given to the settlers.

However, one major problem to be faced by the farmers is transportation of the harvested crops from remote areas to the main market at Kanthallur.

Mr. Murugesan said there are plans for providing transportation cost to the tribal farmers.

Weather app for farmers

Farmers in Kerala can now access weather information on their mobile phones to help them make the right decisions on time.

The mobile application deployed by the Department of Agriculture will provide them with five days of weather forecast.

The app is part of the Farmers Call Centre and Agriculture Information Hub set up by the Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) to reach out to farmers with a variety of agricultural services.

Farmers or the general public can reach the Farmer's Information Hub through the Web portal www.krishi.info or by downloading the Android mobile application from the Google Play Store.

Preparations on for agriculture census

Preliminary works for the 10th Agriculture Census were inaugurated here on Monday by district panchayat president Asha Sanil at a function organised at the conference hall of the district collectorate.

District Collector M.G. Rajamanickam presided over the event.

To begin on July 1

The census operations, beginning on July 1, will be conducted by the Department of Economics and Statistics.

Deputy Director of the Department of Economics and Statistics Cinsimol Antony welcomed the gathering and Principal Agriculture Officer M. Sreedevi and Assistant Information Officer N. B. Biju spoke on the occasion.

Brothers reap rich dividends by cultivating betel leaves in polyhouse

: While floriculture and cultivation of vegetables is undertaken in polyhouses in the malnad region, Raghavendra J.M. has taken up the cultivation of betel leaves in the regulated environment at his farm in Sadashivapura village, Shikaripur taluk.

Mr. Raghavendra quit his job as a networking engineer with a reputed firm in Bengaluru and returned to his native Shikaripur to look after the agriculture land

of the family after his father, J.S. Murudappa, developed health issues. The family has a total land holding of nine acres.

Mr. Raghavendra said that the Shikaripur region was once known for cultivation of betel leaves of high quality. After the prices of arecanut surged from the year 1990, the betel leaf gardens were converted into arecanut plantations. With prices of arecanut fluctuating regularly now, he decided to cultivate betel leaves that ensure regular and lucrative returns.



Happy faces:Raghavendra J.M. and Ravi J.M. (right) seen with the betel leaves cultivated in their polyhouse in Sadashivapura village, near Shikaripur, of Shivamogga district.— Photo: VAIDYA

A polyhouse measuring 2,000 sq mt with interline drippers and fogging system was setup at a cost of Rs. 18 lakh on half an acre of land of which Rs. 9 lakh was provided as subsidy under the National Horticulture Mission programme.

He planted 2,000 saplings in June 2013. The poles of locally available Chagache tree were used for supporting the vines. Within one year, the vines were ready for harvesting.

At present, seven bundles, locally known as pendi with each bundle containing 12,000 betel leaves are harvested every 15 days.

The leaves are sold at the markets in Ranibennur and Harihar. Each pendi is priced at around Rs. 5,000 and the price touches Rs. 20,000 during the wedding season. He and his elder brother, Ravi J.M., who also looks after the polyhouse, earn Rs. 10 lakh annually from cultivation of betel leaves. Mr. Raghavendra said that at present only 10 loads of locally-procured sheep manure is administered to the furrows where the vines are planted and chemical fertilisers are strictly avoided. Owing to the controlled environment inside the poly-house,

pest infection is also minimal. Pesticides are sprayed once a year to control mealybug menace.

Mr. Ravi said that cultivation of betel vine is labour-intensive as manpower is required for the process of training the branches on the poles, pruning the leaves, harvesting and preparing the pendis.

An amount of Rs. 5 lakh is incurred as expense towards labour annually and Rs. 60,000 for administering manure and spraying insecticide.

After deducting the expenses, they are earning a profit of Rs. 4.40 lakh now from the polyhouse spread over half an acre of land.

Mr. Raghavendra said that the returns from betel leaves is lucrative compared to the cultivation of arecanut, the main crop in the region. Enthused with the success, they are planning to setup another polyhouse in their ancestral land to cultivate betel leaves.

State convention of cane growers on July 5

The State convention of the Sugarcane Growers' Association will be held in Mysuru on July 5 to seek policy changes from the government on agricultural issues to benefit farmers.

The thrust will be on amending rules under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) so as to include commercial crops like sugarcane under the newly launched crop insurance scheme. Sugarcane and a few other commercial crops, including silk, have been left out of the ambit of the PMFBY and the association members want these two crops to be brought under its purview to benefit the farmers.

“In Karnataka, there are lakhs of sugarcane cultivators and about 2 lakh hectares, which was brought under sugarcane, withered due to drought this year. It would have provided succour to farmers had the crop insurance scheme not kept sugarcane out of its purview on the grounds that it is a commercial crop,” said Atihalli Devaraj, secretary of the association. The same applies to sericulture, which is not under the crop insurance scheme, he added.

The farmers are also seeking a revision in the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane from nearly Rs. 2,300 to Rs. 3,000 in view of the escalation in the cost of cultivation.

Revamp sought

Association president .Kurubur Shanthakumar called for a total revamp of the lending policies of the government and suggested that banks should be authorised to lend up to 75 per cent of the land value mortgaged by the farmers to avail loan instead of pegging the loan amount to the cultivation cost and the area of cultivation.

A change in the lending policies will help arrest the wave of suicides of farmers due to financial stress created by agricultural crisis, said Mr. Shanthakumar. The association will also seek an amendment to the banking laws regarding agricultural loan, which stipulates repayment within a year to avail zero per cent interest.

“But the gestation period of sugarcane is longer and the cycle — from sowing to harvesting, crushing and payment from the factories to the farmers — take about 18 months and hence sugarcane cultivators should be given that option’,” said Mr. Shanthakumar.

Thrust will be on amending rules under PMFBY to include sugarcane under crop insurance scheme

Maruthur anicut to be desilted soon: Collector

“Tenders will be floated at the earliest”

To cater to demands of farmers, desilting works in Maruthur anicut will be taken up soon and tenders floated at the earliest. This historic anicut has 97.500 cubic metres of water spread area running to a length of 1, 249 metres, according to Collector M. Ravikumar.

Silt deposited up to a depth of one to three feet in the anicut would be removed.

This anicut has been benefitting farmers within the ayacut area of 20, 547 acres, he said while talking to reporters here on Monday.

On desilting works under way in Srivaikuntam dam, he said the first and second reach had been completed and works were in progress in the third and fourth reach in the dam.

While 57 per cent of desilting works had been completed in the third reach, 33 per cent of works was over in the fourth reach.

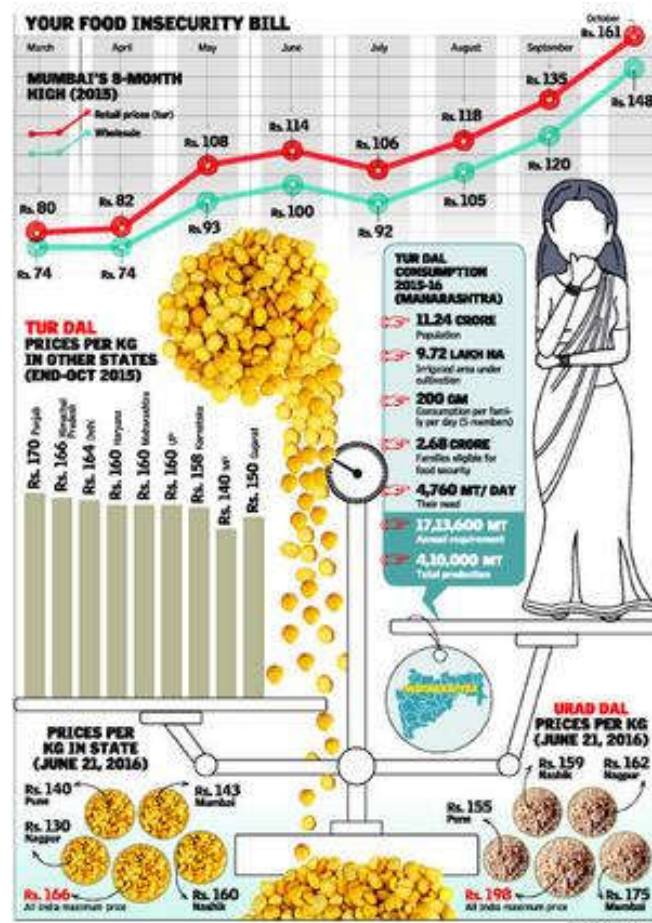
The Collector said 20 ponds maintained by the government had been selected for desilting in various parts of the district.

As per an order notified by the government, up to 30 cubic meter of silt removed from these ponds could be given to farmers free of cost for agriculture purpose.

Of these ponds, six ponds were under Tamirabarani basin, nine under Korampallam basin and five under panchayat limits.

District Revenue Officer S. Murugaiah was also present.

Why pulses rates skyrocketed



Drought alone is not the cause for the rising prices of pulses. Mismanagement of the supply chain and lack of foresight have also contributed to put dal beyond the reach of the common man.

Pulses, the common man's food, have gone beyond the reach of millions with the government failing to rein in the crisis extending across the country since March, 2015. Lethargy and mismanagement by the State government, problems of a mismatch in demand-supply, and rigidity in the supply chain, owing to a narrow stock limit, were further compounded by the extended two-year drought in the State.

Maharashtra, somehow, failed to put a finger on the pulses crisis. Not only did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-headed government in the State miss a few tricks, it moved slowly and clumsily in intervening to stem the prices during the peak crisis period between March and October, 2015.

The government's mismanagement even spurred action by the Prime Minister's Office which had to intervene to correct the misinterpretation of central orders. On October 28, 2015, Joint Secretary to Prime Minister, Anurag Jain, wrote to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis: "Stock limit shall apply to any stock held by dealers after the first sale by importer."

The limit was for wholesale traders to maintain less than 5,000 quintals of pulse stock in Mumbai; 3,500 quintals in other areas, and 1/9th of last three years' crushing dal stocks with millers.

Meanwhile, between April 10 last year and April 11 this year, the prices jumped by 60.35% for tur, 83.55% for urad, and 43.57% for gram.

The State has so far shown little urgency in lifting the un-milled pulses from the Centre's buffer stock (at Rs. 66 per kg, to be sold in the retail market at Rs. 120 per kg). With a prospective shortfall of 13,00,000 metric tonnes this year, the State failed to lift two instalments from the buffer stock totalling 17,000 tonnes. This stock is now gathering dust at Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns at Latur, Akola, Jalgaon, Udgir and Yavatmal. The mismanagement of the crisis did not end with this. In October 2015, the government misinterpreted central directives and lifted the 'stock limit' on pulses at 4 p.m. on October 19. This was followed by midnight raids on consignments at ports and seizure of nearly 74,846 tonnes of pulses from alleged hoarders.

Traders, importers and millers claim the State's reaction delivered a 'disastrous' signal to the market, which reacted with a further price hike. "All the government did was, paint the entire trading community as hoarders and black marketers. The government must facilitate trade instead of trying to micro regulate it during a crisis such as this," said Prem Kogta, president of the Jalgaon Dal Mill Owners' Association.

Not a single action was taken against the big corporate retail chains found selling pulses at higher rates, while importers and traders working on wholesale prices — that remained lower than retail prices all through 2015 — faced the brunt. "Chains like Big Bazaar, Reliance Fresh did not face any music at all while the importers and miller were hounded," said Navin Bhai, former secretary of Grain Rice and Wholesale Merchants' Association (Mumbai).

The seized stock was later returned to the same traders who had faced government action under the Essential Commodities Act, and the stock limit was scaled back until September 30, 2016. Unable to control the crisis, the State appointed a Price Monitoring Committee on December 28 last year to regulate the rates of 27 essential commodities, including onion and potato. The committee suggested introduction of a Price Control Act to ensure traders prepare a rate chart, and sell pulses at fixed prices. The punishment for violation was proposed as jail term of three months or one year.

The Bill is currently pending approval by President Pranab Mukherjee. The trigger for the draft Bill was hoarding and profiteering by traders. “It cannot be denied that traders are creating artificial shortages to jack up prices, there is an urgent need for a Bill to control prices, the Act will allow traders to appeal to Divisional Commissioners,” a Cabinet note of April, 2016 reads.

Historical mismatch

In 1956, India was producing 120 lakh tonnes of pulses for a population of 42 crore. In 2015-2016, production of pulses is estimated at 17.06 million tonnes, while the demand for it stands at 23.5 million tonnes.

“Our population kept increasing but the pulse production remained static. The per capita consumption dropped to 40 gm per person from 68 gm in the 1950s, the yield too dipped to about eight quintal an acre from 12 quintal. Slowly, the farmers abandoned pulses because its yield was three times less than wheat, and when the government’s minimum support price too supported wheat, that was the end of pulse production in India. The successive governments did not make any long term plans. It (crisis) has now exploded,” explained Sunil Baltewa, executive member of the New Delhi Grind Merchants’ Association.

Buffer stock

The fears of buffer stock going waste were raised at a meeting of the State price monitoring committee on pulses on April 21 this year. Members of the committee revealed that the government is yet to chalk out a plan to transport 7,367.5 tonnes of *tur*, *urad* and *chana* to the milling units due to disagreement of prices. “The government has no clue where the milling and polishing of the naked grain is going to be carried out or what will be the recovery percentage millers are going to charge. All this, while a huge stock is lying at the FCI godowns. This government is just lethargic,” said Nitin Kalantari, manufacturer of Pistol Dal, a popular brand in Marathwada.

A senior FCI official said they had started procuring pulses since January — *tur* at Rs 8,900 per quintal, *urad* at Rs. 4,800 per quintal and *chana* at Rs.

10,800 per quintal. “But we do not yet have information on what the State wants to do with this stock, whether they want to distribute it through PDS or auction it directly into the market. We do not have any experience of distribution or transportation,” said G.S. Rajasekhar, general manager, FCI (Maharashtra).

Consumer, the fall guy

The ultimate impact of the pulse crisis is being felt by the average consumer, who is forced to cut down on his daily consumption. On an average, a single family in Maharashtra consumes 200 gm of *tur* daily, which goes up during the festive season.

Low-income homes are either cutting down on consumption or trying to substitute *tur* with *moong* which has more amount of nutrient value. “Earlier, when *tur* was around Rs. 100/Rs. 120, I used to buy two to three kg per month for my family, but now prices have increased to about Rs. 200/ Rs. 220. We have cut our consumption to 1-1.5 kg. The prices of vegetables are also high, it is becoming hard to manage kitchen,” said Balkrishna D. Kadam, 53, a security guard who lives with his family of five in a chawl at Grant Road. Mr. Kadam’s monthly income is Rs. 8,000.

The retail prices of *tur* and *moong* are touching Rs. 160 and Rs. 175 per kg. The all-India retail prices have hovered around Rs. 200 through June, only to settle at Rs. 198 per kg on June 21. “I only cook dal once a week now. I now cook more dishes using potatoes, since even other vegetables are getting costly. I can’t disturb the family budget, as it will now cost me Rs. 800 to Rs. 820 for the same consumption. I don’t want to compromise with my children’s education or medical requirement of the family,” said Ms. Kanchan Jalandariya, 42, a Grant Road resident.

(With inputs from Sourabh Jain, Aditya Jain)

‘Seed capital coming up on floodplains’

By planning the seed capital of Amaravati on floodplains, the State government is not only violating several laws but also denying water to the future generations, alleged a Congress leader and social activist Bolisetty Satyanarayana here on Monday. Mr. Satyanarayana pointed out that building the seed capital in such an area would result in destroying a water source apart from making it vulnerable to floods. “The AP State Capital Region Development Authority has violated every law of the land in its hurry to build the capital instead of going for systematic planning,” he said at a press conference. “Even while submitting declarations to the court and the National Green Tribunal, the State government gave false information and the Commissioner of CRDA also

told the NGT that the area is a dry land, there are no floodplains, etc. and that the plan will not cause any sort of damage and if damage occurs it would be compensated with the authority's own funds," Mr. Satyanarayana pointed out. His statements were based on the Rapid EIA and EMP reports of the CRDA and since the same are riddled with false facts, the courts are certain to find fault with the CRDA and reject the plan for the capital, Mr. Satyanarayana said.

To ensure that the people have a good capital which is people-friendly, farmer-friendly, environment-friendly and investor-friendly, Mr. Satyanarayana said he was getting a study done.

Vellode farmer achieves bumper yield of sugarcane



RICH RETURNS:Natarajan of Vellode has readied his field for the second crop of sugarcane in Erode. —PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

A farmer at Vellode has realised bumper yield of one tonne sugarcane in every cent on his 1.3 acre farm owing to adoption of cultivation methods under sustainable sugarcane initiative.

The farmer Natarajan (67) harvested 130 tonnes and earned profit of Rs. 1.3 lakh. The farmer owes the bumper harvest to a combination of factors: application of farmyard manure, cultivation and mulching of green manure (dhaincha), timely rainfall, and spacing between saplings.

Such productivity has not been recorded in any field in the entire state so far, G.R. Muthusamy, Deputy General Manager - Cane, Sakthi Sugars Unit IV, Poondurai Semur, said, adding the extent of harvest after cultivation of the crop under normal flow irrigation was unusual.

The sugar unit supplied saplings of tissue cultured seedlings that were free of bacterial and viral diseases. The farmer could not only save one month by planting the saplings - the duration taken for growth of saplings after planting of sets - there was also substantial savings in terms of the cost that would have otherwise been incurred towards labour and irrigation.

Each individual cane in a clump weighed about three kg. The length of an individual cane rose up to 18 feet and there were 30 nodes, Mr. Muthusamy said. Normally, 5,000 to 6,000 saplings are planted per acre with spacing of 2.5 feet. Mr. Nagarajan said he had left a spacing of four feet, and that the better sunlight and air passage resulted in heavy tillering of canes with good girth.

Sugarcane farmers in Modakurichi area have been visiting the field to study the methodology for increasing productivity ever since the harvest was made earlier this month. Since ratooning has been carried out, the farmer has to bear the cost of fertilizers, irrigation and labour alone, and the returns are bound to be more in the coming years.

According to Mr. Muthusamy, as many as 500 farmers with combined holdings of up to 1,500 acres are currently following SSI methodology. Under the system, the trash is shredded and converted into decomposable manure. A major advantage is that the trash will cover the field as a blanket with high water retention capacity and prevent damage to the field from Early Shoot Borer pest. Also, there will be no weed growth, Mr. Muthusamy said.

Rainfall 32 p.c. lower than normal in Malnad region

Scanty rain, low reservoir levels a cause for worry in Hassan district



The Malnad districts of the State, including Hassan, have recorded lower than normal rainfall this month, leaving the farmers worried over the yield in their fields. This is also expected to contribute heavily to drinking water shortage.

According to the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, Hassan has received a cumulative rainfall of 116.61 mm against the normal 121 mm expected this month (up to June 27). The fall in the rate of rainfall was significant in the last week (June 20-27), when the district registered a negative departure of rainfall of 30 per cent from the normal. The normal rainfall expected during the week was 38.6 mm, while the actual rainfall received was only 27.09 mm. This has left the region's potato growers in the lurch, who are worried about losing the crop this year.

The situation in other districts of the Malnad region is worse.

Chikkamagaluru district has received 25 per cent less rainfall this month (up to June 27) than normal .

While, the normal rainfall is 248 mm, the district has received only 186.97 mm.

Kodagu district has received only 308.46 mm of rainfall against the normal 525.7 mm registering a negative departure of 41 per cent. Shivamogga district has recorded a departure of minus 37 per cent this month. The district has received 238.68 mm of rainfall as against the normal 375.90 mm. Overall, the Malnad region, consisting of the four districts, has received 32 per cent lower rainfall than the normal that is expected for the month of June.

Meanwhile. the water-level in the Hemavati reservoir at Gorur near Hassan stood at 2,864.17 ft against the maximum level of 2,922 ft, on Monday.

Last year on this day, the level stood at 2,901.50 ft. Water available at present in the reservoir is only 4.84 tmc ft, while last year on this day it was 20 tmc ft. The inflow into the reservoir is 369 cusecs, while last year on this day the inflow was 25,338 cusecs.

H.S. Prakash, MLA for Hassan, has said that providing drinking water to the residents of Hassan city and other areas has been difficult owing to the low water-level in the reservoir.

“We have to depend on borewells to fulfil the requirement. If it does not rain in a few days, the situation would turn worse,” he told presspersons here on Monday.

ICAR to work for second Green Revolution: Minister of Agriculture

Radha Mohan Singh also drew the attention of the agriculture scientists towards adverse effect of the climate change on the agriculture production.



Minister of Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh addressing the committee meeting of second Green Revolution at ICAR complex.(Source: PTI)

Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Monday asked the Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) to step up its activities in the eastern region to bring the “second green revolution” in the country.

Addressing the steering committee meeting of the second Green Revolution (SGR) at ICAR Complex for Eastern Region, he said ICAR should work out coordination and convergence of different agricultural activities being implemented by the Centre to expedite agricultural development in the region.

Noting that the eastern region has potential to increase production of milk, meat, pulses and oil seeds through overall development of the agriculture and allied sectors, he said that the states in this region were producing only 50 per cent rice, 45 per cent vegetables and 38 per cent fish respectively of the total production of the country.

Singh also drew the attention of the agriculture scientists towards adverse effect of the climate change on the agriculture production and asked them to mitigate the problem by developing smart technologies for plantation of short duration crops among other measures.

There is also a need to rehabilitate the waterlogged areas in the region which accounts for 41 lakh hectare through integrated farming system approach, he said.

Singh said state coordination, technical coordination and steering committees had been formed to discuss policy, investment, convergence and related issues for successful implementation of the second green revolution.

Cotton area in Punjab, Haryana shrink by 27% in 2016-17 crop year

These states had advised cotton growers to complete the sowing operation timely before May 15 to avoid any whitefly infestation.



Areas under cotton cultivation in Punjab and Haryana have declined 27 per cent to 7.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year.

Cotton area in Punjab and Haryana has declined 27 per cent to 7.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year as farmers shifted to other crops after incurring huge losses due to whitefly pest attack last year.

These two states had planted cotton in 10.3 lakh hectares in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June).

“Sowing of cotton in Punjab and Haryana has been completed. Total area is down as farmers were scared to grow cotton fearing whitefly pest attack that had damaged the crop massively in these two states last year,” a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

These states had advised cotton growers to complete the sowing operation timely before May 15 to avoid any whitefly infestation again. Farmers did not opt for cotton despite prices ruling high in the market at present.

Instead, farmers have shifted to pulses, paddy and other crops in these states, the official added.

As per the latest data, area planted to cotton in Punjab is lower by 43.11 per cent at 2.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year, from 4.5 lakh hectare in the previous year.

Similarly, cotton area coverage in neighbouring Haryana fell 14 per cent to 5 lakh hectares this year as against 5.8 lakh hectares in 2015-16.

Even in Uttar Pradesh, the cotton acreage is down 19 per cent at 0.17 lakh hectares as against 0.21 lakh hectares in the said period.

The official said the sowing of cotton in northern states is almost over except in Rajasthan, where total acreage was higher by 43 per cent to 2.61 lakh hectares so far this year from 1.83 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

More than 90 per cent of farmers have sown Bt cotton seeds, the maximum retail price of which is being fixed by the central government from this year onwards.

The country's total area sown to cotton remained lower by 45 per cent at 19.07 lakh hectares so far in 2016-17 compared with 34.87 lakh hectares in the year-earlier period.

Late onset of monsoon is one of the reasons for less coverage in central and southern region, where planting is still in progress even as farmers are scared to sow cotton after last year's pink bollworm pest attack.

Belarus to sell India potash at lowest price in a decade

Indian Potash Limited will buy 700,000 tonnes of potash at \$227 per tonne on a cost and freight basis with a credit period of 180 days, Belarusian Potash Company, said in a statement on Monday.



Photo taken for representation purpose (Source: Express Archive/file)

Belarus has agreed to sell potash to India at the lowest price in a decade and about a third less than last year's level as global supplies of the crop nutrient exceed demand.

One of India's biggest fertiliser importers, Indian Potash Limited (IPL), will buy 700,000 tonnes of potash at \$227 per tonne on a cost and freight (CFR) basis with a credit period of 180 days, Belarusian Potash Company, Belarus's state-controlled trader of this fertiliser, said in a statement on Monday.

Belarus' contract price is likely to become the benchmark for other suppliers to India, such as Russia's Uralkali and North American trading group Canpotex Ltd, owned by Potash Corp of Saskatchewan , Mosaic Co and Agrium Inc.

Interfax news agency cited a Uralkali spokesperson as saying a price of \$227 per tonne was too low and the company was not yet ready to sign a contract with India.

Shares for Mosaic and Potash were down 7 and 6 percent respectively in New York at 1640 GMT, while Agrium, which also has a large farm retail business, slipped 2 percent.

The Toronto Stock Exchange's materials group, which includes precious and base metals miners and fertiliser companies, was down 1 percent.

India and China, the world's biggest fertiliser consumers, usually sign contracts earlier in the year. This year, deals were delayed as high stocks held by farmers meant there was no rush to agree a deal.

India's deal is a rare instance of the country signing a potash supply contract with a major producer before China.

"It remains to be seen if this contract will spur better volume/prices in other global markets, though it should set floor prices for the next months in some of those markets," BMO analyst Joel Jackson said in a note.

Indian buyers confirmed the contract signing. The price is sharply down from last year's price of \$332.

IPL said it would pass on part of the benefits from lower import prices to farmers by slashing the retail price of potash by 4,000 rupees per tonne (\$59).

An Indian fertiliser company official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said lower prices and favourable rainfall for crops could boost potash consumption this year.

The contract price is fair and reflects the current conditions in the global potash market, Elena Kudryavets, director general of Belarusian Potash Company, said in a statement.

"The contract reflects the interests of producers, importers and consumers of potash fertilisers," she added. (\$1 = 67.9495 Indian rupees)

Whitefly fear: Cotton area in Punjab, Haryana shrinks 27%



Instead, farmers have shifted to pulses, paddy and other crops in these states. (HT File Photo)

Cotton area in Punjab and Haryana has declined 27% to 7.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year as farmers shifted to other crops after incurring huge losses due to whitefly pest attack last year.

These two states had planted cotton in 10.3 lakh hectares in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June).

“Sowing of cotton in Punjab and Haryana has been completed. Total area is down as farmers were scared to grow cotton, fearing whitefly pest attack that had damaged the crop massively in these two states last year,” a senior agriculture ministry official said.

These states had advised cotton growers to complete the sowing operation timely before May 15 to avoid any whitefly infestation again.

Farmers did not opt for cotton despite prices ruling high in the market at present.

Instead, farmers have shifted to pulses, paddy and other crops in these states, the official added.

As per the latest data, area planted to cotton in Punjab is lower by 43.11% at 2.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year, from 4.5 lakh hectare in the previous year.

Similarly, cotton area coverage in neighbouring Haryana fell 14% to 5 lakh hectares this year as against 5.8 lakh hectares in 2015-16.

Even in Uttar Pradesh, the cotton acreage is down 19% at 0.17 lakh hectares as against 0.21 lakh hectares in the said period.

The official said the sowing of cotton in northern states is almost over, except in Rajasthan, where total acreage was higher by 43% to 2.61 lakh hectares so far this year from 1.83 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

More than 90% of farmers have sown Bt cotton seeds, the maximum retail price of which is being fixed by the central government from this year onwards.

The country's total area sown to cotton remained lower by 45% at 19.07 lakh hectares so far in 2016-17 compared with 34.87 lakh hectares in the year-earlier period.

Late onset of monsoon is one of the reasons for less coverage in central and southern region, where planting is still in progress even as farmers are scared to sow cotton after last year's pink bollworm pest attack.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Paddy farmers 'watching' rain; sowing expected to pick up in coming days

farmers in Punjab, Odisha, Haryana, Bengal, Chhattisgarh, await upturn in monsoon

Sowing of paddy in the country so far is significantly lower compared to the average sowing in the previous five years.

Farmers, not just in States that have received low rainfall, such as Odisha, Haryana, Assam, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, but also in Punjab, which received good 'pre-monsoon' rains last week, have adopted a 'wait-and-watch' approach.

On the bright side, rice sowing is likely to gather pace in the last week of June and early July, as “conditions are becoming favourable” for a further advance of the South-West monsoon after June 24, according to the Indian Meteorological Department.



Farm advisory

Some more parts of the north Arabian Sea and Gujarat, the remaining parts of west Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and most parts of Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Punjab and east Rajasthan are likely to get covered by the monsoon this week.

“Advisories are now being sent to farmers to undertake transplanting of rice seedlings and continue nursery sowing of rice in almost all major rice growing States, including Punjab, Haryana, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh,” an Agriculture Ministry official told *BusinessLine*.

Farmers in coastal Karnataka and Kerala as well as Assam, which may get a short-spell of heavy rains, have been advised to provide for proper drainage in rice fields and drain out excess water from rice nursery/transplanted rice field and orchards to avoid water stagnation.

“The timing of sowing is very important as not just early sowing but late sowing could also spoil a crop as a deluge at the wrong time could harm the seed,” pointed out agriculture expert VN Saroja.

Lower acreage

Till June 24, lower area coverage under rice, compared to normal of corresponding week (average of 2011-12 to 2015-16), was reported from Punjab (8.08 lakh hectares shortfall), Odisha (2.09 lakh hectare shortfall), Chhattisgarh (1.59 lakh hectare shortfall), Haryana (1.26 lakh hectare shortfall), Assam (0.9 lakh hectare shortfall), Kerala (0.26 lakh hectare shortfall), Uttarakhand (0.12 lakh hectare shortfall), Bihar (0.10 lakh hectare shortfall), Telangana (0.09 lakh hectare shortfall), Andhra Pradesh (0.08 lakh hectare shortfall), West Bengal (0.06 lakh hectare shortfall), Tripura (0.06 lakh hectare shortfall), Rajasthan (0.05 lakh hectare shortfall), Sikkim (0.02 lakh hectare shortfall) and Mizoram (0.01 lakh hectare shortfall).

Plentiful rain is vital for a good rice crop as cereal — the staple food for people in Eastern and Southern India — is very heavily monsoon-dependent in the country.

India is the second largest producer of the crop (annual production of about 105 million tonnes), which is mostly grown in the *kharif* season, and accounts for over a fourth of total world production.

‘Depression’ off Gujarat strengthens monsoon



In a sudden development, the Arabian Sea to the west of Porbandar, Gujarat, has thrown up a low-pressure that in turn intensified into a depression, strengthening the monsoon along the West Coast of India.

The India Met Department said that the depression was located 530 km to the west of Porbandar on Monday.

Away-moving

But the system is forecast to move away from the West Coast, and poses no threat to any part of India, except that it will intensify rain over the region.

The depression is forecast to intensify into a deep depression as it moves towards the Oman coast, India Met said.

It has also caused the offshore trough, a narrow corridor of low pressure off the West Coast that determines the health of the monsoon, to lie extended from Gujarat to North Kerala.

The trough had until now been manifest between Coastal Karnataka to Kerala, a conventional alignment that represents normal monsoon conditions.

Full-blown monsoon

The extended offshore trough means that full-blown monsoon conditions are to be expected along this stretch even as central and southern parts of Kerala stay relatively dry.

During the 24 hours ending Monday morning, heavy to very rainfall has been reported from Ratnagiri, Harnai, Honavar, Mormugao and Karwar on the West Coast.

To the other side of the Indian peninsula, another low-pressure area is lurking in the Bay of Bengal off the coast of South Odisha and North Andhra Pradesh.

It has been instrumental in setting off a punishing rain spell in East and adjoining Central India over the past couple of days.

Heavy rain has been reported from Jalpaiguri, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, and a number of other places over West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

The sudden development in the Arabian Sea has dimmed the prospects of intensification of the counterpart in Bay for now.

Wetter July seen

This is because no two weather systems which form part of the same monsoon can together intensify at the same point of time except under exceptional circumstances.

Meanwhile, the low-pressure area in the Bay is likely to move inland and track into Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana taking advantage of a corridor set up by a land-based trough.

According to projections by the Met, a follow-up low-pressure area is expected to form in the Bay of Bengal, which would help sustain the monsoon over North India.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts too agrees, saying that the impending 'low' is likely to form by July 1. It goes on to add that a third 'low' can be expected by July 8.

This is an outlook shared by the storm tracker featured by the US Climate Prediction Centre, which suspects that the whole of July could turn out to be 'productive' in terms of rain-heads moving in from the Bay.

Cardamom loses aroma on slow buying

Small cardamom prices declined at last week auctions, after moving up by around 150 a kg in less than a fortnight, following slow down in buying.

At today's auction held in Bodinayakannur by the Cardamom Planters' Association, Santhanpara, the average price dropped to 729.85 a kg from 788.64 the previous Monday. Total arrivals stood at 24.1 tonnes and of this 19.8 tonnes were sold. The maximum price was at 1,030/kg. Total arrivals remained at moderately higher levels at 578 tonnes last week.

Upcountry buyers were covering while exporters were inactive, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*. Exporters were said to have bought an estimated 20 tonnes only.

Good colour 8 mm bold capsules were fetching 1,150-75 a kg. Good bulk was being traded at 740-750 a kg.

The cardamom growing regions in Kerala have been receiving good rains but not the usual incessant rains lasting for several days, growers in Kumily said.

The individual auction average declined by 25 a kg after moving up sharply and was vacillating between 735 and 845 last week, they said.

Total arrivals during the season up to June 25 were at around 32,052 tonnes and sales were at 30,865 tonnes. The individual auction average stood at around 622.34 a kg. Prices in /kg: 8mm bold good colour 1,175; 7-8 mm 850-870; 6-7 mm 720 and below 6 mm: 630.

Business Standard

Cotton area in Punjab, Haryana shrinks 27 pc this year

Farmers have shifted to pulses, paddy and other crops in these states



Cotton area in Punjab and Haryana has declined 27% to 7.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year as farmers shifted to other crops after incurring huge losses due to whitefly pest attack last year.

These two states had planted cotton in 10.3 lakh hectares in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June).

"Sowing of cotton in Punjab and Haryana has been completed. Total area is down as farmers were scared to grow cotton fearing whitefly pest attack that

had damaged the crop massively in these two states last year," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

These states had advised cotton growers to complete the sowing operation timely before May 15 to avoid any whitefly infestation again. Farmers did not opt for cotton despite prices ruling high in the market at present.

Instead, farmers have shifted to pulses, paddy and other crops in these states, the official added.

As per the latest data, area planted to cotton in Punjab is lower by 43.11% at 2.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year, from 4.5 lakh hectare in the previous year.

Similarly, cotton area coverage in neighbouring Haryana fell 14% to 5 lakh hectares this year as against 5.8 lakh hectares in 2015-16.

Even in Uttar Pradesh, the cotton acreage is down 19% at 0.17 lakh hectares as against 0.21 lakh hectares in the said period.

The official said the sowing of cotton in northern states is almost over except in Rajasthan, where total acreage was higher by 43% to 2.61 lakh hectares so far this year from 1.83 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

More than 90% of farmers have sown Bt cotton seeds, the maximum retail price of which is being fixed by the central government from this year onwards.

The country's total area sown to cotton remained lower by 45% at 19.07 lakh hectares so far in 2016-17 compared with 34.87 lakh hectares in the year-earlier period.

Late onset of monsoon is one of the reasons for less coverage in central and southern region, where planting is still in progress even as farmers are scared to sow cotton after last year's pink bollworm pest attack.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Holy cow! Junagadh Agricultural University scientists find gold in Gir cow urine

Junagadh: The famous Gir cow is worth its weight in gold, quite literally! After four years of extensive research, scientists at Junagadh Agricultural University (JAU) have actually found gold in the urine of Gir cows. The analysis of urine samples of 400 Gir cows done at the Food Testing Laboratory of JAU showed traces of gold ranging from three mg to 10 mg from one litre urine. The precious metal was found in ionic form, which is gold salts soluble in water.

The team of researchers led by Dr B A Golakia, head of JAU's biotechnology department, used gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) method to analyze the urine samples.

"Till now, we have heard about presence of gold in cow urine from our ancient scriptures and its medicinal properties. Since there was no detailed scientific analysis to prove this, we decided to undertake a research on cow urine. We analyzed 400 samples of Gir cow urine and found traces of gold," Golakia said.

Golakia said the gold from urine can be extracted and solidified using chemical processes. The researchers also screened urine sample of camel, buffaloes, sheep and goat but they did not find any anti-biotic elements. Of the 5,100 compounds found in Gir cow urine 388 have immense medicinal value that can cure several ailments," said Dr B I Golakia, head of JAU's biotechnology department. He was assisted by researchers Jaimin, Rajesh Vijay and Shraddha. They will now analyze urine samples of all 39 indigenous cow breeds of India for the same purpose.

JAU's Food Testing Laboratory is accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing Calibration Laboratories (NABL). On an average, it conducts 50,000 tests every year on various products which include items of exports, dairy items, vegetables, pulses, oil seeds, honey , pesticide residuals and other commodities. The lab is a joint venture of JAU Union ministry of food processing industries, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Gujarat Agro Industries Corporation (GAIC). "Now, we are working on the use of Gir cow urine on human and plant pathogen. The experiments are being conducted to use it in treatment of human diseases and plant protections," Golakia added.

High yield, salt tolerant korgut seeds distributed to farmers

The directorate of agriculture has provided 15 tonnes of the local salt tolerant paddy variety, korgut, to the farmers for cultivation in khazan lands free-of-cost.

Additionally, 255 MT of high yielding varieties of paddy seed has been sold to farmers at a 50% subsidy provided at source through three authorized farmers' co-operative societies besides the departmental sub-offices.

In a bid to bring more area under cultivation a 50% subsidy on hire charges of various agriculture machinery for land preparation will be provided for the 2016kharif season.

150 mini-kits of 2 kgs each of various new paddy varieties have been distributed to farmers throughout the state during the 2016 kharif season for a large scale evaluation.

Also, 405 kg of vegetable seeds have been sold to vegetable cultivators at a 50% subsidy.

Adequate stock of fertilizers/pesticides has been made available through private dealers and co-operative sector outlets for the season.

The directorate also produced 19 kg of mushroom spawn and 12,100 units of adults of bracon in the state bio- control laboratory (BCL) at Ela, Old Goa.

7,600 units of the adults of bracon were released in fields to control leaf eating caterpillars on coconut palms.

Additionally, 1,458 samples of soil were tested in the soil-testing laboratories at Old Goa and Margao.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Union Agri Minister Radha Mohan asks ICAR to work for second green revolution



Singh also drew the attention of the agriculture scientists towards adverse effect of the climate change on the agriculture production and asked them to mitigate the problem by developing smart technologies for plantation of short duration crops among other measures.

PATNA: Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Radha Mohan Singh today asked the Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) to step up its activities in the eastern region to bring the "second green revolution" in the country.

Addressing the steering committee meeting of the Second Green Revolution (SGR) at ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region, he said ICAR should work out coordination and convergence of different agricultural activities implemented by the Centre to expedite agricultural development in the region.

Noting that the eastern region has potential to increase production of milk, meat, pulses and oilseeds through overall development of the agriculture and allied sectors, he said that the states in this region were producing only 50 per cent rice, 45 per cent vegetables and 38 per cent fish respectively of the total production of the country.

Singh also drew the attention of the agriculture scientists towards adverse effect of the climate change on the agriculture production and asked them to mitigate the problem by developing smart technologies for plantation of short duration crops among other measures.

There is also a need to rehabilitate the waterlogged areas in the region which accounts for 41 lakh hectare through integrated farming system approach, he said.

Singh said state coordination, technical coordination and steering committees had been formed to discuss policy, investment, convergence and related issues for successful implementation of the second green revolution.

Cotton area in Punjab, Haryana shrinks 27 per cent in 2016



Area planted to cotton in Punjab is lower by 43.11 per cent at 2.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year, from 4.5 lakh hectare in the previous year.

Cotton area in Punjab and Haryana has declined 27 per cent to 7.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year as farmers shifted to other crops after incurring huge losses due to whitefly pest attack last year.

These two states had planted cotton in 10.3 lakh hectares in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June).

"Sowing of cotton in Punjab and Haryana has been completed. Total area is down as farmers were scared to grow cotton fearing whitefly pest attack that

had damaged the crop massively in these two states last year," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

These states had advised cotton growers to complete the sowing operation timely before May 15 to avoid any whitefly infestation again. Farmers did not opt for cotton despite prices ruling high in the market at present.

Instead, farmers have shifted to pulses, paddy and other crops in these states, the official added.

As per the latest data, area planted to cotton in Punjab is lower by 43.11 per cent at 2.56 lakh hectares in the 2016-17 crop year, from 4.5 lakh hectare in the previous year.

Similarly, cotton area coverage in neighbouring Haryana fell 14 per cent to 5 lakh hectares this year as against 5.8 lakh hectares in 2015-16.

Even in Uttar Pradesh, the cotton acreage is down 19 per cent at 0.17 lakh hectares as against 0.21 lakh hectares in the said period.

The official said the sowing of cotton in northern states is almost over except in Rajasthan, where total acreage was higher by 43 per cent to 2.61 lakh hectares so far this year from 1.83 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

More than 90 per cent of farmers have sown BT cotton seeds, the maximum retail price of which is being fixed by the central government from this year onwards.

The country's total area sown to cotton remained lower by 45 per cent at 19.07 lakh hectares so far in 2016-17 compared with 34.87 lakh hectares in the year-earlier period.

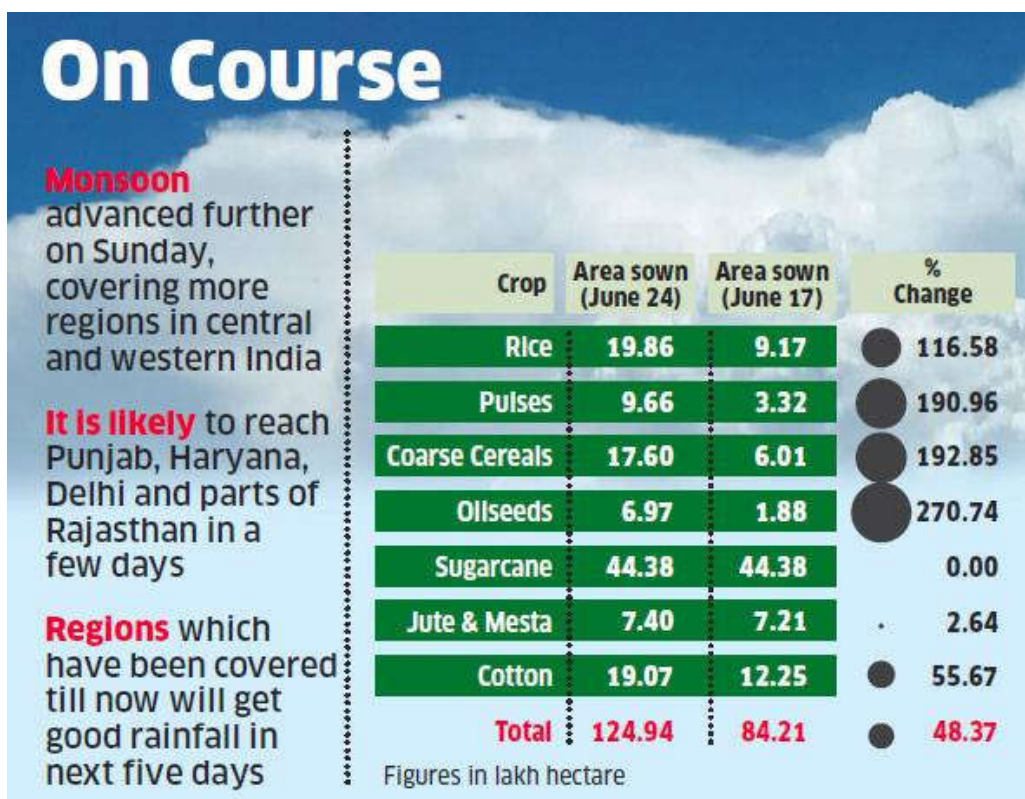
Late onset of monsoon is one of the reasons for less coverage in central and southern region, where planting is still in progress even as farmers are scared to sow cotton after last year's pink bollworm pest attack.

Monsoon gathers momentum, sowing picks up

PUNE: The monsoon has bounced back emphatically and is on track for a strong run in the weeks ahead, cheering farmers who were rattled by the unexpected lean patch with rainfall 25% below normal in mid-June.

The rainfall deficit has narrowed to 16% as the monsoon raced up to Kashmir and delivered heavy showers in the regions it has covered so far after starting late and advancing at a snail's pace in the first three weeks of the month.

Increased rainfall has already accelerated crop planting, which expanded 48% to 125 lakh hectare in the past week although it still lagged behind the same period last year, when rainfall was significantly higher before drought-like conditions set in. Planting of rice more than doubled in a week while area under pulses has trebled, signalling higher output of lentils, which should ease food inflation.



The monsoon advanced further on Sunday, covering more regions in central and western India. It is expected to reach Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and parts of Rajasthan in a few days. "Other regions of the country, which the monsoon has covered, are going to get good rainfall in next five days," said PCS Rao, director at India Meteorological Department's Pune centre.

"Except for Punjab, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir and west Rajasthan, other regions of the country, which monsoon has covered, are going to get good rainfall in next five days," Rao said. "Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat and Vidarbha (in Maharashtra) too will get good rainfall. Rainfall will be scattered in Rayalseema, Tamil Nadu and north interior Karnataka, but increase after four to five days."

In its latest monsoon update, the IMD said three factors were influencing the monsoon: end of El Nino conditions; a pulse of clouds and wind along the equator called the Madden Julian Oscillation; and differences in temperature between eastern and western parts of the Indian Ocean. "Above large scale features are favourable for monsoon activity over Indian region," the weather office said.

Higher rainfall is expected to fill up reservoirs, which are severely depleted in many regions, and completely dry in some areas. Reservoirs were filled to barely 15% of capacity last week, which was about half of the level last year.