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# AGRI BYTES

*E- Weekly Newsletter*

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### **1. India assures Afghanistan of cooperation in agriculture**

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh recently assured the Afghanistan Ambassador Shaida Moh Abdali of cooperation in the field of agriculture and allied sectors. Abdali expressed thanks to Government of India for extending cooperation in the field of agriculture and allied sectors, according to an official statement. Singh informed Abdali that India has taken keen interest in conducting training programmes to share its expertise in agricultural techniques, infrastructure for the benefit of Afghanistan. Both the countries have agreed to explore possibilities in further strengthening bilateral cooperation, research work, infrastructure and technology, the statement added. The Afghanistan ambassador also suggested that both the countries may jointly organise workshops and farmers of both sides may participate in them so as to find out scope for sharing knowledge and experience in technologies, cooperatives and packaging industries. Abdali also expressed hope that National Agricultural University in Afghanistan would get necessary support in research work from India.

### **2. India must harness new policies to provide better nutrition: study**

Economic growth is fuelling a protein revolution in global agriculture, with the demand for livestock, poultry and fish estimated to double by 2050, says a report by the Global Harvest Initiative (GHI). GHI's Global Agricultural Productivity Report said livestock, poultry and fish will be the largest drivers of the world's food economy, with 70% of the increase coming from developing countries. From 2013 to 2030 — poultry and egg demand will increase by 63%, milk by 55%, and ruminant meat by 44 %, all of them outpacing population growth, says the report by GHI, formed in 2009 by big corporates involved in agri-business, such as Monsanto, John Deere, DuPont, Elcano and Accenture. World per capita fish consumption from 2013 to 2023 will also increase by 9 per cent (1.7 kilograms per person) reaching 20.9 kg per person in 2023, says the report. This year's report throws special spotlight on India, which it sees as crucial to increasing global farm productivity in the backdrop of the "evolving food needs and preferences of its expanding middle class, while assuring food security for all its citizens." GHI called upon India for introducing policies that incentivise private sector investment and growth, and unleash innovation in agricultural productivity and marketing, water and land conservation, and adaptation to climate change.

Overall, the report said global agricultural output would have to double in order to meet the expected demand for food, feed, fibre and fuel by 2050.

### **3. Parkash Singh Badal seeks upward revision of MSP**

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal asked the Union Government to "upwardly revise" the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for wheat for the forthcoming season. "The MSP must be hiked to the level where the mismatch between input costs of agriculture produce and MSP announced for these was removed," Badal said. He said the Swaminthan formula for fixing the MSP should be implemented.

According to this formula, farmers should get an MSP which should cover production costs, plus 50% of these costs to be paid to the farmer. "He saw hope in the approach, philosophy and administrative response of the present government to the needs of the poor and the farmers", Badal said, adding that considering market realities and the overall price index in the country, a wheat price of Rs 1450 could not even cover the expenses incurred by the farmers.

#### **4. Grow more pulses, oilseeds and not cereals: CACP report**

The recently released Rabi price policy report, advocates moving away from production of cereals and growing more pulses and oilseeds. The nominal Rs.50 hike in minimum support prices (MSP) of wheat is because of excess stocks in the central pool and the fact that support prices are comfortably higher than projected costs, the report said. The price policy report for Rabi crops (marketing season 2015-16) prepared by Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) was submitted to the government in July and was made public a day after the Union cabinet approved increases in MSP recommended by the CACP. The CACP report recommended a nominal hike of 3.6% in the MSP of wheat—from Rs.1,400 a quintal in 2013-14 to Rs.1,450 a quintal in 2014-15. The increase in the MSP of wheat has been steadily declining—from 9.8% in 2011-12 to 5.1% in 2012-13 and 3.7% in 2013-14.

Wheat is the major cereal grown alongside pulses and oilseeds in the winter or Rabi season, extending from November to April. Foodgrain output in the country during Rabi season currently outstrips the monsoon-dependent Kharif, with paddy as the primary crop. In 2013-14, the Kharif output is estimated at 129 million tonnes, lower than the 135 million tonnes produced during Rabi season. The CACP report notes that against the buffer stock norm of 31.9 million tonnes of rice and wheat (as on 1 July every year), total central pool stocks were more than double at 65.3 million tonnes (25.5 million tonnes of rice and 39.8 million tonnes of wheat) on 1 July 2014. "This amounts to locking of resources, estimated at Rs.45,640 crore, which entails its own opportunity costs. It needs to be noted here that the economic cost of Food Corporation of India (FCI) is about 32-43% more than the MSP of wheat," it said, adding, this has resulted in rising expenditure on food subsidy bill which is budgeted to be Rs.1.15 trillion in 2014-15.

#### **5. Karnataka to revise biotech policy soon: minister**

In an effort to attract higher investment in the biotechnology sector in the state, the Karnataka government will announce a new Biotechnology policy soon, S R Patil, minister for IT, BT, Science and Technology, said. "Biotech companies in Karnataka, including Biocon, have contributed 26 per cent of the country's biotech products worth \$4 billion. More than half of the country's biotech companies are in Bangalore and it has emerged the fourth largest biotech cluster in the world. The government aims to attract more investment in the sector," he said. Addressing the curtain-raiser event to announce the upcoming Bangalore India Bio 2015, he said Bangalore has also emerged as the biotech capital of India and is next only to China in Asia. "We are planning to establish a biotechnology incubation centre to nurture biotech start-ups in Karnataka. The state has

already set up as many as nine incubation centres in different engineering colleges across the state to raise new IT companies,” Patil said. He said, the government will also encourage agriculture, horticulture-related biotech research activities. The government has earmarked Rs 8.5 crore to the Horticulture University, Bagalkot and Rs 6.5 crore to University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad for this purpose.

#### **6. Radha Mohan Singh emphasizes the need to increase Productivity of Milch Cattle**

India ranks first among the world’s milk producing nations since 1998 and accounts for about 17% of the cattle population and 64% of the buffalo population. However, there is a great need to increase the productivity of our milch cattle. This was stated by Union Agriculture Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh while addressing the first meeting of newly constituted Parliamentary Consultative Committee held recently. Introducing the subject of “Dairying” and the achievements made by the new Government in this field, he informed that the milk production in India has reached 137.6 million tonnes in 2013-14 as compared to 17 million tonnes in 1950-51. During the last five years, the rate of increase in milk production has remained at 4.2% which is higher than the growth rate of population. As a result, per capita availability of milk which was 130gm per day during 1950-51 has increased to 302gm per day during 2013-14 which is more than 186gm estimated for Asia and the world average of 294gm.

About 60% Indian farmers are small and marginal, who collectively own almost 75% of the female bovines but only 40% of farmland. Shri Radha Mohan Singh underlined the need for tapping the potential of indigenous breed of cows. He informed that Government of India has started Rashtriya Gokul Mission with the objective of enhancing the milk production and productivity of indigenous bovines, as also to distribute the disease-free, high genetic merit bulls of indigenous breeds for natural service. During the current year, the provision of Rs. 150 crore has been made for this mission, Shri Singh informed.

#### **7. Radha Mohan Singh assures assistance to rehabilitate farming activities in Hud Hud affected Andhra**

The Center will provide all possible assistance to farmers in Andhra Pradesh who lost their crops due to cyclone `Hud Hud`, as announced by the ministry recently. Union Minister Of Agriculture, Shri Radha Mohan Singh gave this assurance to Shri P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, to apprise of the damage of crops and other agriculture activities in the State.

Shri Radha Mohan Singh said to Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Chandra Babu Naidu that his ministry is awaiting formal assessment of damage of crops by the state Government and the request to see the areas where the immediate assistance is required. He assured his Ministry would provide all possible support to rehabilitate farming activities including fishing, animal husbandry and plantation of various crops. He asserted that Union Agriculture Ministry would take up the work on priority basis.

## 8. Kerala Agri min harvests KAMCO crops

Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan inaugurated the harvesting of crop cultivated on the land owned by Kerala Agro Machinery Corporation Ltd, (KAMCO) a public sector company at Athani, near Angamaly. K P Mohanan also took part in the harvesting of paddy. The employees of KAMCO formed a group, Karshaka Samithi, to cultivate various crops on the spare land with the company. K P Mohanan lauded the employees for the venture and said that KAMCO has set an example to other public sector industries for carrying out such initiatives. "The public sector companies in the state should not leave their spare land barren. They should follow in the footsteps of KAMCO and plant various crops and vegetables. Such initiatives would revive interest among the public in agriculture and help Kerala become self-sufficient in agricultural produce and stop depending on neighbouring states," he said.

Paddy was cultivated in around 10 acres of land with KAMCO. The cultivation was carried out using organic material and equipment of the company. The Minister was also present when the saplings were planted on the KAMCO premises in July this year.

## 9. Assocham for promoting value addition in agri to develop AP

Industry body Assocham suggested the Andhra Pradesh government promote value addition in agriculture sector and create opportunities to double farmer incomes, thereby encouraging them to produce and export high-value fruits and vegetables using modern farming technologies and high quality seeds. These measures should be duly supported by setting up food processing centres and world-class agriculture universities, said the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India. With a view to establish a vibrant entrepreneurial eco-system in the state, it suggested the government to set up an 'AP Entrepreneurship Mission', based on public-private partnership (PPP) model. "With the ultimate objective of employment generation through acceleration of entrepreneurship and business creation to tap rural markets of AP, the mission must aim to facilitate 200 business and convenience hubs to provide services and facilities to both rural industries and households," said an Assocham paper titled 'Strategy for Developing the New Andhra Pradesh State'.

"Considering that cost of one rural entrepreneurial hub would be in a range of Rs 30-50 crore, it would require financial support worth Rs 6,000-10,000 crore to create requisite ecosystem during the course of next 10 years," said the paper prepared by Assocham Economic Research Bureau. As in the case of special category state (which is being demanded by Andhra Pradesh) 90% cost of creating this ecosystem will be through a grant from the Centre and the remaining being treated as loan to the AP government, it said.

Each rural business and convenience hub should have an e-governance and agriculture service centre; nursing home, pathological lab and pharmacy; banks and non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs); skill development centre; rural market; proper connectivity and other such facilities.

## 10. FPOs to get include in NCDC Act: Ministry of Agri

The Agriculture Ministry has proposed amendments to the NCDC Act to include farmer producer organisations (FPOs) for extending financial assistance and government subsidies. Currently, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) provides financial assistance to cooperatives including those from weaker sections, for infrastructure and business development among others. "We have suggested a small amendment to the Act to incorporate FPOs for extending loans and subsidies," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said. The government is encouraging setting up of FPOs in a big way and trying to provide credit facilities through various schemes so that FPOs become viable, the official added.

FPOs, which are registered under the Companies Act, are firms consisting of small and marginal farmers. There are total 300 FPOs in India supported by government body Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC). NCDC, a statutory body, had in 2013-14 fiscal released Rs 5,268 crore, against the sanctioned amount of Rs 7,755 crore for the same period. Maximum funds were released to cooperatives working in Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, an official data showed. Financial assistance is being given for production, processing, marketing, storage, export and import of agricultural produce and other notified commodities.

## 11. India to ratify protocol to promote innovation in agriculture, healthcare

India will ratify a new supplementary protocol which promotes innovation in agricultural and healthcare research and development that is safe for the environment and human beings. The Union Cabinet at its meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave its approval for ratification by India of the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur supplementary protocol on liability and redress to the Cartagena protocol on bio-safety. The new supplementary protocol provides international rules and procedure on liability and redress for damage to biodiversity resulting from living modified organisms (LMO). An official release said the proposed approach provides for an international regulatory framework in the field of liability and redress related to living modified organisms LMO that reconciles trade and environment protection. The supplementary protocol would promote sound application of biotechnology making it possible to accrue benefits arising from modern biotechnology while minimising the risk to the environment and human health. The objective of the supplementary protocol is to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health, by providing international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress relating to living modified organisms.

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