



ACFI NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2022

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Budget may up agri-credit target to ₹18 L cr

New Delhi, Jan. 2: With a view to give a boost to the agriculture sector, the government is likely to raise the farm credit target to about Rs 18 lakh crore in the Budget 2022-23 to be presented on February 1, according to sources. For the current financial year, the government has set a credit target of Rs 16.5 lakh crore.

The government has

been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year and this time also, the target is likely to be increased to Rs 18-18.5 lakh crore for 2022-23, the sources said.

The number will be frozen at the time of giving final touches to the Budget figure in the last week of this month, the sources said.

The government fixes

annual agriculture credit, including crop loan targets for the banking sector. The agricultural credit flow have increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal. For instance, credit worth Rs 11.68 lakh crore was given to farmers in 2017-18, much higher than the Rs 10 lakh crore target set for that year. —PTI

Use organic manure: Agri minister to farmers

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, JANUARY 3

Agriculture Minister JP Dalal on Monday exhorted the farmers to shun fertilisers and use cow dung manure to enhance the fertility of soil.

He said this during his visit to Shri Gopal Gaushala, Kunjpura, and a steel plant, where cow dung is converted into biogas to generate power. Srawan Kumar Garg, chairman, Haryana Gau Seva Aayog, welcomed the minister.

“We have been using cow dung in our fields from a very long time,” Dalal said, adding that with the help of the Haryana Gau Seva Aayog, they had been working on phosphate-rich organic manure at the Haryana Govansh Anusandhan Kendra, Pinjore.

Agriculture Minister JP Dalal visits a steel plant, where cow dung is converted into biogas in Karnal on Monday.

SAYEEED AHMED



Rabi sowing: Mustard emerges favourite

Acreage under wheat, nutri-cereals, pulses drops; area under gram gains

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, December 31

Sowing of all rabi crops has exceeded the season's normal area, reaching 634.68 lakh hectares (lh) as on Friday, up by 1.5 per cent from year-ago. While wheat acreage is down by one per cent to 325.88 lh, mustard sowing is up by 22.5 per cent at record 88.54 lh.

The government has been banking on a higher mustard output to cool down edible oil prices in the country. Following 10.1 million tonnes (mt) mustard production in 2020-21, the government had set a target of 12.24 mt from an area of 75.8 lh for 2021-22. The total area under oilseeds reached 97.07 lh, up by 20.4 per cent.

According to the weekly update released by the Agriculture Ministry, all major mustard producers such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have reported significant ex-

pansion of the coverage under the oilseed. "We can expect a higher mustard crop in the coming months, which surely will have a softening effect on the (edible oil) prices," Union Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said December 30.

While the overall decline in wheat area is not much, it is significant in the sense that except Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the shift towards mustard is clear in all other major growing states - Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Bihar. The increase in Madhya Pradesh (by 0.56 lh) and Rajasthan (by 1.96 lh) may also be due to compilation error, experts said.

Winter-grown pulses

Overall winter-grown pulses acreage reached 152.62 lh, which is one per cent lower than 154.04 lh a year ago. The season's normal area (five-year average) is 146.14 lh, whereas

Slipping Wheat

(Area covered under rabi crops in lakh ha as on Dec 31)

Crops	This year	Last year
Wheat	325.88	329.11
Rice	14.05	15.05
Pulses	152.62	154.04
Gram	107.69	105.68
Lentil	16.76	16.49
Fieldpea	9.61	10.12
Kulthi	3.34	3.67
Urdbean	5.66	6.43
Coarse-cum-Nutri Cereals	45.05	46.19
Jowar	23.17	26.05
Maize	14.80	12.89
Barley	6.56	6.65
Oilseeds	97.07	80.64
Rapeseed & Mustard	88.54	72.30
Groundnut	3.64	3.66
Total Crops	634.68	625.04

Source: Agriculture Ministry



last year the acreage reached 167.38 lh. However, the area under gram and masur is higher from the year-ago period. Area under gram is up by two per cent at 107.69 lh and its likely to be near last year's coverage of 112 lh by the time sowing ends. Masur acreage, too, is up 1.7 per cent at 16.76 lh, but all other pulses such as urad, kulthi and fieldpeas have re-

ported a fall in acreage.

Among nutri-cereals or coarse cereals, the area under maize has started picking up after a long gap, with the coverage reaching 14.8 lh, up by 14.8 per cent from 12.89 lh a year ago. Barley is a tad lower at 6.56 lh from 6.65 lh year-ago, data show. Overall, coarse cereals acreage has dropped 2.5 per cent to 45.05 lh.

New trends emerge as wheat farmers switch to other crops

Besides mustard, growers are shifting to onion, garlic and potato in MP, Rajasthan

OUR BUREAU

Chennai, January 17

The latest sowing data on wheat show a drop in the coverage of the main rabi season crop. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the area under wheat this year is lower at 31.70 million hectares (mh) against 33.65 mh during the same period last year.

Among the 16-plus States that grow wheat, the area has increased in Assam, Bihar and Chhattisgarh only, while showing a drop in other States. (See table) This is just one side of the story on the sowing of wheat during this season. Probably, Madhya Pradesh is showing the way apart from Rajasthan, where farmers have switched over to mustard from wheat this year.

Positive shift

"In Madhya Pradesh, a positive shift is taking place with growers switching over to other crops from wheat. While farmers in areas where the availability of

water is a problem have sown mustard, in regions such as Ujjain and Dewas farmers are shifting to crops such as onion and garlic," said Anand Singha Anjana in the State's Ujjain district. "In some areas bordering forest areas like Dewas, farmers have shifted to chickpea (chana) from wheat. In other areas, farmers are growing onion and garlic," said Sunil Mukhan, a farmer from Rabihi village in the Dewas district.

"In parts of Western Uttar Pradesh, we hear farmers have shifted to potato from wheat and they will likely grow onion next year," said Jaikishore Singh, a farmer in the State's Chandauli district. Anjana says the new trend is because young farmers are now taking lands on lease to cultivate crops, particularly to make profits. "Also, farmers tend to get more by growing onion and gar-

lic," he said.

The per acre yield of wheat is nine quintals, whereas in the case of onion the yield is 25-30 quintals and in garlic, it is 80-100 quintals. "We have to depend on the government to sell our wheat and it is bought at the minimum support price (MSP). That is not the case with onion or garlic, though the latter's prices are ruling low now," the Ujjain farmer said. Uttar Pradesh's Singh said farmers have now begun to look beyond merely depending on the government's support for procurement under the MSP programme. This year, the Centre has increased the MSP for wheat to ₹2,015 a quintal from ₹1,975.

Favourable weather
In Maharashtra, unseasonal rains are likely to have a major impact on wheat production, according to farmers. Wheat tracts in Nashik, Dhule, and Nanded in North Maharashtra have been affected due to rains, which continued till last week. "So far, the weather has been favourable for wheat and any marginal drop in acreage is not going to have any impact," said DV Malhan, adviser, Roller Flour

Increasing mechanisation
"Farmers still have to follow the old farming system to grow wheat. But to either cultivate potato or onion or garlic, farmers can now use machines for sowing. They don't face problems even for spraying pesticide for these crops," he said, point-

ing out low mechanisation is catching up and changing the face of farming. In Bihar, on the other hand, there has been a shift to wheat from crops such as maize. "Farmers in Bihar have shifted to wheat from maize as rains delayed the sowing of the coarse cereal this year," said Suresh Singh Chauhan, General Manager, AMMO Foods Pvt Ltd. In Karnataka, the sowing of wheat is almost over. Sources said a marginal decline in Karnataka's area is on account of some farmers shifting to oilseeds such as safflower and sunflower, besides maize.

Exports buoy prices
Wheat prices have also been bul-

Wheat coverage in major States

(Area in lakh hectares)

States	Normal coverage	Normal area at this time of the year	Actual area during week ended Jan 15	2020-21	2019-20
Bihar	21.25	22.176	22.97	21.97	21.52
Gujarat	6.44	11.876	12.44	13.428	13.64
Haryana	25.32	25.208	23.87	25.21	25.08
Madhya Pradesh	58.65	69.724	90.54	91.68	78.07
Maharashtra	10.26	8.679	8.839	10.034	9.336
Punjab	35.11	35.078	35.02	35.22	35.20
Rajasthan	29.48	29.979	27.23	29.04	32.74
Uttar Pradesh	96.89	98.32	95.546	97.433	98.696
Total	303.86	316.99	340.478	340.737	338.697

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare

Millers Federation of India. Almost all stakeholders are unanimous in their view that the weather is conducive for the wheat crop this year and yield could perhaps make up for the drop in the area.

Uttar Pradesh's Singh said growing areas in his region received two spells of rains last month of which the second one was good. "These rains are very good for the crop and they are shaping up well," he said.

ing near MSP this season and it has swayed farmers in States such as Bihar. This fiscal, India has emerged as a major wheat exporter in the Asia-Pacific region resulting in open market prices rising. Rates are ruling above ₹1,900 a quintal compared with about ₹1,700 during the same period a year ago.

Despite the shift seen in some States, particularly in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, wheat production is expected to be above 100 mt this year too. Last season, wheat produc-

tion was estimated at a record 109.24 mt against 107.86 mt the previous season. "This year, too, there are chances of a 100 mt-plus wheat crop. We have to see how the weather unfolds since any adverse change in weather can impact the crop," said MK Duttaraj, Managing Director, Krishna Flour Mills.

"It is too early to comment on the crop expectations," said Pramod Kumar S, Senior Vice-President, Roller Flour Millers Federation of India. "The sowing is almost the same or marginally lower than last year. Soil moisture has been good, rains have been good, so far," he said. A scientist at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research said though current conditions (cloudy and humid) are suitable for yellow rust, there has been no report of any pest/attack on any wheat.

ies are yellow rust resistant," he said. Kumar said climatic conditions during February-April will hold the key for a good crop.

Stocks to dip?

Roller Flour Mills Federation's Malhan said "There will not be any concern on procurement even if production falls marginally. The government will also be happy if farmers shift from wheat to oilseeds since the Central Pool has surplus wheat," he said.

The USDA has projected that the FCY will have only 22 mt wheat stocks as of April, 2022, as the Centre has extended the distribution of foodgrains for poor families free of cost. On April 1 last year, FCY had a record 27.30 mt of wheat in its warehouses.

With inputs from Prothrusto Mishra, New Delhi; Vishwanath Kulkarni, Bengaluru; Rudreshwari Joshi, Pune; and Subrotojit Das, Mumbai, Chennai

Feb 5 new deadline to give feedback on GM food: FSSAI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

AFTER objection from several civil society groups, including RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has extended the deadline on draft regulations on GM food to February 5.

The previous deadline had ended on January 15.

There are several online petitions filed by civil society groups as well as one by SJM against the regulations.

Coalition for a GM-Free India, a consortium of several such groups, said the regulator has not committed to publish the draft regulations in vernacular languages, nor has it committed to holding widespread consultations, which were also

the demands being put forward by citizens.

"This limited-time extension is insufficient and insignificant. While it might be useful to some extent, this does not address what citizens have been asking for," the coalition contended.

"We object to the fact that the

regulator is ignoring what citizens are legitimately demanding. Citizens want to engage with these regulations being proposed by FSSAI, since there is a wide demand from people of India who want to keep their food GM-free."

The group pointed out to FSSAI that the draft regulations

are being rejected for a variety of reasons, and that the proposed regulations should be revised drastically, to ensure that FSSAI would be able to fulfill its statutory mandate, and to keep out GM foods from our food chain.

More than 50,000 citizens have so far signed these multiple letters, with the demand of keeping India GM-free being at

the centre of these efforts.

Incidentally, the maximum signatories are from Gujarat.

"We urge Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to intervene in this matter, and not leave this issue of great importance to only the regulatory body FSSAI, which has already failed citizens several times on this front," the coalition said in its statement.



BUSINESS LINE CHENNAI 1/1/2022

8-member panel to prepare syllabus for natural farming

Praveen Rao to head ICAR panel

OUR BUREAU

Hyderabad, December 31

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has appointed a national-level committee, headed by Praveen Rao, Vice-Chancellor of Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU).

The eight-member committee will hold discussions with stakeholders and prepare a syllabus for students of Under Graduate and Post Graduate students in various agricultural colleges and universities.

Committee members

The committee also comprises E Somasundaram, professor of agronomy at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU); S K Sharma (Director - Research at



Praveen Rao, Vice-Chancellor, PJTSAU

Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology); Ranveer Singh (Indian Veterinary Research Institute); and N Ravishankar, Principal Scientist (Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research).

The ICAR has decided to equip the students with knowledge and skills required to promote natural farming. This decision came close on the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocating for chemical-free farming.

ECONOMIC TIMES, KOLKATA 01-01-2022

Core Growth Slows to 9-Month Low in Nov

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India's core sector growth slipped to a nine-month low in November following a broad-based moderation in key infrastructure sectors and a sequential decline in output over October; data released by the commerce and industry ministry showed.

The index of eight core industries expanded 3.1% year-on-year in November compared with October's growth of 8.4%, revised from 7.5%. However, it contracted 4.1% month-on-month.

"Core sector growth deflated to a lower than expected 3.1% in November from the revised 8.4% in October, adding further evidence that the momentum slackened after the festive season amidst supply disruptions in parts of southern India related to heavy rainfall," said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

The index measures the output of eight sectors—coal, steel, cement, fertiliser, electricity, natural gas, refinery products and crude oil.

Fertiliser output rose 2.5% in November compared with 0.04% in October—the only sector with sequential growth as rabi sowing progressed. Coal output rose 8.2% year-on-year against 14.7% in October and 3.3% in November last year. Crude oil output contracted 2.2%, the same as in October. The production of natural gas increased 23.7% while refinery output expanded 4.3%. Electricity generation rose 1.5%.

Cement output slipped into contraction with a 3.2% decline from a year ago and the sharpest month-

CORE SLOWS

% GROWTH IN NOV (YoY)

Coal	8.2
Crude oil	-2.2
Natural Gas	23.7
Refinery Prods	4.3
Fertilizers	2.5
Steel	0.8
Cement	-3.2
Electricity	1.5
Total	3.1

Output declines in 6 of 8 infra sectors
Cement slips into contraction
Nov core sector contracts 4.1% month-on-month
 Nov IIP seen at 2.5%

on-month fall of 21.1%. Steel output grew a modest 0.8% from the same period last year, suggesting some slowdown in construction.

The core sector makes up 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), making it a lead indicator of industrial activity.

"With the considerable moderation in the core sector growth and the sequential decline in the GST e-way bills, we expect the IIP growth to flatten to under 2.5% in November, in spite of the low base (-1.6% in November 2020)," Nayar said.

When compared with pre-Covid (February 2020) levels, the output of coal, cement and electricity in November were lower.

Organic fertiliser to boost carbon content in soil

PARVEEN ARORA
 TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, JANUARY 5

On the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote zero budget natural farming, scientists of the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) here have started the production of an organic fertiliser, "Ghan Jeevaamrit", consisting of cow dung and urine of indigenous breed, water, jaggery, soil and gram flour.

NDRI Director Dr Manmohan Singh Chauhan claimed that it was a rich source of carbon which could increase the carbon content from 0.2 per cent to 0.9 per cent. The NDRI will also give training to interested farmers free of cost in coming days.

"It has been observed that due to excessive use of fertilisers the natural carbon content in the soil goes down to less than 0.2 per cent, which is not a good



Scientists of the NDRI with the organic fertiliser, 'Ghan Jeevaamrit' in Karnal on Wednesday. TRIBUNE PHOTO

'GHAN JEEVAAMRIT' PRODUCTION HAS BEGUN

The National Dairy Research Institute, here, have started the production of an organic fertiliser, "Ghan Jeevaamrit" consisting of cow dung and urine of indigenous breed, water, jaggery, soil and gram flour.

CARBON CONTENT GOES UP WITH ITS USE

It has been observed that due to excessive use of fertilisers the natural carbon content in the soil goes down to less than 0.2 per cent, which is not a

cent, which is not a good sign. By using this "Ghan Jeevaamrit" we have observed that it goes up to 0.9 per cent," the Director maintained while interacting with The Tribune after launching this fertiliser.

Not only this, it will also help in multiplication of beneficial microbes in the soil by manifolds, he added. The Prime Minister has given the call for zero budget natural farming recently, after which a team of scientists of NDRI led by Dr Ashutosh has started work on this project and now they

have produced the organic fertiliser, which will be available at Rs 10 per kg for the general public. "We have started the packing in both liquid and solid and will be available at NDRI," the Director maintained.

Dr Manmohan Singh Chauhan, DIRECTOR, NDRI

Dr Chauhan said it would also enhance the population of the earthworm soil which was ultimately useful in improving the nutritive value

of the soil, which further helped in the growth of plant.

"If farmers utilise it, with zero fertilizer input, the organic crops will be produced," said Dr Ashutosh.

"We mixed all ingredients together and kept them for eight to nine days for the multiplication of useful microbes," he added.

It is good for kitchen gardening also, he maintained.

HANS INDIA
HYDERABAD 4/1/2022

Agri sector registered high growth, says Kannababu

- Asserting that govt is committed to farmers' welfare, the agriculture minister says farming and allied sectors recorded 11.3% growth between 2019-'21
- Says Rythu Bharosa Kendras, which have been supporting farmers from supplying seeds to procuring produce, have become a role model for the entire country
- Attacks Oppn chief Chandrababu Naidu for carrying out 'misinformation campaign' on farming and shedding 'crocodile tears' to derive a political mileage



Agriculture Minister Kurasala Kannababu addressing a press conference at YSRCP Central Office in Tadepalli on Monday

Rythu Bharosa, free crop insurance, zero-interest loans to support the farmers in all phases.

The government credited Rs 19,813 crore into the accounts of farmers directly in the last 30 months under Rythu Bharosa alone benefiting over 50.58 lakh farmers. He said the entire country is showing interest in the RBK model, which is helping farmers from seed to sales, and so far over 158 RBKs were started in including in urban areas, giving a fillip to urban farmers.

The agriculture minister said that the state government has been procuring seven other crops in addition to the ones being procured by the Centre, and added that over Rs 36,000 crore paddy has been procured so far in the last three years.

He reminded that the previous TDP government had completely neglected the agriculture and allied sectors and even left arrears of thousand of crore, which are now being cleared by Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

He said that the government is also taking strict measures for quality control by establishing agri testing labs, where cases are getting registered for selling spurious seeds and fake fertilisers. He slammed opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu for allegedly misleading farmers by spreading 'false information' against the government.

He said that it was Naidu who neglected agriculture during his rule, and has been shedding crocodile tears for farmers to gain political mileage. He said

pared to other states.

He said that the state growth rate was only at 6.3 per cent during 2017-19, but with the efforts put in by the Chief Minister, it increased to 11.3 per cent, becoming a role model to other states. While the growth in horticulture output is 12.3 per cent from a mere 4.7 per cent under previous government, milk production set a new record at 11.7 per cent from 1.4 per cent earlier, as the state government made a pact with Amul and initiated Palavelluva scheme. Similarly, the growth in meat production touched 10.3 per cent from minus 6.7 percent, while the crop insurance implementation scored 26.1 per cent growth.

Kannababu said the state gov-

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

REITERATING that the state government is committed to the welfare of farmers, agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu said that Andhra Pradesh stood first in the Good Governance Index ranking in Agriculture and Allied Sectors by registering a growth rate of 11.3 per cent between 2019-21.

Speaking to the media at YSRCP central office at Tadepalli on Monday, the minister said that the state government has been supporting farmers from supplying seeds to procurement of agriculture gr Pradesh

Pepper Farms raises \$1 m in seed funding

AGRITECH START-UP Pepper Farms has raised \$1 million from investors to grow its business. The start-up helps farmers organise vegetable production lifecycle starting with plantations until harvest and sales. In a statement, Pepper Farms said it has secured \$1 million in a seed funding round led by AxilorVentures and Himanshu Aggarwal, co-founder of Aspiring Minds.

DECCAN CHRONICLE HYDERABAD 13/01/2022

CM asks PM to rein in fertiliser prices

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 12

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Wednesday appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on behalf of crores of farmers in the country to ensure that the cost of fertilisers were maintained at the present level and additional cost, if any, should be absorbed by the Centre so that farmers were not burdened.

In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said, "By raising fertiliser prices, increasing fuel prices and faulty fixa-

tion of MSP (minimum support price) for crops, the Centre is not only contributing to increase in the cost of cultivation of farmers but also defaulting on the promise of doubling farmers' income by 2022."

These policies coupled with the threat of proposed reforms in the agriculture electricity distribution sector by fixing power consumption meters were causing great deal of anxiety to the hardworking farmers of the country, the Chief Minister noted.

■ Page 2: Centre doubled all input costs for farming: KCR

BUSINESS LINE N.D 7/1/202

Anti-GMO activists ask FSSAI to extend deadline

KV KURMANATH

Hyderabad, January 6

The Coalition for a GM-Free India has asked the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to extend the deadline to submit the feedback on the draft regulations on GM (genetically modified) foods.

Stating that there are several missing links in the draft guidelines, it alleged that there was no mention on reg-

ulating the crucial aspect of GM feed. It felt that there was no provision for a long-term, comprehensive and independent testing regime.

It asked the FSSAI to offer the draft guidelines in all the vernacular languages so that people from different parts of the country can understand the guidelines and respond. The deadline for submitting feedback ends on January 15.

"The FSSAI has taken so long

to prepare the guidelines and come out with draft guidelines. It can wait for some more time to make it comprehensive and inclusive," Kavitha Kuruganti said.

Kapil Shah of Jatan Trust said ensuring safe and wholesome food is not being addressed with these draft regulations, especially given that there is enough scientific evidence on the adverse impacts of GM foods".

BUSINESS STANDARD MUMBAI 08/01/2022

Centre doubled all input costs for farming, says KCR

From Page 1

Reminding the announcement made by the BJP-led government at the Centre in February 2016 that it would double the farmers' income in six years by 2022, the Chief Minister said, "Despite passage of over five years, no specific or structured programme has been initiated towards this direction."

Contrary to the policy of doubling farmers' income, to the dismay of one and all, input costs were doubled in the last five years due to which the income of farmers had further declined causing distress to farmers, the Chief Minister added.

"The Centre has turned a blind eye to the increasing prices of fertilisers in the last six years while encouraging the states to take up campaigns to reduce urea and DAP consumption. It is sad to note that the prices of two most consumed fertilisers 28.28.0 and MoP (muriate of potash) have increased by more than 50 per cent and 100 per cent respectively in the last 90 days," the Chief Minister pointed out.

Rao found fault with the Centre in choosing to pass on the burden to farmers instead of bearing the increasing import costs of raw materials and maintaining the prices of fertilisers at an affordable level.

"You are also aware that the fuel consumption in the agriculture sector has increased manifold due to promotion of farm mechanisation by states. Even in the case of petrol/diesel prices, indiscriminate imposi-

tion of cess across the board despite no increase in import price of crude oil has added great distress to farmers. Due to the faulty policies of the Centre in fuel and fertilisers pricing, farmers are bearing the brunt," the Chief Minister told Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his letter.

All these steps were causing great deal of anxiety to farmers that the seven-decade old fertiliser subsidy regime under the purview of the Centre was being modified against the interests of the farming community of India, the Chief Minister opined.

Rao stated that the Centre's claim that MSP for crops was pegged at 150 per cent of the costs of crop was misleading.

"While accepting Prof MS Swaminathan headed National Commission on Farmers' recommendations to peg MSP for farm produce at 50 per cent more than the weighted average cost of production, essential costs of farm rentals and cost of fixed capital assets were deliberately excluded while calculating the cost of crop to farmers," he said.

Further, apart from announcing MSP and procuring small quantities of crops, the Centre had no reliable mechanism of ensuring price guarantee to farmers for their crops. It was also noticed that under the guise of pegging FAQ standards at global levels, farmers were denied MSP prices and compelled to sell at lower prices, thereby making agriculture non-remunerative, the Chief Minister added.

Agri sector leads the recovery trail with 3.9% increase in FY22

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE
New Delhi, 7 January

Agriculture and allied activities are estimated to grow at 3.9 per cent in FY22, up from 3.6 per cent in the last fiscal, according to the first advance estimates of national income released on Friday.

In current prices, growth is estimated to be 9.1 per cent in FY22, up from 6.6 per cent during the same period last year. This translates into an inflation impact of around 9.1 per cent.

The impact, which is sometimes referred to by some economists as a proxy of farmers' income in the absence of real-time data, was 6.6 per cent in FY21.

The gross value added (GVA) in agriculture and allied activities in FY22 is slightly higher than the long-term average for the sector which is 3-4 per cent. It is also greater than most economists' expectations.

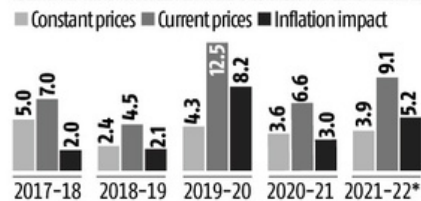
Considering that the farm sector registered a strong growth of 3.6 per cent in the pandemic-hit FY21, an expected growth of 3.9 per cent on top of that also shows the resilience of the sector. The first advance estimate of national income is based on the first advance estimate of crop production, which primarily comprises the kharif harvest. This is an indicator of higher growth in the full year and could also mean that the government expects the coming rabi harvest to be good.

"This number (3.9 per cent) for GVA is slightly higher than our expectations because we were expecting growth in FY22 to be around 3.5 per cent. This could also mean that the rabi harvest may be better than expected. Crop is just around 60 per cent of the total agriculture GVA while the allied sector comprises the rest," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Bank of Baroda, told *Business Standard*.

According to the Centre's first advance estimate of agriculture production released in September 2021 for the 2021-22 season (July-



REAPING BENEFITS
GVA of agriculture and allied activities (in percentages)



*First Advance Estimates of National Income
Source: Government of India

June), India's foodgrain production is likely to touch a record 150.5 million tonnes in the kharif season. Oilseeds production was estimated to be 23.39 million tonnes, 2.66 per cent less than last year, but pulses situation was relatively better as production of kharif pulses was expected to be at 9.45 million tonnes. This was 8.74 per cent more than last year.

However, experts said that much should not be read into the initial production estimates of pulses and oilseeds as the final harvest may go down in subsequent estimates when the crop starts hitting the market in full steam.

In the rabi season, latest data showed that, till January 7, rabi crops have been planted in around 65.21 million hectares, which is 0.59 million hectares more than last year.

BUSINESS LINE N.D 7/1/2022

Anti-GMO activists ask FSSAI to extend deadline

KV KURMANATH
Hyderabad, January 6

The Coalition for a GM-Free India has asked the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to extend the deadline to submit the feedback on the draft regulations on GM (genetically modified) foods.

Stating that there are several missing links in the draft guidelines, it alleged that there was no mention on reg-

ulating the crucial aspect of GM feed. It felt that there was no provision for a long-term, comprehensive and independent testing regime.

It asked the FSSAI to offer the draft guidelines in all the vernacular languages so that people from different parts of the country can understand the guidelines and respond. The deadline for submitting feedback ends on January 15.

"The FSSAI has taken so long

to prepare the guidelines and come out with draft guidelines. It can wait for some more time to make it comprehensive and inclusive," Kavitha Kuruganti said.

Kapil Shah of Jatan Trust said ensuring safe and wholesome food is not being addressed with these draft regulations, especially given that there is enough scientific evidence on the adverse impacts of GM foods".

Millets improve growth in kids: Study

STATE BUREAU

Sangareddy

Researchers studying the nutritional benefits of millets have found that these 'smart foods' can boost growth in children and adolescents by 26 to 39 per cent when they replace rice in standard meals. The results suggest that millets can significantly contribute to overcoming malnutrition.

The study was published in the journal 'Nutrients' and is a review and meta-analysis of eight prior published studies. It was undertaken by seven organisations in four countries and was led by Dr S Anitha, Senior Scientist-Nutrition at the International Crops Research Institute of the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). "These results are attributable to the naturally high nutrient content of millets that exhibit high amounts of growth promot-

Increase of 28% in height, 26% in weight, and 37% in chest circumference was noted among children fed with millet-based meals during the study

ing nutrients, especially total protein, sulphur containing amino acids, and calcium in the case of finger millets," said Dr Anitha.

Infants, preschool and school going children as well as adolescents were part of the review. Five of the studies in the review used finger millet, one used sorghum and two used a mixture of millets (finger, pearl, foxtail, little and kodo millets). Among the children fed millet-based meals, a relative increase of 28.2 per cent in mean height, 26 per cent in weight, 39 per cent in the mid upper arm circumference and 37 per cent in chest circumference was noted when compared to children on regular rice-

based diets. The children studied consumed millets over 3 months to four-and-a-half years.

"These findings provide evidence that nutrition intervention programmes can be developed and adapted to increase diversity in meals using millets, and thus to improve the nutritional content, including in school feeding and mother and child programmes," said Dr Jacqueline Hughes, Director General, ICRISAT. The author of the study, Dr Hemalatha, Director at India's National Institute of Nutrition, said that implementing millet-based meals required menus to be designed for different age groups utilising tasty recipes.

"This should also be complemented with awareness and marketing campaigns to generate an understanding and interest in millets" said Dr Hemalatha. The studies were undertaken in India and based on standard rice-based meals. The researchers also studied meals enhanced with more diversity including vegetables, fruits, dairy and staples, which resulted in minimal additional growth from replacing rice with millets.

"Millets are a basket of a wide range of nutrients and this growth study is part of four years of work among numerous organizations around the world who partnered to undertake a series of scientific studies on the major health claims of millets, to test the scientific credibility," noted Professor Ian Givens, a study author and Director, Institute for Food, Nutrition and Health, University of Reading, UK.

Encourage farmers to use chemical-free fertilisers: PM

Modi says while interacting with BJP workers from Varanasi

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 18 JANUARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with BJP workers from his parliamentary constituency Varanasi and urged them to make farmers aware of the use of chemical-free fertilisers.

In an audio interaction with BJP booth level workers, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the BJP's commitment towards development. While interacting with party workers, he discussed several topics including, restoration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham corridor, women empowerment, infrastructure, healthcare development and other issues.

Interacting with one of the



BJP workers, Prime Minister Modi asked him to expand the reach of the government's welfare schemes to farmers. The Prime Minister said, "They (workers) should make farmers aware of the

use of chemical-free fertilisers."

The Prime Minister, also, talked about the several central schemes which are benefiting the people of Kashi at large. Prime Minister Modi urged people to contribute to a section, Kamal Pushp, in his NaMo app that features some inspiring party members.

"The NaMo App has a very interesting section known as 'Kamal Pushp' that gives you the opportunity to share and know about inspiring party workers," he said.

The Prime Minister further talked about the BJP's special micro-donation campaign, seeking to raise funds through small contributions from its members and others.

It is learnt that about 10,000 BJP workers participated in the interaction.

It will be the first interaction of the Prime Minister with the party workers after the announcement of Assembly poll dates in five states.

It will also be the first virtual address with the party workers after the Election Commission of India (ECI) banned physical rallies and road shows till January 15 while announcing the poll dates. On January 15, the ECI extended the ban on the physical rallies and road shows till January 22.

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls will be held in seven phases in February-March starting from February 10. Counting of votes will be held on March 10.

HT MINT, ND 07-01-2022

'India will safeguard agri, dairy sectors while negotiating FTAs'

The govt will not compromise on the interests of key sectors during trade talks, say officials

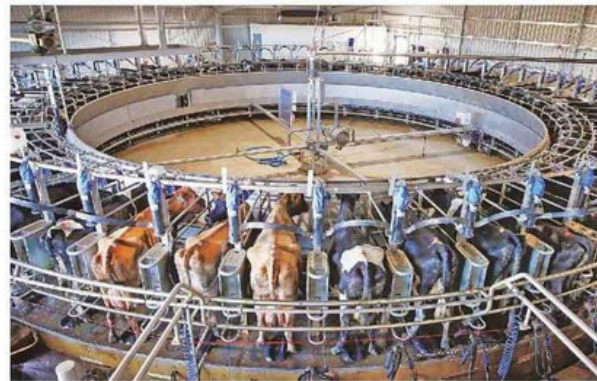
Rajeev Jayaswal
letters@hindustantimes.com
NEW DELHI

India will safeguard the interests of its farm, dairy and fishery sectors while finalizing multilateral or bilateral trade deals, including talks at the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as ongoing bilateral trade negotiations with countries such as Australia, said two government officials aware of the trade negotiations.

New Delhi's stand at all multilateral and bilateral fora has been consistent and explicitly clear for a developing and populous country such as India; food security of the underprivileged is of paramount importance as is the protection of the interests of the three sectors, the officials said requesting anonymity.

"India is committed to protecting its agriculture sector. This was evident from the prime minister's last-minute decision on 4 November 2019 to exit the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), despite it being one of the biggest trade blocs," one of the two officials said.

"Whether negotiating free-trade agreements (FTAs) with individual countries or at the WTO, the government will keep Indian interests first. Certain sectors, such as public procurement for food security, agricul-



The apprehension about ongoing negotiations of the FTA with Australia involving imports of dairy and agriculture products is incorrect, an official said. BLOOMBERG

ture, dairy and fisheries, are sensitive and the government will not compromise with it at any cost," the official said.

New Delhi walked out of RCEP as it

be detrimental to the health of India's dairy industry, he added.

RCEP covers 30% of the world's population, contributing \$25.8 trillion or about 30% of global gross domestic product, and accounting for \$12.7 trillion or a little over a quarter of global goods and services trade. The 10-member RCEP includes Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

The apprehension about ongoing negotiations of the FTA with Australia involving imports of dairy and agriculture products is incorrect, the second official said. "It is clarified that negotiations have focused

entirely on mutually beneficial items of trade, and India has not made any offer at all in these (dairy or agriculture) sectors to Australia," the official said.

The official was reacting to a tweet by Bhartiya Kisan Union's national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait on Saturday alleging that India will be signing a deal with Australia, which will allow milk imports at ₹20-22 per litre, much lower than the retail price of locally-produced milk, at ₹50-60 a litre.

"There is no proposal for any duty concession on the import of dairy products into India with Australia under consideration with the department of animal husbandry and dairying," Parshottam Rupala, Union minister for fisheries, animal husbandry and dairy, said in a tweet in Hindi on Tuesday.

"Regarding dairy, India has already opened up some sub-sectors in its trade in goods agreement with Asean and comprehensive agreements with Japan and Korea. However, Indian companies are not able to export to key markets like the UK, EU and Australia, and they face almost an entry ban as they are not able to meet the export requirements," said Arpita Mukherjee, professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations. "There is a strong lobby in India, which is against reducing tariff through trade agreements on imports from the UK, EU, Australia. However, this is not the view of all companies, which use dairy as an ingredient in processing, and would like this sector to have lower duties on ingredients for processing," she added.

TRADE TALKS

THE negotiations include talks at the WTO as well as ongoing trade talks with Australia

NEGOTIATIONS with Australia have focused on mutually beneficial items of trade, an official said

INDIA has not made any offer at all in these (dairy or agriculture) sectors to Australia, he added

realized that the deal could flood the Indian market with Chinese goods at the cost of the local industry, while cheaper imports of milk derivatives from Australia and New Zealand would

System loopholes may weaken organic exports

India needs to strictly adhere to standards to achieve potential: Experts

PRABHUDATTA MISHRA
New Delhi, January 11

With the European Union blacklisting five Indian organic certification agencies and concerns being raised over the country's process, India's organic exports may not achieve a 10-fold increase in next five years unless the Union government takes stringent measures to ensure quality, according to experts.

According to a report by US Department of Agriculture (USDA), India's organic products market - food and beverages, health and wellness, beauty and personal care and textiles - are estimated to grow to \$10.1 billion by 2026, s against \$1.04 bil-

lion in 2020-21. However, challenges related to India's organic control system and increased incidences of fraud continue to impact the credibility of India's organic sector, and its exports, according to the report released in September 2021.

Problems aplenty

More than 50 per cent of organic exports from India go to the US. "We lost our organic recognition from USDA last year. In ethylene oxide (ETO) issue, five organic certification agencies from India were de-recognised by European Commission. There are more problems in the store and it is a bummer of India's organic ag-



Challenges related to India's organic control system and increased incidences of fraud continue to impact the credibility of India's organic sector and its exports

riculture," said S Chandrasekaran, a foreign trade analyst. Having a huge pool of localized agriculture graduates across the country, government should develop "competent person" model, using Skill India and Digital India, said Chandrasekaran.

"In the long-term, creation of a Natural and Organic Agriculture Promotion Board

to perform focused and large scale activities should be the road map," he said.

The problem with regard to organic certification is that loopholes in the system are taken advantage of by unscrupulous elements.

This is one of the reason why some of the export consignments did not conform to ETO norms, resulting the

EU issuing quite a few rapid alerts against Indian shipments.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEEDA) in October last year had derecognised five firms by suspending accreditation to Aditi Organic Certification for a year and banning four others - CU Inspections India, ECOCERT India, Indian Organic Certification Agency (Indocert) and OneCert International - from registering any new organic processor or exporter for organic products certification.

Blockchain system

The action followed after some shipments cleared by them failed to meet the norms for ethylene oxide (ETO) presence, which was also flagged by the European

Commission.

"The biggest challenge in organic products marketing is assured product integrity. Without traceability and use of blockchain technology it will be very difficult to win consumer confidence," said Vijay Sardana, a food policy expert. All laboratories and certification companies must be part of blockchain system to avoid fake certificates and test report, Sardana said adding without tough measures, reliability cannot be ensured.

As many as 44 per cent (or 2.32 million) of the world's certified organic farmers are from India, the highest in the world. Still, India's total certified organic area is about 2.3 million hectares, as against world's total area of 72.3 million hectares, according to USDA.

MIRROR, MUMBAI 11-01-2022

Green filter to detox crops

IISc team awarded for developing eco-friendly filter for chemical fertilisers



Poisoning by organophosphates found in pesticides can lead to acute health problems such as hyperactivity, lethargy and cancer

Garima Prasher
mybangaloremirror@timesgroup.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

A team from Indian Institute of Science (IISc) recently won the International Genetically Engineered (iGEM) competition for developing an 'eco-friendly' filter, which can be used to remove harmful chemical compounds found in insecticides.

The bacterial cellulose-based filter, CellOPHane, is designed to combat organophosphate, a harmful compound found in pesticides. "CellOPHane employs a bacterial cellulose sheet coated with enzymes that breaks down organophosphates into harmless products. Besides this, CellOPHane is all about a modular plug-n-play filter, which can be used as a platform to design other enzyme-based bioremediation strategies without any changes in the basic structure," said Sukriyo Chakraborty, team leader of iGEM team at IISc.

Organophosphates in the pesticides kill insect and pests by acting as potent neurotoxins and inhibiting the normal functioning of the nervous system. Although these chemical compounds degrade under

natural conditions, their residues are often detected in soil, sediments and water, as it seeps into the water bodies through agricultural run-off.

The neurotoxic activity of organophosphates is not limited to pests. Once consumed by humans or other animals unintentionally through food and water, they exert similar effects on the human nervous system. This poisoning by organophosphates can lead to acute health problems such as hyperactivity, lethargy and even cancer.

The team decided to take up this project due to its harmful health impacts and prevalence in many agricultural products such as tea, sugars, vegetables, and fruits throughout India. "We were looking at a project that will have synthetic biology approaches and we wanted to alleviate the problem of organophosphate poisoning. While organophosphate toxicity has been exceedingly alarming, other chemical or biological methods to filter such harmful compounds are either highly expensive or are not feasible to implement at large scale. Project CellOPHane was aimed at addressing this void in efforts to tackle organophosphate pollution by creating a novel and eco-friendly filter," said Sukriyo.

CellOPHane can be used to design enzyme-based bioremediation strategies without any changes in the basic structure

—Sukriyo Chakraborty, IISc

When organophosphate laden water passes through the micro diameter channels of the filter, it gets degraded into much less harmful compounds. These compounds can then be converted into naiver forms. With further marginal treatment, the resultant compounds can be converted into fertilisers.

The team believes that CellOPHane will not only be effective but will also be friendly to nature and biodiversity. This eco-friendly filter can be used in natural reserves, natural aqua parks, water tanks or other water bodies also where maintaining water quality, as well as biodiversity, is a priority. It is believed that the filter might also find application in the medical field. Since it can filter organophosphate, it can be used in the hemodialysis machines to treat patients who self-harm using this chemical.

Farmer produces special tomato variety through organic farming

FP NEWS SERVICE
Jabalpur

A local farmer has produced a special variety of tomatoes called cherry tomatoes through organic farming.

According to reports, the special tomatoes are worth Rs 400 to Rs 600 a kg and can be grown round the year. The tomato has a huge demand not only in the state or country but also in foreign countries.

The farmer, Ambika Pa-

tel, is supplying it to various cities in the state for last several years. Patel said that he undertook extensive research to grow tomatoes in organic way. During his research, he took different varieties of tomatoes, in which he found the cherry tomato to be the most useful.

Patel said cherry tomato can be called hybrid tomato or vitamin rich tomato. These tomatoes can also be grown in polyhouse during rainy days and usually its

use increase when the arrival of normal tomatoes stops.

"The cultivation of cherry tomatoes is not difficult task. It can also be easily grown. The are small in size and have sour taste in comparison to normal tomatoes and rich in vitamins," Patel said.

Patel also said that the packing of the cherry tomatoes were performed in a special way just like grapes. It used to be handled with utmost care, Patel added.

मप्र के कृषि विश्वविद्यालय ने विकसित की जई, गेहूं, चावल की नई किस्में

भाषा। जबलपुर

मध्य प्रदेश के जबलपुर में शासकीय कृषि विश्वविद्यालय ने जई, गेहूं, चावल और रामतिल (नाइजर) फसल की नई किस्में विकसित की हैं। ए किस्में अन्य राज्यों में भी उत्पादन के लिए उपयुक्त हैं। एक अधिकारी ने शनिवार को यह जानकारी दी। विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति डॉ पी के बिसेन ने कहा कि जवाहरलाल नेहरू कृषि विश्वविद्यालय (जेएनकेवीवी) ने जई और गेहूं की दो किस्में, चावल की एक और रामतिल (नाइजर) की तीन किस्में विकसित की हैं। इन किस्मों को केंद्र द्वारा उत्पादन के लिए उपयुक्त होने के रूप में अधिसूचित किया गया है उन्होंने बताया कि केंद्रीय कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्रालय ने इस संबंध में तीन जनवरी को गजट



अधिसूचना जारी की है। बिसेन ने कहा, इन नई किस्मों के बीज शीघ्र ही किसानों को उपलब्ध कराए जाएंगे। इससे फसलों का गुणवत्तापूर्ण उत्पादन सुनिश्चित होगा और किसान को अधिक आय होगी। जेएनकेवीवी

में अनुसंधान सेवाओं के निदेशक डॉ जी के कौटू ने कहा कि नई किस्मों का तीन साल तक परीक्षण विभिन्न कृषि जलवायु में विभिन्न राज्यों में किया गया। उन्होंने कहा कि अनाज की उच्च उपज, रोगों का प्रतिरोध,

अनाज की अच्छी गुणवत्ता और कम अवधि की फसल जैसे कई वांछनीय गुणों का संयोजन इन नई किस्मों में है। उन्होंने कहा कि जई के दो नई किस्मों में से जेओ 05-304 महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात, छत्तीसगढ़, मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान में उत्पादन के लिए उपयुक्त है, जबकि जेओ 10-506 का उत्पादन ओडिशा, बिहार, झारखंड, उत्तर प्रदेश के पूर्वी क्षेत्र, असम और मणिपुर में किया जा सकता है। उन्होंने कहा कि गेहूं की नई किस्में-एमपी 1323 और एमपी 1358 और चावल जेआर 10 मध्य प्रदेश के विशिष्ट क्षेत्रों में उगाई जा सकती हैं।

कौटू ने कहा कि नाइजर (रामतिल) की तीन किस्में - जेएनएस 521, जेएनएस 2015-9 और जेएनएस 2016-1115 मध्य प्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ के सिंचित और असिंचित क्षेत्रों के लिए उपयुक्त हैं।

Biological pesticides are mandatory along with chemical pesticides

Important decision of the Department of Agriculture for Green Revolution

Mul (Prakash Chalakh): Chemical pesticides are being used in large quantities in the fields day by day and it is having serious effects on human life. The Department of Agriculture has taken an important step to prevent such losses in the future by forcing the agricultural centers in the district to sell some quantity of biological pesticides along with chemical pesticides which will be of great benefit to the farmers in the agricultural sector. Pest control with the help of natural enemies or with the help of a biological principle is commonly called biological pest control. Toxic chemicals are widely used to kill pests. Excessive use of toxic chemicals pollutes the air, water, sea and food environment and causes great harm to human beings. Various biological methods of pest control have been



developed to prevent this damage. Agricultural inputs sellers are selling large quantities of chemical pesticides and the sale of organic pesticides is negligible. Agricultural center operators sell large quantities of chemical pesticides to farmers. Accidents are happening in some places as farmers are unaware of chemical pesticides. The use of chemical pesticides has also caused huge losses to farmers. In contrast, the use of biological pesticides has no side effects. It has been proven that there is no adverse effect on environment, crops, human life. But due to non-availability of biological pesticides, farmers are dependent on chemical pesticides. The daily recommendations of the

university include the use of biological pesticides for pests and diseases. Even so, agricultural inputs sellers are always selling expensive chemicals and pesticides to farmers. This leads to a huge increase in the basic planting cost of the farmers. Their net profit results in lower yields. Biological pesticides are environmentally friendly and help increase the number of friendly insects. All sellers of agricultural inputs in the taluka should be required to keep at least 10% of the annual turnover of organic pesticides in their shops and instructions should be given at their level to sell it to the farmers. Vendors who do not comply with these instructions should immediately submit action proposals to this office. Also, a monthly sales report for each seller should be taken separately. Otherwise action will be taken as per

section 14 of the Pesticides Act 1968 and section 31 of the Fertilizer Control Order 1985. Letter Sr.No.114/22 Dated 11/01/2022 Office of District Superintendent Agriculture Officer Chandrapur has been informed by letter. The widespread use of chemical pesticides in the field is a matter of concern. The use of chemical pesticides needs to be reduced if green revolution is to take place. Agricultural centers are being required to keep at least ten per cent of the annual turnover of organic pesticides. Thirty-one selected agricultural centers have been selected in the district. The availability and use of organic pesticides will definitely improve the economic livelihood of the farmers, said Mr. Barhate District Agriculture Officer while talking to Nagpur Post correspondent.

● **AGRI MINISTRY DATA**

Rabi sowing marginally up

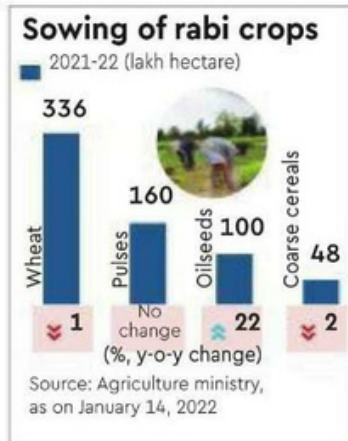
FE BUREAU
New Delhi, January 14

THE SOWING OF rabi crops, mostly consisting of wheat, pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals, for the current season (2021-22) has largely been completed with the total sown area reported to be marginally higher than the previous year.

The total area under all the rabi crops rose to 664 lakh hectare (lh) in 2021-22 season compared to 656 lh reported in the corresponding period of 2020-21 season, according to data released by the agriculture ministry on Friday.

Despite the increase in acreage this year, sowing of wheat and coarse cereals has been reported to be marginally lower. However, the agriculture ministry stated that sowing window available for wheat crop is for another few days.

Wheat has been sown in 336 lh as on Friday, compared with 340 lh in the year ago



period. About 1% drop in sowing of wheat is attributed to the delay in withdrawal of south-west monsoon rain last year. There was less area under wheat crop in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. Sowing of rabi (winter) crops like wheat begins in October and harvesting from April onwards.

Officials say that lower sowing of wheat is not a cause of concern as at present the Food

Corporation of India (FCI) has more than 32 million tonne (MT) of wheat stocks against the buffer norm of 21.41 MT on January 1. India achieved a record wheat production of 122 MT in the 2020-21 crop year.

The winter pulses such as chana, moong and urad have been planted in 160 lh this year so far which is at the same level compared to last year. However, sowing of chana, which had close to 47% share in India's pulses production of 25.72 MT in 2020-21, has been marginally higher at close to 112 lh this year compared to 2021.

The sowing of oilseeds such as mustard, groundnut and sunflower rose sharply by more than 22% to 100 lh as on Friday from 82 lh reported a year back. The sowing of mustard so far has increased by 23% to close to 90 lh compared to close to 73 lh reported a year ago.

Official sources said higher oilseeds sowing would help meet domestic edible oil

demand and reduce import dependence. India imports around 60% of domestic edible oil requirement while the retail prices have risen sharply in the last few months because of rise in global prices.

There was lower coverage under coarse-cum-nutri cereals as the total sown area has been lower at 48 lh so far as against 49 lh reported in the previous year. Meanwhile, the farmers' cooperative Nafed has commenced procurement of tur or arhar (kharif crop) from farmers in Karnataka under Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations. Nafed has set a tur procurement target of 7 lakh tonne for current year (2021-22). The procurement of Chana by Nafed would commence in March, 2022.

FCI, in collaboration with state government agencies, would commence procurement of wheat from April 1 in key producing states including Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Over 11 MT FCI silos to be built through PPP mode

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, January 18

IN A BID to attract investment into India's food grain storage infrastructure from big corporate entities, the food ministry has approved a policy which encourages the private players to bid for construction of 249 state-of-art silos with close to 11 million tonne (MT) wheat storage capacity for the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

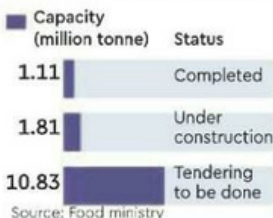
The silos will be built across 12 states, including Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Kerala, over the next four to five years through the public-private partnership (PPP) model with an estimated investment of ₹9,200 crore.

The FCI will use the silos for storage of wheat through a lease of thirty years with private entities. As per the tender document, fixed storage charges to be paid by the FCI to private entities based on a per tonne per year basis are the bidding parameters. This fixed charge escalates by 70% of the wholesale price index and 30% of the consumer price index.

Sources told *FE* that 'through bundling of projects' the food ministry has removed an earlier clause which used to restrict large private players or consortium from participating in bidding for a number of projects for construction of silos.

Officials say that upper ceiling for bidding by any single entity or consortium for con-

FCI wheat silos via PPP



struction of silos was 15% of the locations or the storage capacity. They added that by allowing private players to bid for multiple projects would attract 'serious' investors into

construction of silos in the country. Currently, the bid documents have been finalised for construction of silos by FCI and sent to the food ministry.

Based on the recommendation of a high-level committee for restructuring of FCI, chaired by former food minister Shanta Kumar, in 2014, an action plan for construction of 10 MT capacity wheat silos through private sector investment was approved by the food ministry in 2016.

So far, silos with more than 1.11 MT wheat storage capacity have been created in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Bihar and Assam at 22 locations. Currently, 36 silos with 1.81 MT capacity is being constructed through

PPP by 13 different bidders in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar and West Bengal.

For the first time, two rice silos with a combined storage capacity of 25,000 tonne are currently being built at Buxar and Kaimur in Bihar by private entities for FCI on a pilot basis.

Food ministry officials say that if food grains are stored in silos and transported in bulk, losses due to theft, pilferage and transportation would be negligible compared to the food grains stored in warehouses. FCI stores around 55 MT to 85 MT of rice and wheat at any given point of time. Silos ensure better preservation of food grains and enhances its shelf-life.

'India needs Green Revolution 2.0 to make agri more climate-resistant, sustainable'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai, January 17

INDIA NEEDS A second green revolution along with the next generation of reforms with a view to make agriculture more climate-resistant and environmentally sustainable, said an RBI article on farm sector challenges.

Observing that Indian agriculture has exhibited remarkable resilience during the Covid-19 period, the article said "new emerging challenges warrant a second green revolution along with next-generation reforms".

Despite the success in terms of production that has ensured food security in the

country, food inflation and its volatility remain a challenge, which requires supply-side interventions such as higher public investment, storage infrastructure and promotion of food processing, said the article titled 'Indian Agriculture: Achievements and Challenges'.

The article said Indian agriculture scaled new heights with record production of various foodgrains, commercial and horticultural crops, exhibiting resilience and ensuring food security during the COVID-19 period.

"The sector, however, confronted various challenges, mitigation of which requires a

holistic policy approach," it said.

For instance, crop productivity in India is much lower than other advanced and emerging market economies due to various factors, like fragmented landholdings, lower farm mechanisation and lower public and private investment in agriculture.

Second, the article said the current overproduction of crops like rice, wheat and sugarcane, has led to rapid depletion of the ground-water table, soil degradation and massive air pollution raising questions about the environmental sustainability of current agricultural practices in India.

AI keeps cotton pest-free

State IT Dept plays crucial role in improving yield and increase farmers' income

S SANDEEP KUMAR
Hyderabad

This Kharif season, cotton crops cultivated in the State fetched whopping prices, ranging from Rs 8,800 per quintal to Rs 9,100 per quintal. And, in some places, it even fetched a record Rs 10,000 per quintal.

Not many may know that the State IT Department played a crucial role in improving cotton yield for farmers in many villages. During Kharif 2021, the department conducted an Artificial Intelligence-based pilot project for pest management in cotton in six districts, including Karimnagar, Nagarkurnool,



During Kharif 2021, State IT Department conducted pilot project for pest management in cotton in six districts.

Nalgonda, Khammam, Wanaparthy and Mahabubabad.

Under the project, the department, in partnership with the Wadhwani Institute of AI, deployed AI solu-

tion at the field level. Cotton farmers in over 2,800 villages were identified to be included in the project. The AI-based solution enabled cotton farmers to identify pest attacks, particularly

Pink Bollworm, in the early stages and initiate corrective measures accordingly to prevent crop damage. All these measures helped farmers in improving the quality of yield and eventually increase their incomes, an official from the Emerging Technologies wing of the department told 'Telangana Today'.

As part of the project, officials captured images of the plants in various stages. The images were then scanned in the system to assess any pest infestation, the official explained. Based on symptoms like leaf colour change and stem colour change, the algorithm identifies the pest. (SEE PAGE 2)

German firm withdraws from organic certification

LACON dubs EU regulations 'increasingly unclear and arbitrary'

SUBRAMANI RA MANCOMBU

Chennai, January 23

One of the leading organic certification agencies in Europe, LACON GmbH, has decided to withdraw from certification in third countries, including India, temporarily in view of the changes in the European Union's Organic Farming Regulation.

In a statement issued on Thursday from its headquarters in Offenburg in Germany, LACON, which has an Indian subsidiary LACON Quality Certification (India), said it was withdrawing from certification in third countries as the conditions for "organic regulations" were changing.



Indian organic products have come under increased scrutiny from the EU in the recent past

Forced to change course

LACON, which has over 30 years of experience in the organic sector, said it was being forced to "change course and withdraw" from the certification, as a result.

In particular, it found fault with the EU publication of regulation 2021/2325 issued last month, saying "the principles and requirements are increasingly unclear and decisions are becoming arbitrary".

Focus on residue-free

In the regulation issued last month, the European Union said

organic products imported by member countries should not only ensure they are processed properly but should also be free from any chemical residues. LACON said the focus on residue-free as an organic characteristic of products from a third country was a "political move away from the process certification".

"We necessarily see ourselves compelled to withdraw from the international organic business for the time being. This, (is) until the conditions regarding the new certification system (compliance) in third-country are clarified and the requirements are on a solid firm basis. We deeply regret this situation," it said.

A trade analyst said the latest EU regulation on organic products called for process and product integrity. "By withdrawing from the organic certification in third countries, Lacon does not want to vouch for the product integrity," the analyst said.

Till now, all organic consign-

ments had to be certified for process rather than the product. The certification agencies supervise the process through which an organic product is made and clear them for shipments.

However, with tests in Europe showing the presence of pesticide or other chemical residues, the EU has decided to tighten the regulations, which required any organic products imported by member countries to be totally free of residues. India is among the countries whose organic products have come under increased scrutiny from the EU.

TN farmer sets example by developing integrated farm

Murugavel, a farmer, has set up an integrated farm on his land in Kandachipuram village in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu

In an inspiring story of success, Murugavel, a farmer, has set up an integrated farm on his land in Kandachipuram, a village in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. He has also taken up fish farming and agriculture on his land through natural means and earns a steady income. "Two years ago, when I started tree-based farming, people who made fun of me today seek my advice. This makes me feel proud," said the farmer, speaking from his beautiful grove.

From a three-acre piece of barren land to make it a green cover with over 1400 trees, creating two farm ponds, and leasing additional land, Murugavel's journey into integrated farming is truly motivating. With one-sixth of the land in India declared as 'waste-land', Murugavel's innovative thinking and grit show us the way to convert these lands to lush-green havens.

Integrated farming: The beginning

Speaking about how it all began, Murugavel said: "My land was so barren that even grass would not grow. It has now been transformed into an integrated farm, and I am leading a contented life". "Two years ago, when I started tree-based farming, people who made fun of me, today seek my advice. This makes me feel proud!", said the farmer, who took



Securing income – for today and the future

to his beautiful grove.

Amidst a natural setting that was soothing for the eye, Murugavel's beautiful farm in Kandachipuram was a fascinating experience. Enveloped by the cool breeze of the teak trees, watching fishes whizz past in the pond, and drenched in the sunlight streaming through the tree leaves, he listened to the farmer's story.

"My wife was diagnosed with brain cancer. So, I left my spinning business, seeking fresh air and natural food. I left for my hometown to save my wife's life. I wanted to do natural farming here. But this place has water scarcity. So, I planted drought-tolerant trees. I set up farm ponds to water these trees and started storing rainwater during the monsoon. Trees began to thrive, and I noticed changes like the soil due to shedding of leaves and the use of organic matter", he said.

Elaborating on how he planned to make his farm productive, Murugavel said: "I thought, the trees are my earnings for the future, but shouldn't I also be looking at getting revenue now? So I decided to raise fish in my farm ponds. The result: today, I earn Rs 1,50,000 through the farm pond every year. I also raise country cows. Apart from this, I have leased three more acres of land and cultivated a variety of crops on these three acres irrigated by the water leaking from my farm pond. So, it is a cyclic process through which I keep getting constant income."

It is common knowledge in the region that they cannot farm because of drought-like conditions. However, with guidance from the Cauvery Calling team, Murugavel was able to think of alternatives for his farm that aimed to increase green coverage in the Cauvery

river basin. He planted trees and built an ecosystem to support the growth of his trees – collected rainwater, raised fish, and is now cultivating crops – making it ecologically sustainable and economically lucrative.

Techniques the farmer implemented in his farm

Murugavel spoke at length about the methods he adopted to bring about these changes in his farm.

Introduced trees that changed the soil

"Three years back, I planted trees like teak, mahogany, 'Poovarasu', sandalwood, Malabar kino, jaman, Red Sanders and amla at an interval of 10 feet on three acres of land. These trees are growing well, and I will benefit from them in a few more years. I set up a farm pond to meet the

water needs of my farm. I collected and stored rainwater in it and used it for trees in summer. With these trees growing on the land, the nature of the soil too has changed to become more fertile, with all of the organic matter that goes back into the soil, from the trees."

Fish farming
Murugavel developed two farm ponds measuring 20x22 me-

ters and 30x40 meters. In these 8-foot deep pits, rainwater stagnated through the rainy season. He bought a wide-variety of baby fishes like Katta, Rogu, Mirgal and Pulkenadi. Among the 3000 fishes he has bought, he expects 90 percent of the baby fishes to grow into large fishes.

He mainly feeds them cow dung and jeevamrutha (a natural liquid fertilizer), instead of store-bought fish food. This increases the microorganisms in the pond, while also being an essential source of food for the growth of fish.

"In addition to this, I also set up two tanks in rocky places. I have grown azolla in it to feed the fish. Azolla did not cost much to grow; it involved only my labour cost. Thus, my costs are reduced." I have raised 1,000 to 2,000 baby fishes in the last two years. Of this, leaving out wastage, I got a total of 1,250 kg of fish. I directly sold a kilo of fish in the price

range of Rs.150 to 200 rupees. I got around Rs 1,87,500 rupees out of it. This includes a sum of Rs 37,500 which was the cost of buying baby fishes, labour cost for the people fishing for me and other expenses related to sale. The remaining Rs 1,50,000 was my profit"

He is also raising Viral baby fishes this year, which are a more expensive variety.

"I expect a total profit of Rs 3 lakh from these two farms alone this time. I did not spend much on these farms. I cut down this farm

Natural, organic farming methods: Murugavel is a stickler to natural farming; he cultivates crops on three acres using water from the farm pond. He grows a traditional type of paddy, along with crops like black gram, groundnut, and sesame. "All these crops are grown naturally, and I sell them as unpolished rice. Then, after my personal use, I sell the remaining to my friends, relatives etc."

Murugavel is happy today; his wife's health has improved due to natural food, breathing, and living in a natural environment. "Even

Two years ago, when I started tree-based farming, people who made fun of me, today seek my advice. This makes me feel proud! –Murugavel,

when doctors gave up on my wife's health, these trees and nature have saved my wife's life," he explains. He is now able to generate a steady income, and at the same time, live in harmony with the environment. He strongly recommends tree-based farming to everyone as a sustainable way of living. "Trees provide income and create conditions to breathe fresh air and live peacefully."



Tube Investments to buy e-tractor start-up Celestial for ₹161 crore

OUR BUREAU

Chennai, January 24

Tube Investments of India Ltd (TII) will acquire a controlling stake of up to 70 per cent in Hyderabad-based Celestial E-Mobility Pvt Ltd, a start-up engaged in the design and manufacture of electric tractors, for a sum of ₹161 crore in an all-cash deal as the Murugappa Group company accelerates its electric mobility growth plans after its announcement on entry into electric three-wheelers.

TII will buy 141,677 equity shares of Celestial at ₹11,356 per share (face value of ₹10 per share) through a combination of primary and secondary purchases.

On Monday, TII signed a share subscription and purchase agreement with Celestial, its founders and other existing shareholders. The acquisition is expected to be completed before March 15, 2022, subject to shareholders approval and other conditions.

Focus on clean mobility

Tube Investments has been exploring new growth opportunities within clean mobility.

As part of this, the company recently embarked on an electric three-wheeler initiative. A proposed new 100 per cent subsidiary will consolidate the electric three-wheeler venture and other EV-related ventures.

The company will infuse initial capital to the extent of ₹350 crore into the new subsidiary for clean mobility.

Shetkari Sanghatana calls for agri reforms

OUR BUREAU

Pune, January 18

Swatantra Bharat Party, the political wing of Shetkari Sanghatana, has in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for technological and economic reforms in agriculture. Anil Ghanwat, party president, wrote that despite admitting there was no scientific evidence to show genetically modified crops were unsafe the government continues to block them..

Ghanwat said the government must lift the moratorium on GM approvals by February 16, 2022, failing which the Shetkari Sanghatana and Swatantra Bharat Party will launch a 'Feed India movement' to highlight the shortfalls in mandatory natural farming.

He expressed concern over the Prime Minister's remarks on "freeing" India from chemical fertilisers and pesticides. "If that happens, millions will fall deeper into hunger and malnutrition," said Ghanwat.

Govt offers 100 pc grant to agriculture institutions to buy drones

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

In a bid to promote the use of drones, Centre on Saturday offered 100% grant upto the cost of Rs 10 lakh to Agriculture Institutes for purchase of Drones for Agriculture and its allied activities.

Besides, the Government has also offered a grant of 75% of the cost of Drone to Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) for demonstrations on the farmers' fields, said a senior officer of the Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Ministry.

The Ministry has issued revised guidelines to make drone technology affordable to the stakeholders of this sector. In its guidelines on "Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization" (SMAM), it envisaged 100% grant to the Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institutes, ICAR institutes, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and State Agriculture Universities.

A contingency expenditure of Rs.6000 per hectare would also be provided to the implementing agencies for hiring Drones from Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) for demonstrations. The contingent expenditure to implementing agencies that purchase drones for drone demonstrations would also be given at Rs.3000 per hectare.

Initially financial assistance and grants would be available till March 31, 2023 and then it would be reviewed again, the Ministry said. The existing Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) that has been set up by Cooperative Society of Farmers or FPOs would also be given a grant of 40% of the basic cost of drone and its attachments upto Rs four lakh, the Ministry said.

Encourage farmers to use chemical-free fertilisers:PM

Modi says while interacting with BJP workers from Varanasi

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 18 JANUARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with BJP workers from his parliamentary constituency Varanasi and urged them to make farmers aware of the use of chemical-free fertilisers.

In an audio interaction with BJP booth level workers, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the BJP's commitment towards development. While interacting with party workers, he discussed several topics including, restoration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham corridor, women empowerment, infrastructure, healthcare development and other issues.

Interacting with one of the



BJP workers, Prime Minister Modi asked him to expand the reach of the government's welfare schemes to farmers. The Prime Minister said, "They (workers) should make farmers aware of the

use of chemical-free fertilisers."

The Prime Minister, also, talked about the several central schemes which are benefiting the people of Kashi at large. Prime Minister Modi urged people to contribute to a section, Kamal Pushp, in his NaMo app that features some inspiring party members.

"The NaMo App has a very interesting section known as 'Kamal Pushp' that gives you the opportunity to share and know about inspiring party workers," he said.

The Prime Minister further talked about the BJP's special micro-donation campaign, seeking to raise funds through small contributions from its members and others.

It is learnt that about 10,000 BJP workers participated in the interaction.

It will be the first interaction of the Prime Minister with the party workers after the announcement of Assembly poll dates in five states.

It will also be the first virtual address with the party workers after the Election Commission of India (ECI) banned physical rallies and road shows till January 15 while announcing the poll dates. On January 15, the ECI extended the ban on the physical rallies and road shows till January 22.

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls will be held in seven phases in February-March starting from February 10. Counting of votes will be held on March 10.

Subsidies rolled out to popularise drones in farming

Grants and concessions to range from 40-100 per cent

PRABHUDEUTTA MISHRA

New Delhi, January 23

In a move aimed at making drones more accessible to the farmers, the Union Agriculture Ministry has decided to provide 40-100 per cent subsidy until March 2023 in purchasing drone by revising guidelines relating to the existing scheme on farm mechanization.

The guidelines of Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM), which have been amended, envisages a grant up to 100 per cent of the cost of agriculture drone or ₹10 lakh, whichever is less, as a grant for the purchase of drones, the Ministry said in a statement on Saturday.



But, this 100 per cent grant will be limited to only Farm Machinery Training and Testing Institutes, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutes, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and State Agriculture Universities for taking up large-scale demonstrations of this technology on farmers' fields, it said.

Grants for CHCs

Agriculture graduates establishing Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) will be eligible to receive 50 per cent of the basic cost of a drone and its attachments or up to

₹5 lakh in grant for drone purchases, the ministry said.

Existing CHCs or new ones, already functional or to be set up by cooperative society of farmers, farmer producers organizations (FPOs) and rural entrepreneurs are entitled to receive 40 per cent (maximum ₹4 lakh) as grant on the basic cost of drone.

"CHCs are the main agencies at grassroots level to popularize farm mechanisation and unless they are given the incentives, drone use will not gather momentum," said a senior official adding that demonstration on farmers' field is also equally important.

The FPOs would be eligible to receive a subsidy of 75 per cent of the cost of drone if used only for demonstration purpose.

Additionally, ₹6,000/hectare would be given to these

implementing agencies that hire drones from CHCs, Hi-tech Hubs, drone manufacturers and start-ups for demonstrations.

But, they would receive ₹3,000/hectare if drones are purchased for demonstrations.

Rural entrepreneurs are defined as those who have passed the Class 10 examination from a recognised board and have a remote pilot licence from an institute recognised by the Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The subsidised purchase of agriculture drones for CHCs/Hi-tech Hubs will make the technology affordable, resulting in their widespread adoption, the Ministry said. This would make drones more accessible to the common man and will also significantly encourage domestic drone production, it said.

Address:

207, Prakash Deep Building, 7 Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi- 110001

Contact Us: 011-43065365

Email: info@acfiindia.com

Visit Us: www.acfiindia.com

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