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NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE AGRICULTURE AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS' FEDERATION LTD.



THE MEGHALAYA CO-OPERATIVE APEX BANK LTD.

HEAD OFFICE : SHILLONG

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FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

	(₹ in Lakhs) As on 31.03.2021	(₹ in Lakhs) As on 31.03.2022
● Paid up Share Capital & Reserves :	16142.61	17320.85
● Deposits :	309681.38	348923.10
● Loans & Advances :	169947.46	172132.13
● Investments :	115056.98	125850.18
● Money at Call & Short Notice :	41690.69	65739.84
● Net Profit :	1203.57	1327.86
● Working Capital :	368913.37	411493.12



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- *Crop Loans for Agriculture through KCC/SHG/JLG/ Cooperatives*
- *Term Loans for Agriculture & Allied Agriculture*
- *Aquaculture Development / Meghalaya State Aquaculture Mission*
- *Loans for Housing*
- *Loans for SRTO*
- *Consumer Durables Loans*
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- *Loans for Women through WDC Cell*
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- *Personal Loan to Salary Earners*
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- *Safe Deposit Lockers & Other Ancillary Services*
- *Loans to Tribal under NSTFDC Schemes*
- *Loans to Physically Challenged under NHFDC*

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701, BSEL TECH PARK, 7th Floor, A-Wing,
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E-mail : nafcard@gmail.com

Website : www.nafcard.org

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EDITORIAL

Financial cooperatives in India comprise of Banking cooperatives coming under BR Act and Non-banking financial cooperatives, which includes Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs), which are collectively known as Long Term Cooperative Credit Structure (LTCCS). LTCCS is an important source of long term finance for investment activities in agriculture and rural sectors. The term loans issued by LTCCS contribute to capital formation and enhancing agricultural productivity. There has been phenomenal increase in the total agricultural credit flow in the last 2 decades from Rs.46000 crores in 1999-2000 to about Rs.17 lakh crores in 2021-22. However, the impressive growth rate in the total agricultural credit during this period is not reflected in the long term component of credit. Long term loans which accounted for more than half of the total agricultural credit prior to 2000, has come down to less than 20% at present. The Hon'ble Union Minister of Home and Cooperation has recently stressed the need to reverse the declining trend in the share of investment loans in the total agricultural credit in order to raise agricultural productivity and wanted the LTCCS to play an important role to facilitate the same. However, LTCCS face certain legal and policy issues affecting their performance by denying a level playing field.

NABARD is the main source of funds for advancing long term agricultural loans. NABARD Act provides for giving long term refinance to lending institutions coming under BR Act based on risk rating and other qualitative norms. However, in case of ARDBs, NABARD is giving refinance only on the basis of State Govt guarantee. Though NABARD over a period of time introduced qualitative norms of risk rating, linking of refinance with audit classification, standard assets etc. for giving refinance to LTCCS, the condition of government guarantee is not relaxed due to restrictive provisions in NABARD Act. Presently, most of the state governments are unable to give additional guarantee to the extent required due to ceiling on government guarantee. The condition of government guarantee not only restricts availability of resources for lending but also increases cost of funds for ARDBs due to guarantee fee. It is high time that NABARD Act is amended to remove the condition of Govt guarantee

for giving refinance to State Cooperative Agriculture & Rural Development Banks (SCARDBs).

Under the provisions of Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act (BUDS Act) 2019, Cooperative Societies including ARDBs can accept deposits from voting members without any restrictions as applicable to public deposits. BUDS Act 2019 stipulates that cooperatives can also implement other deposit schemes with the prior approval of State Governments concerned. Presently, ARDBs are accepting member deposits and also implement a scheme with the approval of State Govts concerned to accept term deposits from individuals and institutions, who are not members, subject to certain conditions. However, lack of arrangements for insurance protection of deposits is a major hurdle in mobilizing deposits by LTCCS. Though Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) extends insurance coverage to deposits upto a certain limit, the same is applicable only to deposits with banking institutions. DICGC Act needs to be amended to include a provision to extend insurance coverage of deposits of non-banking financial cooperatives such as ARDBs.

Government of India is implementing Crop Loan Interest Subvention Scheme for making available short term loans to farmers for carrying out seasonal agricultural operations at affordable rates. However, the benefit of crop loan interest subvention scheme is extended only to the borrowers of lending institutions coming under BR Act. Govt of India needs to change its policy for extending crop loan interest subvention scheme to crop loan borrowers of ARDBs also, which are not coming under BR Act.

CIBIL TransUnion Membership enables lenders to upload their loan details and repayment history of borrowers in the data base of Credit Rating Companies. However, ARDBs are not given CIBIL TransUnion membership as they do not have license from RBI. CIBIL TransUnion should include provisions to give membership to lending institutions like ARDBs, which do not have license from RBI, in order to make credit score reports of CIBIL and other Credit Rating Companies realistic and also to prevent willful defaulters in one lending agency to borrow again from other agencies.

ORGANIC FARMING- PROSPECTS, COMPONENTS & ORGANIC LABELLING

Dr. Vinod Kumar

As on 31st March 2021 total area under organic certification process (registered under National Programme for Organic Production) is 4339184.93 ha (2020-21). This includes 2657889.33 ha cultivable area and another 1681295.61 ha for wild harvest collection.

Among all the states, Madhya Pradesh has covered largest area under organic certification followed by Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Karnataka. India produced around 3496800.34 MT (2020-21) of certified organic products which includes all varieties of food products namely Oil Seeds, fibre, Sugar cane, Cereals & Millets, Cotton, Pulses, Aromatic & Medicinal Plants, Tea, Coffee, Fruits, Spices, Dry Fruits, Vegetables, Processed foods etc. The production is not limited to the edible sector but also produces organic cotton fiber, functional food products etc.

Among different states Madhya Pradesh is the largest producer followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In terms of commodities Oil seeds are the single largest category followed by Sugar crops, Cereals and Millets, Tea & Coffee, Fiber crops, fodder, Pulses, Medicinal/ Herbal and Aromatic plants and Spices & Condiments. The total volume of export during 2020-21 was 888179.68 MT. The organic food export realization was around INR 707849.52 Lakhs (1040.95 million USD). Organic products are exported to USA, European Union, Canada, Great Britain, Korea Republic, Israel, Switzerland, Ecuador, Vietnam, Australia etc.

In terms of export value realization Processed foods including soya meal (57%) lead among the products followed by Oilseeds (9%), Cereals and millets (7%), Plantation crop products such as Tea and Coffee (6%), Spices and condiments (5%), Medicinal plants (5%), Dry fruits (3%), Sugar(3%), and others.

Organic farming is a production system of crops which avoids the use of synthetic and chemical inputs like

fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and live-stock feed additives. Organic farming systems depend mainly on crop rotation, crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manures, off-farm organic residues, mineral bearing rocks and biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and supply important nutrients like N.P.K. Indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers for decades has resulted in the decline of organic matter content of soils to less than one per cent. The use of pesticides led to pest resurgence and difficulty in controlling weeds. Indiscriminate use of artificial fertilizer and pesticide has caused severe water and environmental pollution. Organic farming ensures the production of palatable food free from chemical residues.

Prospects for Organic Farming in India

Only 30 per cent of India's total cultivable area is covered with fertilizer where irrigation facilities are available; the remaining 70 per cent of the arable land, which is mainly rainfed area, has not be using any fertilizer. It is estimated that around 600 to 700 million tonnes of agricultural waste is available in the country every year but most of it is not properly used. There are several alternatives for the supply of the soil nutrients from organic sources like vermi-compost, biofertilizers, etc. Technologies have been developed to produce large quantities of vermi compost. There are specific biofertilizers for cereals, millets, pulses and oilseeds. However, such biofertilizers and biopesticides have not become very popular in India for two reasons. The first is the lack of marketing and distribution network. Retailers are typically not interested in selling bio inputs because their demand is low, supply is erratic and farmers are ignorant about bio-inputs. The second reason is the presence of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, with their heavy advertisements, public support and higher margin for retailers. All these problems need to be addressed for popularizing organic farming in India.



Organic Farming Technology

Organic farming is a system approach utilizing the natural cycles and biological interactions for crop production and protection. The main components of this technology are described below:

1. Composting

The bacteria and fungi occurring in the soil convert dead organic matter present on its surface into a nutrient rich medium. This process is called composting and its nutrients rich product is called compost. It contains most of the major and minor nutrients required by plant for healthy growth.

Pit method

For pit method, the site should be selected near cattle shed and a water source. The site should be located at an elevation so that no rainwater gets in during the monsoon season. The pit should be at least 8 m long, 2 m wide and 1 m deep. The material of composting like straw, crop residues, vegetable residues or other organic wastes is spread evenly in the pit. A slurry of dung made with 4.5 kg urine soaked earth and 4.5 kg inoculum taken from a 15-day old composting pit is added as a layer on straw/composting material. Sufficient quantity of water (60-90%) is then sprinkled over the material. The pit is filled in this way, layer by layer and it should not take more than one week to fill the pit. Do not compact the material in the pit. The material should be turned at least 3 times during the whole period of composting after 15,30 and 60 days from filling the pits. It takes about 3 months to decompose all types of organic matter. After the preparation of compost, it is spread in the field.

Compost prepared by this method is rich in nutrients and has 1.4-1.6% N. After the compost has been added, plough the field for proper mixing with the soil.

2. Vermicompost

The method of producing compost using earthworms is called vermicomposting. Earthworms constitute more than 80% of the invertebrate biomass. They play a significant role in maintaining the soil productivity. Earthworms help in decomposition of organic matter and contribute 20-100 kg N per ha per

year apart from producing other mineralized nutrients and plant growth promoting substances. Earthworms help the growth of beneficial microorganisms by providing optimum conditions for their growth.

Worms assimilate some of the microorganisms as their food. Hence, the more the microbial biomass the more will be the worm biomass. Worms enrich the soil with oxygen, thus encouraging aerobic microorganisms. These microorganisms perform several important functions like nitrogen fixation, production of enzymes, antibiotics, growth hormones, etc. They also control parasitic nematodes and enhance crop yields.

Earthworms can feed on crop residues; vegetable and fruit wastes and convert them into vermicompost. On an average one worm weighing about 1g can produce about 1 g compost in a day. In an area of 1 sq. meter, if 1000 earthworms are inoculated, 1kg of vermicompost can be prepared in a day. This way, within 80-90 days the complete area of 1 sq. meter will turn into compost and the population of earthworms will increase several folds.

3. Green Manuring

The method of incorporating green leafy matter directly into the soil is called green manuring. Green manuring helps improve soil quality in the following ways:

- Increases organic content of soil
- Increases nutrient availability
- Improves the tilth of soil
- Restricts growth of weeds
- Helps in pest control
- Increases biological activity in the soil

Growing of leguminous green manure crops like *Sesbania aculeata* (Dhaincha), *Crotalaria juncea* (Sun hemp), *Tephrosia purpurea* (Wild indigo), *Vigna radiata* (Green gram), *Vigna mungo* (Black gram) etc. increases the nitrogen availability in the soil. Green manure crops act as a reservoir of nutrients. These nutrients are released in the soil when they are ploughed in.

How to use green manure in the soil?

Green manure crops are directly ploughed into the soil about 45 days after sowing. To get maximum benefit



from green manure crops, it is important to plough them in before they begin to flower or fruit. Green manuring is an easy method of improving soil structure and fertility. Since the crop is grown right where it is utilized the costs are also minimal.

4. Crop Rotation

The practice of alternating the species or families of annual and/or biennial crops grown on a specific field in a planned pattern or sequence so as to break weed/pest and disease cycles and to improve soil fertility and organic matter is called crop rotation. Planting the same crop in the same location time after time (mono cropping) encourages the build up of diseases and pests that plague that particular crop. Crop rotation helps in overcoming this problem without the use of any chemicals.

5. Biofertilizer

Microbial inoculants are an important component of organic farming, which help to nourish the crops through required nutrients. These microbes help to fix atmospheric nitrogen, solubilize and mobilize phosphorus, translocate minor elements like zinc, copper, etc., to the plants, produce plant growth promoting hormones, vitamins and amino acids and control plant pathogenic fungi, thus helping to improve the soil health and increase crop production. Biofertilizers like Rhizobium, Azotobacter, Azospirillum and blue green algae (BGA) are in use since long. These organisms fix atmospheric nitrogen and supply it to plants. Hence, biofertilizers to some extent. The bacterial biofertilizers contribute 20-30 kg N/ha/season. Rhizobium inoculant is used for leguminous crops. Azotobacter can be used with crops like wheat, maize, mustard, cotton, potato and other vegetable crops. Azospirillum inoculants are recommended mainly for sorghum, millets, maize, sugarcane and wheat. Blue green algae belonging to genera Nostoc, Anabaena, Talyphothrix and Aulosira fix atmospheric nitrogen and are used as inoculants for paddy crop grown both under upland and low land conditions. However, the inoculants are most effective under low land rice cultivation and effective under low land rice cultivation and contribute 20-30 kg N per ha

per season with better quality of grains. Anabaena in association with water fer Azolla contributes nitrogen up to 60 kg/ha/season and also enriches soils with organic matter.

Phosphate solubilizing microorganisms (PSM) are a group of microbes capable of solubilizing inorganic phosphorus from insoluble sources. In alkaline and acidic soils, the availability of phosphorus is low. These microbes can be useful to reverse this process. PSM when used with rock phosphate can save about 50% of the crop requirement of phosphatic fertilizer like single super phosphate. Simple inoculation of seeds with PSM gives crop yield responses equivalent to 30 kg P₂O₅/ha of phosphatic fertilizers.

Vesicular-Arbuscular Mycorrhizae (VAM) fungi are found to be associated with a majority of agricultural crops. VAM occur over a wide range of habitats from aquatic to desert environments. VAM have been associated with increased plant growth and enhanced accumulation of plant nutrients, mainly phosphorus, zinc, copper and Sulphur through greater soil exploitation by mycorrhizal hyphae. Maximum root colonization and sporulation occurs in soils with low phosphorus. The results of field trials conducted in India indicate that VAM inoculations increase yields significantly but the response varied with soil type, soil fertility and VAM cultures. The major constraint for field application is the inability to produce clean pure' inoculum on a large scale as the fungi are obligate symbionts and have to be maintained and multiplied on living host plants. In such a situation, until suitable technology is evolved to multiply these fungi on a large scale, it is better to concentrate on crops normally grown in nurseries so that they can be easily inoculated with selected strains and then transplanted.

6. Weeds Control

In organic farming, the weeds are controlled without the use of chemical herbicides. Different strategies are adopted to prevent weeds from competing with the crops for nutrients and water. This can be done by limiting the germination of weed seeds by the following methods:

- Using cover crops: They not only add organic matter into the soil, but also shade out “weeds”. This means that weeds do not get enough sunlight to enable them to reach maturity and set seed.
- Pre-irrigating the field to germinate weed seeds, and then ploughing them before they mature to reduce weed seeds in the soil.
- Using drip irrigation, whenever possible, to distribute water only around the plant line. This technique not only conserves water, but also limits water availability to weeds in the field.

Crop rotation.

- Biological control of weeds: By using biologically derived chemicals or by using insects that prevent growth of weeds.

7. Control of pests and Diseases Pheromone trap or Sex Pheromone trap

Monitoring of pest population is a pre-requisite to efficient pest management strategy. Several methods are used for determining the pest population.

Pheromone trap is one such tool, which is used for monitoring of pests.

Sex pheromones are bio-chemicals released usually by female insects as a means of chemical communication to attract males for mating. They are highly specific and are perceived by the males of the same species only. The synthetic pheromones are now in use for luring a variety of lepidopterous pests in small entraptions popularly called pheromone traps. These traps are effectively used in cotton, rice, vegetable and many other crops. Two traps per acre are often sufficient for monitoring the pest population.'

Pheromones are also exploited for mass trapping of certain pests particularly yellow stem borer in rice. Usually ten traps per acre are used to mass trap the moths to reduce their population. Of late, pheromones are also used for disruption of mating cycle. Small bits of rope impregnated with pheromones are strewn for dispensing this chemical in the field. The crop environment pervaded by

pheromone confuse the females to the extent that their mating gets disrupted in spite of the fact that males are there in the field. The unmated females are rendered incapable of laying the eggs. Pheromones can be effectively used in organic farming.

Biocontrol agents

Ecofriendly organic farming technologies for plant protection have been gaining importance in recent years. Commercial production of biopesticides containing different bacteria, fungi and viruses has been undertaken to control certain insects. Spraying of *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacterium, has successfully killed several lepidopteran insects. Another strategy could be to use beneficial insects like ladybugs, which feed on aphids to control harmful pests. Some of the plant diseases that can be controlled by antagonistic fungi and bacteria are as follows:

Trichoderma harzianum as fungal antagonist proved effective against *Macrophomina phaseolina* (Charcoal rot) in several plant species.

T. harzianum isolate TH3, was found most effective against *Colletotrichum capsici* causing fruit rot and die back of chilli in vitro followed by isolates TH 4 and TH 1. Two sprays of conidial suspension of *T. harzianum* (TH3), one before 48 h of inoculation and second after 15 days of inoculation, were found effective in which lowest fruit rot intensity (44.4%) with 32.9% disease reduction was recorded. It was followed by sprays of *T. viride*-2 and *Aspergillus niger* AN-27.

Trichoderma harzianum and *Psedomonas fluroescens* effectively suppressed mycelial growth. Sclerotial production and germination of *Rhizoctonia solani* causing root rot of wheat.

Many botanicals have the potential to control pests and diseases of plants. Extracts of neem, custard apple and callophyllum (undai) seed can control a wide range of insects, bacteria and fungi. Harmful insect-pests can also be controlled releasing appropriate biocontrol agents in the field.

It has been observed that some plants when planted together help each other to grow and also help to keep pests at a minimum. Such plants are called companion



plants. Some tested companion plants are carrots and tomatoes; corn and beans; cucumbers and corn; chilli and brinjal; radish and tomatoes; cauliflower and potatoes; and peas and cucumber.

8. Cultural practices

The cultural practices also help in controlling weeds and plant diseases. For example, in maize, the following practices have helped to control several bacterial and fungal disease:

- Field sanitation by removing the previous crop straw, proper drainage to avoid water logging and regulation of plant density (55 thousand plant/ha) were found effective for the management of Pythium stalk rot of maize.
- Stripping off lower 2-3 leaves along with sheath when the crop is 30-35 days old proved very effective for the management of banded leaf and sheath blight disease.
- Removal of 'Kans' grass for adjoining area of the main crop field helped in the reduction of downy mildew incidence in maize.

Organic Labelling and Certification

The growing demand for organic food has led to the initiation of the process for developing their 'own' standards by different countries. The US and the European Union have already announced comprehensive National Organic Programmes. Japan, Canada and Australia have national standards for organic products in practice since early nineties. New Zealand, Israel and Brazil have almost attained the equivalency status with the standards of the European Union and the USA.

Certain very large organic food markets such as the United States present particular problems for exporters because of the rigid requirements for

exporters labelling. In the US, products are accepted as organic only if they conform to US Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements, which are fairly stringent and require certification, which can be costly and cumbersome for exports from poor countries.

Certification In India

The Government of India is attempting to establish the basic rules and accreditation processes, which are necessary. In March 2000, the Ministry of commerce launched the National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP), designed to establish national standards for organic products, which could then be sold under the logo, "India Organic". To ensure the implementation of NPO, the National Accreditation Policy and Programme (NAPP) has announced in May 2001. These make it mandatory that all certification bodies, whether already engaged of organic crops and products, should be accredited by an accreditation Agency, Foreign certification bodies operating in the country must also be accredited.

The appointed Accreditation Agencies are the Agricultural & Processed food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). Coffee Board, Tea Board and Spices Board. At present, only APEDA has invited applications of accreditation. The Regulations also make a provision for export, import and local trade of organic products. Currently, however, only the export of the organic products comes under the government regulation, while imports and local trade do not. Thus, an agricultural product can, at present, be exported as an organic product only if a certification body duly accredited by APEDA, as one of the accreditation agencies certifies it. The categories of products covered under accreditation are organic crop production, organic animal production, organic processing operations, wild products and forestry.

ROLE OF WEATHER BASED AGRO ADVISORY FOR YIELD ENHANCEMENT

Shraddha Bhople, Anay Rawat, Abhijeet Dubey and Rajul Soni

Most of the farmers in India are small holder farmers often with limited access to technologies and resources which leaves them increasingly vulnerable to weather and climate fluctuations. Increased frequency, severity and intensity of weather and climate extremes have contributed to food deficits and failure to prevent widespread famine in many high risk areas. Although farming communities throughout the world have survived by mastering the ability to adapt to widely varying weather and climatic conditions, increasingly erratic climate variability and the rapid pace of other drivers of change are overwhelming indigenous knowledge and traditional coping practices. Climate services are receiving increasing attention globally. Also increases in extreme weather such as floods and drought, as a result of climate change could have a negative impact on livelihoods that depend on climate-sensitive activities such as rain-fed agriculture and livestock rearing. National Meteorological Services (NMS) has great role to play to share climate information including the products with the small farmers. NMS in many cases need to be realigned, resourced and trained as providers of services for development and as participants in the development process. Climate information should reach the last mile to create impact, enough information. There is a great need to convert the climate information into actionable information for farmers. Linking the climatic information with the available technologies and best farming practices is required. Customized, location and crop specific actionable information is the requirement of the small farmers.

Agricultural production depends upon many factors, of which weather is the major factor. Weather varies with space and time, hence, its forecast can help to minimize the farm losses through proper management of agricultural operations. The complete avoidance of all farm losses due to weather factor is not possible but it

can be minimized to some extent by making adjustments through timely and accurate information of weather forecast.

Weather forecast and weather based agromet advisories help in increasing the economic benefit to the farmers by suggesting them the suitable management practices according to the weather conditions. Results showed that the farmers, who followed the agromet advisories, are able to reduce the input cost and increases in the net profit as compared to the non AAS farmers. This profit was due to the crop management done by the farmers according to agromet advisory bulletins. Thus, the application of agromet advisory based on current and forecast weather is a useful tool for enhancing the production and income.

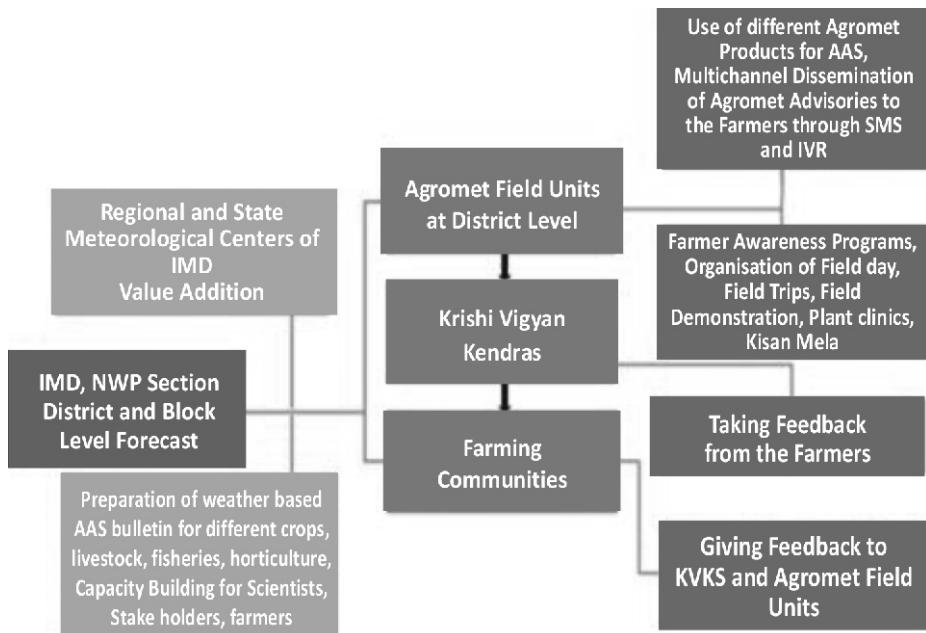
Weather is one of the most important factors determining success or failure of agricultural production. It effects on every phase of growth and development of plant. Any variability in the weather during the crop season, such as delay in the monsoon, excessive rains, flood, droughts, spells of too-high or too-low temperatures would affect the crop growth and finally the quality and quantity of the yield. The losses in crop can be reduced by doing proper crop management in time by timely and accurate weather forecasts. Weather forecast also provides guidelines for selection of crops best suited to the anticipated climatic conditions. The objective of the weather forecasting is to advise the farmers on the actual and expected weather and its impact on the various day-to-day farming operations i. e. sowing, weeding, time of pesticides spray, irrigation scheduling, fertilizer application etc. and overall crop management. Weather forecast helps to increase agriculture production, reduce losses, risks, reduce costs of inputs, improve quality of yield, increase efficiency in the use of water, labor and energy and reduce pollution with

judicious use of agricultural chemicals. Rathore et al (2001) discussed the weather forecasting scheme operational at National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecast for issuing location specific weather forecast five days in advance. Damrath et al. (2001) reported that the statistical interpretation methods are used to increase the reliability of the precipitation forecast.

Weather services to agriculture :

All agrometeorological and agroclimatological information that can be directly applied to try to improve and/or protect the livelihood of farmers in agricultural production may be considered to belong to agrometeorological services. This improvement/protection applies to yield quantity, quality and income while safeguarding the agricultural resource base from degradation. The Agromet Advisory Services provide a very special kind of inputs to the farmers as advisories that can

make a tremendous difference to the agriculture production by taking the advantage of benevolent weather and minimize the adverse impact of malevolent weather. This has a potential to change the face of any country in terms of food security and poverty alleviation. Agrometeorological service rendered by India Meteorological Department (IMD), Ministry of Earth Sciences is a step to contribute to weather information based crop/livestock management strategies and operations dedicated to enhancing crop production and food security. IMD is operating a project "Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa" (GKMS) with an objective to serve the farming community at different parts of the country. The following are the major activities being carried out under this project minimising the threat on the biodiversity in the agricultural system in India. Figure 1 depicts overview of Agromet Advisory services in India.



Generation of Weather forecast & agromet advisory:

Based on the medium range weather forecast, AAS bulletins have been prepared for 636 districts and issued on every Tuesday and Friday. State Composite bulletins (23) and National AAS bulletins have also been issued simultaneously. Efforts are being made to prepare AAS bulletins for all the districts of the

country. Efforts have also been made for preparation of accurate medium range weather forecast by value addition from Regional Meteorological Centres (RMCs)/Meteorological Centres (MCs). To help the farmers to cope with climate risks and also for effectively use seasonal to inter-annual climate forecasts, IMD in collaboration with Central Research

Institute for Dryland and Agriculture, Hyderabad continued issuing AAS Bulletins based on Extended Range Weather Forecast and Monthly Weather Forecast during southwest monsoon 2017 to fulfil the needs of different users including planners at State and National levels and farmers.

Alert before climate change:

In a over populating country like India which is experiencing cyclone, floods, droughts, hailstorms as an extreme events every year, the weather may be nullified to a large extent by suitable adoptive measures dissemination through Agromet Advisory Services by aberrations of India Meteorological Department is doing yeomen's service by providing advance information including monitoring of the disaster events by using state of art instruments & technology. Such type of advisories are issued in cyclone, floods and droughts so that the farmers can minimize the crop loss. Also, IMD is having different kinds of network of observatories in India to monitor and assess the weather which are Conventional Observational Network, Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), Buoy/Ship Observations, Cyclone Detection Radars, Doppler Weather Radars and Satellites observations. Another two important issues which are being dealt are extreme weather events and climate change & variability. Around 26 Doppler weather radars were installed and also various types of satellite data is being used to provide information about extreme weather events like heavy rainfall to save the crops and also contingency planning is given to the farmers for taking appropriate crops in respect of expected climate variability during the monsoon season Synoptic Methods, Statistical Methods and Numerical Weather Prediction models developed based on these observational network can be used for generation of rainfall, temperature, thunderstorm, dust storm, clouds, cyclonic storms (their courses and stages), heavy rainfall warnings, frost warning, squall warning, heat waves, cold waves etc. Digital and image information at 10 minutes interval from Doppler weather radar is very useful in addition to many other observed data in predicting

thunderstorm activity. Specialized products derived from satellites such as Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), surface insulation, Leaf Surface Temperature (LST), Albedo, reference evapotranspiration, soil moisture, Aridity index, satellite-based rainfall etc. also play very significant role in disaster management in agriculture. Such generated agromet products are useful if they were promptly delivered to the end users to reduce disaster management risk for farmer community. Due to this information, farmers can tackle the situations under different extreme weather events and ultimately reduces the impact of bad weather. Efforts have also been made through automated advisory tools to develop a mechanism for generation of agromet advisories along with crop and its stages by using realized data recorded at surface observatories under Network of IMD.

Dissemination of weather forecast, agromet advisories and extension activities:

The Integrated Agromet Advisory Services located in the Division of Agricultural Physics, Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi has been serving the farming community in and around NCR. Progressive farmers have been taking keen interest in the agro-advisories and are the foremost beneficiaries.

The major objective of this programme is to advise timely and need-based crop management practices. Weather forecast on rainfall, maximum and minimum temperature, wind speed, wind direction, cloud cover, maximum and minimum humidity are being received on every Tuesday and Friday from IMD, New Delhi. Once the forecast was received, the experts' opinion from different disciplines was obtained. Based on the advice, the agro advisories are being prepared on every Tuesday and Friday in Hindi as well as in English. These advisories are sent to IMD for preparation of national bulletins and are uploaded on the IMD website (www.imdagrimet.gov.in) in both Hindi and English.

Dissemination of agromet advisories to the farmers through different multi-channel system of like All

India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan, private TV and radio channels, newspaper and internet, SMS and IVR (Interactive Voice Response Technology) etc. is being made on wider scale. Under PPP mode, Reliance Foundation, Reuter Market Light, IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL), NOKIA-HCL, Handygo, Mahindra Samriddhi, Kisan Sanchar, National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) are disseminating agromet advisories in SMS and IVR format to the farming community. In addition to that number of AMFUs has started sending agromet advisories through SMS in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC) / Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) / KVK / NABARD / Internet. Agromet Advisories are also being disseminated in both Regional and English languages through "Kisan SMS", a portal (<http://farmer.gov.in/advs/login.aspx>) launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. At present 21.69 million farmers are benefitted by this service directly. Weather forecast and advisories under alerts and warnings through SMS during extreme weather events are also issued which enable the farmers in planning of farming operations to minimize/control damage of crops under the adverse weather conditions.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) in collaboration with Agromet Field Units (AMFUs) disseminates weather forecast and Agromet Advisories to the farming community in the country in both regional and English languages through farmers' portal (<http://farmer.gov.in/advs/login.aspx>). The services helped the farmers not only in increasing the crop production but also reducing the losses due to inclement weather and other problems. In order to increase the number of farmers in the Kisan Portal, a system of registration through IMD's website has been developed by IMD and National Informatic Centre (NIC), Pune to provide weather based Agromet advisories to more number of farmers through free SMS. To avail this service, farmers are required to register their name and mobile number

along with the crops.

Farmers' awareness programmes (FAP):

Agromet Advisory Services can be strengthened through awareness programmes for the farming communities. Awareness programmes helping are helping the farmers to make more self-reliant in dealing with weather and climate issues that affect agricultural production and also to assist the farmers and further develop their adaptive capacity with improved planning and better management decisions, a participatory, cross- disciplinary approach is being taken to delivering climate and weather information and enhancing the awareness of information user groups. In India, such programmes were organized jointly by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), State agricultural universities, Institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Institute of Technology, working with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders in different parts of the country. Farmers receive informative brochures; pamphlets outlining weather-based farming guidelines; information on packages and crop practices in the district; leaflets containing information about pests and diseases, severe weather conditions, crops grown under stress conditions and inbuilt contingency plans; and the District Agromet Bulletin - all in local languages. In order to improve the linkages and develop a local (village) level rain measuring network, five rain gauges made of plastic are distributed to a group of progressive farmers in the programmes. The purpose of distributing the rain gauges is to involve farmers in the observation of weather data and in the preparation of agromet advisories so they can share their observations. Such types of outreach programmes can be Farmer's club meeting, Field Visits by Scientists, Farmers Field Schools etc. In all, 243 farmer awareness programmes were organized at district level by Agromet field units with the funding of IMD.

Results showed that the farmers who followed the agromet advisories are able to reduce the input cost

as compared to the non AAS farmers, who did not follow the weather based information. More net returns of AAS farmers over non-AAS farmers can be due to low input cost, following weather based management practices and timely management of pests and diseases. This profit was due to the crop management done by the farmers such as timely land preparation and sowing, adoption of recommended seed rate and suitable varieties, timely weeding, harvesting and irrigation and pesticide applications, according to agromet advisory bulletins.

Conclusion:

Sustainable development is a set a long-term goal that can only be achieved by a set of management practices. Development of sustainable food production strategies requires a more complete understanding of the limitations of the ecosystem and of the inter- relationships between weather and climate, crops, trees and livestock. Proper incorporation of agroclimatic considerations in the development of improved strategies requires a much longer time frame than has been used in the past. Though there is substantial improvement in the weather services to the farmers but yet a substantial body of research also shows that the availability of information is not sufficient for unreached and poor farmers in the villages to benefit. These farmers need both weather and climate services for better crop production. Agromet Advisory services for agriculture that is, the provision of accurate and locally-appropriate climate and weather information play a vital building block for increasing the resilience of communities to climate change, diseases, and disasters. A new initiative, the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS), is working to enhance the capability of many countries to provide these services, so that they can adequately plan for the future. Through India Meteorology Department (IMD)'s national Agro-meteorological Advisory Service (AAS) program, Gramin Krishi Mausam Seva, farmers across the country have been receiving, weather-based, crop-focused agro-meteorological advisories at district level for a number of years. Now

IMD has planned to strengthen the service in terms of observation, seamless weather forecast, manpower, real time information flow, research and development (R&D), dissemination etc. This present system of delivering the services at district level is underway to extend up to sub-district/ block level with dissemination up to village level to meet the end user's requirements in both the irrigated and rain fed systems. Establishment of 660 District Agrometeorological Units (DAMUs) in each district of India at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) is under pipeline which includes 130 existing AMFUs till 2019 with the objective of preparing customized advisory at sub district/block level with medium range block level weather forecast. So that small and marginal farmers will be benefitted by these services.

The studies showed that the application of agromet advisory bulletin, based on current and fore casted weather is a useful tool for enhancing the production and income. AAS farmers received weather forecast based agro-advisories, including optimum use of inputs for different farm operations. Due to judicious and timely utilization of inputs, production cost for the AAS farmers reduced. The increased yield level and reduced cost of cultivation led to increased net returns.

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ONBOARDING OF COOPERATIVES ON GEM PORTAL: ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY IN COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM

Prakash Naiknavare

on 9th August, 2022, the Union Home and Cooperation Minister, Amit Shah, e-launched the onboarding of cooperatives as buyers on Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal. In the first phase, cooperatives with a turnover of more than 100 crore are being encouraged to register on the portal. The launch process was quite encouraging as 45 of the 54 multistate cooperatives and 289 out of the 589 eligible cooperative societies had already registered on the portal by then. With the e-launch, these cooperatives can now place purchase orders on GeM portal, which has been planned as the national procurement portal, an end-to-end online marketplace for Union and State Government Departments, Ministries, and public sector undertakings (PSUs). The portal has approx. 45 lakh verified sellers and service providers, offering more than 10,000 products and more than 288 services. The move to enlist cooperatives as buyers on GeM portal will enhance transparency and efficiency in the sector and in process will also enhance the trust of the members and the farmer shareholders of the societies. The Hon'ble Minister, while launching the onboarding process, also exhorted cooperatives to the register as sellers, which will help expand the cooperative sector.

Earlier, the Ministry of Cooperation had designated National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) to facilitate the onboarding of cooperatives on GeM portal. The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd. (NFCSF) has been working with NCUI and the Ministry of Cooperation to onboard sugar cooperatives on GeM portal. NFCSF has also been working to create awareness about GeM portal and to coordinate with the member cooperative sugar factories on issues and challenges, if any they face in the registration process.

Let us understand the genesis of GeM and the benefits and impact of permitting cooperatives on the portal as buyers.

Genesis of GeM Portal

GeM is a digital platform that enables buying and selling of goods and services. The portal was launched on 9th August, 2016, by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Notably, the initial version of the GeM portal was hosted and developed by the Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for buying desired products voluntarily. Rule 149 of GFR i.e., General Financial Rule has been amended to "Procurement of Goods and Services by Ministries or Department will be mandatory for Goods or Services available on GeM". However, the present GeM portal is developed and managed by the 'Managed Service Provider' (MSP).

The Department of Commerce had developed GeM portal to bring transparency to the old public procurement tender process of government departments. GeM portal aims to enhance efficiency and speed in public procurement. Its main objective is to facilitate government departments to procure services or products with the desired quantity, quality, volume, and sources in defined timelines. Government users and sellers need to register themselves as buyers and sellers respectively to avail the online GeM portal benefits.

GeM portal is facilitating online procurement of everyday use services and goods required by various government organizations, departments, and PSUs only. But now, the Union Cabinet has approved the mandate for GeM to allow cooperatives to procure goods and services through GeM and thereby increased transparency and sellers' participation. The Ministry of Cooperation has encouraged cooperative societies to onboard on GeM portal as buyers to reap the benefits of competitive pricing of required goods and services.

Source : The Co operator - Sept 2022

On 9th August, 2022, Hon'ble Minister of Home and Cooperation inaugurated the e-launch of onboarding of cooperatives on GeM portal with enhanced scope of inclusion of cooperatives as buyers. The Ministry of Cooperation has made NCUI the nodal agency to facilitate the onboarding of cooperatives and coordinating with GeM authorities.

NFCSF is the largest cooperative apex sugar body in the world representing around 50 million farmers through its 258 member sugar factories and 9 state cooperative sugar federations. On the basis of information given by NFCSF, NCUI has compiled and forwarded a list of cooperatives with turnover/deposits of 100 crore, to GeM for the onboarding process. NFCSF has not only sensitized and encouraged cooperative sugar mills to onboard on GeM portal, but also shared the information with interested banks for opening GeM Pool Account (GPA).

GeM brings in Transparency and Builds Up the Image of Cooperatives :

1. GeM portal is a paperless, contactless, and cashless online marketplace. It eliminates human interface in vendor registration, order placement, and payment processing, to a great extent. Being an open platform, GeM avoids all entry barriers for suppliers, who wish to do business with the government/ PSUs/ cooperatives.

There is a provision of sending direct SMS and e-mail notifications to both buyer/head of organization/ paying authorities as well as sellers for different events in the purchase process. Buyers can online search, compare, select, and buy with ease through database on GeM portal. They can have access to price trends and price comparisons among multiple suppliers and get apparent and healthy competitive advantage. Online, cashless, and time bound payment on GeM portal is facilitated through integration with public financial management system (PFMS) and bank multi-option system (BMOPS). Web services integration is extended to payment systems by opening a GPA. Seamless processes and online time-bound payment, which is also mandated by the Department of

Expenditure, has given confidence to the vendors.

GeM is committed to abiding with the GFR Rule 173 (xiv) and also keeping in line with the CVC guidelines. It does not encourage negotiations except in ad-hoc conditions with the prior approval of competent authority (CA), clearly having the reason for undergoing negotiations only with the lowest evaluated responsive bidder. All these facilities provided in GeM portal would enhance transparency and ultimately the image of the cooperatives.

GeM Facilitates Cost-effective Buying to Coops

Direct purchase on GeM can be done in a matter of minutes and the entire process is online, end-to-end integrated and with online tools for assessing price reasonability.

1. Three categories of buying, based on amount of purchases are prescribed:

- a. Direct purchase for amounts up to ₹ 25,000.
- b. L1 purchase for amounts greater than ₹ 25,000 and less than ₹ 5 lakh.

For procurements of higher value than ₹ 5 lakh, the bidding/reverse auction (RA) facility on GeM is among the most transparent and efficient, in comparison to e-procurement systems in vogue within the government sector. The buying of products valued ₹ 25 lakh depend on intent as: (i) Intent of Buying - Proprietary Article Certificate (PAC) Procurement of specific products as per requirement; (ii) Intent of Buying - BID If objective is to only go for BID without comparison; and (iii) BID/ RA Procurement via BID/RA to get the best price.

For creating a bid/RA, the buyer does not need to create his/her own technical specifications as they have been standardized on GeM. The bid/RA can be created in a matter of minutes and finalized within 7 days. The bid/RA is notified via e-mail and SMS to all the eligible suppliers. New suppliers are also notified once they get themselves registered online on GeM and are determined as 'eligible' by the system. GeM bidding/RA therefore ensures competition, fair play, speed and efficiency and leads to proper price discovery and cost effectiveness.

2. Coordination with 18 nationalized banks, state and district cooperative banks to open GPA for MSCS and SSCS is another facility extended to compete in the market economy.

3. The reasonableness of the rates can also be confirmed through online comparison with market price on leading e-commerce. This entitlement given to the buyers is another way of cost and effective purchases by them.

4. The MoU with Department of Post (DOP) has been conceived after the successful integration of GeM and India Post. With this integration, it is now possible for all government/PSUs/cooperative buyers, sellers and service providers to avail the logistics services and facilities on GeM portal through the India Post offices located in the remotest parts of India. In addition, more than 1.3 lakh common service centres (CSCs) outlets of DOP would facilitate onboarding of sellers on GeM. This tie-up between Department of Posts and GeM will enable sellers to opt for DOP services of pickup, booking, transmission and delivery from their profile page on GeM portal. Department of Posts has deployed seamless data exchange with all its customers through application programme interface. (API). GeM portal thereby ensures a high quality of service and faster delivery of e-commerce benefits through last-mile physical connectivity, in turn facilitating in the cost effective purchasing by buyers.

5. Multiple consignees can be selected for services by a buyer based on their convenience/logistic arrangements.

6. Easy return policy is facilitated on GeM portal in the event of delivery of product which is defective/physically damaged/wrong/not as per specification. These provisions made in GeM portal and user friendly dashboard would facilitate cost effective buying to cooperatives to compete in the market economy.

Training Programs for Cooperatives on GeM

1. The Ministry of Cooperation has developed a system of single point of contact for states for GeM as a helpdesk for onboarding and further process of buying. The Ministry of Cooperation (MOC) has designated

regional and state business facilitators to provide direct assistance to cooperatives. These business facilitators should initiate training programs for cooperative societies to achieve the desired objectives.

2. NCUI is actively coordinating with GeM to render services required by cooperative societies during the onboarding process. This coordination should continue for imparting training to cooperative societies and associated banks.

3. State registrars of cooperative societies also can be involved to draw up a training plan for cooperative societies/associated banks in their respective states/districts, and setup/ facilitate help desks at their offices similar to the Department of Cooperation for rendering necessary assistance.

4. DOP, which has been integrated GeM by way of an MoU signed, may also guide and train CSCs and cooperatives with regard to various postal products and services that are offered and packaging of consignments as per Department of Posts Shipment Packaging Policy.

5. Coordination with 18 scheduled commercial public sector and private banks, and state and district cooperative banks to open GPA has been done. They should impart training to cooperative societies for smooth functioning with respect to performance bank guarantees (e-PBG), earnest money deposit (EMD), and payment gateway to the registered users on GeM portal.

Aggressive plan for training to cooperatives with respect to onboarding, buying process, payment management, and incident handling is required for successful implementation of the GeM.

Precautions/Strategies for Smooth Functioning of GeM

Every new initiative has some dissatisfaction which needs immediate attention to resolve. Updating and upgrading of system is a regular process for improved functionality and increased ease of use, for becoming more efficient and productive while avoiding risks associated with non-compliance. Updating GeM portal will require careful review at intervals either because a

new regulation is forcing them to make some changes in one or more processes, or simply to overcome the problems/suggestions receiving from the users. Some of such points require due attention, and are as follows:

1. Buyers are not allowed to place any order at GeM prices outside GeM. The prices on GeM are only applicable if the procurement is made through GeM portal. Using GeM, prices for procurement outside GeM portal is strictly prohibited.
2. It has been general a complaint that there was delay in payment to vendors, which may become a bigger concern for GeM. This may defeat the main objective of GeM portal that vendors will get timely, assured payment when they do business with the government/PSUs/cooperatives.
3. Incident management (IM) on GeM portal may be a herculean task. As per the data reported in GeM Quality Report, a large number of incidents have been raised related to pre and post-contract against buyers and sellers. To bring the pre/post-contract incidents down, certain interventions based on complaints / suggestions from the buyers/ sellers, may be done to make the incident processing easier and faster for them.
4. The goods delivered have self-certified warranty/guarantee. Buyer has the right to reject on proper justification any consignment of the goods received within a period of 10 days of receipt. No payment will be made for rejected goods and the seller would be liable to take back such rejected goods within 10 days without any charge. The disputes/issues of infringement of these provisions need to be resolved by an authority from GeM.
5. There shall be performance security / PBG requirement for contracts placed under direct purchase option on GeM as of now. However, for procurement through reverse auction/e-bidding,

security deposit/performance bank guarantee (PBG), shall be applicable in respect of contracts valuing above ₹25 lakh. This issue for the purchases of lesser than ₹25 lakh value also needs to be taken care in GeM portal.

6. If the seller fails to deliver the goods/services within the delivery/time, liquidated damages will be charged as per terms and conditions. No provision of relaxation for the natural cause of delay has been provided, which may lead to a matter of dispute amongst buyers and sellers.
7. As per the terms and conditions of GeM, the demand for goods shall not be divided into small quantities to make piecemeal purchases to avoid procurement through L-1 buying / bidding / reverse auction on GeM or the necessity of obtaining the sanction of higher authorities required with reference to the estimated value of the total demand. There should be some provision in GeM about dealing with the sudden demand of the immediately after a purchase.

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that GeM portal has immense potential as it offers a large number of products for individual categories of goods/services; makes available search, compare, select, and buy facility; enables buying goods services online as and when required; provides transparency and ease of buying; ensures continuous vendor rating system; offers an up-to-date user-friendly dashboard for buying; monitors supplies and payments; provides an easy return policy; and last but not the least, provisions an incident management policy. Though GeM has achieved significant success so far, but a concerted effort is required from all governments /PSUs/ cooperatives buyers, sellers, and the various partners in the GeM ecosystem, to make it more advance and allow e-portal to unlock its full potential.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARDBS 2022 ON 16TH JULY 2022, NEW DELHI

The National Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks' Federation Ltd (NAFCARD) organized the National Conference of ARDBs-2022 on 16th July 2022 at NCUI auditorium, New Delhi. Shri Amit Shah, Hon'ble Union Minister of Home and Cooperation was the Chief Guest of National Conference. On this occasion, the Union Minister of State for Cooperation and North Eastern Affairs Shri B.L. Verma; the Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation Shri Gyanesh Kumar, President of NCUI and Chairman of IFFCO Shri Dileep Sanghani, President of International Cooperative Alliance - Asia-Pacific Region and Chairman of KRIBHCO Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav and many other dignitaries were present. The conference was attended by more than 800 representatives of Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks at state and primary levels across the country and

representatives from the government, NABARD and other National Federations. This conference culminates the sectoral programmes of ARDBs including public contact programme at ground level as part of celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The Federation also held an award function on the occasion to felicitate SCARDBs in Kerala, Karnataka, Gujarat and West Bengal for outstanding performance in lending, recovery and improvement in other parameters of performance during 2020-21. Awards were also presented to the four oldest ARDBs in the country for ceaseless service to the rural sector for more than 90 years.

The technical session of the day-long conference was to "deliberate on the roadmap for revival of ARDBs and finalize recommendations for submitting them to the government."



INAGURATION OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022



Managing Director, NAFCARD, Greeting & Welcoming Shri Amit Shah, Hon'ble Union Minister of Home & Cooperation



Lighting of Lamp by Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour



Welcome Address of Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman, NAFCARD



Shri Amit Shah, Hon'ble Union Minister of Home & Cooperation delivering his Speech



Address of Shri B.L. Verma, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Cooperation & Dev. of North-East Region



Address of Shri Dileep Sanghani, President National Coop. Union of India & IFFCO



Vote of Thanks by K.K. Ravindran,
Managing Director, NAFCARD



View of VIP Guests and participants

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARDBS 2022 SPEECH OF CHIEF GUEST

SHRI AMIT SHAH, UNION HOME AND COOPERATION MINISTER

The Union Home and Cooperation Minister, Shri Amit Shah attended the National Conference of Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) as the Chief Guest, on 16th July 2022 at NCUI Auditorium, New Delhi. On this occasion, the country's first Union Minister of Cooperation said the dimension of cooperatives is very important for agricultural development and without this we cannot fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of doubling farmers' income. The history of Agriculture and Rural Development Banks in India is almost nine decades old. Agricultural credit has two pillars, short term and long term. Before 1920, the agricultural sector was completely based on aerial farming, when rains came, there was a good harvest. In the 1920s, the introduction of long-term loans to the farmer began, which led to the realization of the farmer's dream of creating infrastructure for agriculture in his farm. Only and only the Agriculture and Rural Development Banks worked to change the country's agriculture from being luck based to becoming labour based. At that time, this dimension of the cooperative sector made a major start in the direction of making the farmer self-reliant. Shri Shah said that if we look at this journey of the last 90 years, then we see that we have not been able to reach the bottom most level of the agriculture and farming system. He said there are many obstacles but unless

and until long-term financing is not increased, agricultural development is not possible according to the vision of the Prime Minister. There are many large States where banks have collapsed and this aspect also needs to be considered. Diverting surplus funds towards non-agricultural use does not serve the purpose. The objectives of NABARD are fulfilled only when all available money is spent on rural development and agriculture. But this is not possible unless we promote long term finance, infrastructure and micro-irrigation in agriculture. Shri Amit Shah said the job of agriculture and rural development banks is not just to finance, but to expand activities. Whatever obstacles are there in expansion of work, we have to find ways and then only will we be able to achieve the goal of agricultural development. He said that we should not only run banks but also try to work towards the fulfilment of the objectives of banking. Co-operatives were set up to achieve the objective of long term finance. By creating new cooperative societies, medium and long term loans have to be provided to farmers. The Union Home and Cooperation Minister said speedy loans will also have to be provided as well as recovery of loans. Services will also have to be expanded, dialogue will have to be undertaken to increase the percentage of irrigated land, yield, and production, make farmers prosperous and bring

awareness amongst farmers. He said that it is not enough just to hold a position in an institution in cooperatives, but it is necessary to worry about what one can do during ones tenure, to achieve the purpose for which these services have been started since 1924. He said these banks have financed more than three lakh tractors, but there are more than 8 crore tractors in the country. We have given medium and long term finance to about 5.2 lakh farmers out of 13 crore farmers. Many new reforms have been undertaken by banks which are welcome but reforms must not be bank specific, they should be for the entire sector. If a bank does a good job, then it is the job of the federation to inform all banks about this and take it forward. Bank specific reforms cannot change the sector, but if reforms take place in the sector, then the sector will automatically change and if the sector changes, then the cooperative will become very strong. Many areas like wells, pump sets, tractors, land development, horticulture, poultry, and fisheries are included in the work cooperatives undertake, but it is our responsibility to expand them and we have to move them forward, then the purpose with which a cooperative unit was established for will be achieved. Members of all banks who are attending this conference today, should also discuss best practices of the sector, if any reforms or changes are needed to bring in new diversification within the banking sector, the doors of the Ministry of Cooperation are open for you 24x7. Shri Amit Shah said that especially in agriculture finance, whether short-term or long-term, the country has become paralyzed in a way. In many places the activity goes on very well, but in many States it is very scattered. We have to revive it and the helpless farmer who has become the victim of inadequacy has to be taken on the path of economic development through proper handholding by the cooperative sector. There is no dearth of capital but our financing system and our infrastructure have collapsed, they have to be revived and every state bank will have to identify such areas in their State. He said that I would like that NABARD should also form a wing of extension and expansion in this direction, so that farmers who want medium and long term finance can get such

finance. The need of the hour is to make institutional coverage adequate. He said long term finance should always be more than short term finance; only then will the sector develop. The higher the long term finance, the better the system will be and the short term finance will automatically increase. 25 years back we had 50 percent of long term finance and after 25 years this share has come down to 25 percent, we should worry about this development. In Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, the entire infrastructure has collapsed. At present, only 13 States have agricultural and rural development banks running relatively in line with the expectations of the government. The Union Cooperation Minister said the country is seventh in the world in the availability of agricultural land and in terms of agricultural activity we are second only to America. That is why NABARD was established. If we make 39.4 crore acres of land completely irrigated, then the Indian farmer will be able to eradicate hunger not only in the country, but also in the world. But if it has to be irrigated and there is a shortage of water, then we have to go towards the micro irrigation system and if holdings have become small, then we have to irrigate them by taking help of cooperative societies. He request that banks should be revived and the government, NABARD and the Federation should work on this. In the coming days, I am also going to convene a joint meeting of NABARD, the Federation and the Department of Cooperation on how to create a strong system of long term finance in each State. For this the federation will also have to play its role. Shri Amit Shah said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Cooperation Department has taken many steps. A very big step has just been taken that all PACS will be computerized at a cost of ₹ 2,500 crore. PACS, District Cooperative Banks, State Cooperative Banks and NABARD will go online for accounting and this will help in running PACS with transparency. It will be of great benefit. We have also taken an in-principle decision to set up a cooperative university in terms of training as well. At present, all units with a turnover of more than ₹ 100 crore will be able to buy on the GEM platform. With this our procurement will also

be cheap, there will be transparency and corruption will be stopped. There is no cooperative database in the country and unless there is a database, one cannot think of expansion. We do not have any database of how many coastal States do not have fishermen's cooperative societies. We do not have any database on how many cooperatives are working in the country. There is also no database of how many villages are deprived of the benefits of PACS. We have also started the work of creating this database and it is going to be a huge benefit. Expansion can happen only when one knows where expansion is to be done. Basic work has also been started by the Ministry of Cooperation, Government of India. The government has sent model bye laws of PACS and I request all the activists associated with the cooperative movement that you must send us your suggestions with your practical experience for the preparation of the model bye laws of PACS. We want to make PACS multi-functional. They can take the work of gas distribution, storage, can take shops for cheaper grains, can also take petrol pumps, can also become FPOs, can also become communication centres, and can also distribute water from taps. When computerized, then a system will also be created to include all these dimensions. But if it has to be made multi-dimensional, multipurpose, then the model bye laws made 70-80 years ago will have to be changed. We do not have to reduce the element of cooperatives in them, but we have worked to add the new activities that can be added to PACS. The Union Cooperation Minister said Amul is also doing primary work for marketing of natural farming products. We have also thought of forming a multi-state cooperatives for marketing of handicrafts. IFFCO and KRIBHCO have been given responsibility for seed reform, a multistate cooperative export house will also be established for export and the Government of India is taking an initiative and before August 15, we will work to take it to the ground. Shri Narendra Modi has also approved a

large increase in the budgetary allocation of the Cooperation Ministry. Shri Amit Shah said the government led by Shri Narendra Modi has done a lot of work in agriculture. Out of these, I definitely want to speak about MSP. Paddy procurement has increased by about 8 percent, earlier in 2013-14, 475 lakh metric tonnes of paddy was procured, today 896 lakh metric tonnes of paddy is procured and beneficiary farmers have increased from 76 lakhs to 1.31 crore. Wheat procurement has increased by 72 percent, earlier used to buy 251 lakh metric tonnes and today it is 433 lakh metric tonnes. Kisan Credit Card, promotion of organic farming, promotion of natural farming, export of agriculture has crossed US \$ 50 billion for the first time, 64 lakh hectares of land has been increased in just 8 years under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana compared to the earlier 64 lakh hectare in last 70 years. As the government's investment in agriculture infrastructure increases, so does the potential of cooperatives, especially cooperatives in agriculture finance. Mechanization of agriculture has also started, a budget of about ₹ 6,800 crore has been spent on 10,000 FPOs and digital transactions have also increased to a large extent in mandis. The Union Cooperation Minister said the government cannot expand the cooperative sector, but only cooperatives can expand the sector. The government can provide facilities, but to revive the spirit of cooperatives and keep this spirit growing into the future, it is our responsibility to establish this type of cooperative sector. No matter how much money government puts in, cooperatives will not grow, but if we revive the spirit of cooperation and remain dedicated to the goals, make efforts to achieve the goals, then surely cooperatives will have a bigger role in the realization of Shri Narendra Modi's vision of a US \$ 5 trillion economy. He said if there is any sector which can make 70 crore poor of the country a partner in the process of inclusive development, then it is the cooperative sector.

**AWARD PRESENTATION BY SHRI AMIT SHAH , HON'BLE UNION MINISTER OF
HOME & COOPERATION AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARDBs 2022**
ON 16 JULY 2022, NEW DELHI



Award for Outstanding Performance presented to Kerala State Co-operative Agricultural & Rural Dev. Bank Ltd. received by Mr. Jyothi Prasad, Administrator Kerala SCARDB Ltd.



Award for Outstanding Performance presented to Karnataka State Co-op. Agricultural & Rural Dev. Bank Ltd. received by Shri D. Krishnakumar, President Karnataka SCARDB Ltd.



Award for Outstanding Performance presented to Gujarat State Co-operative Agriculture & Rural Dev. Bank Ltd. received by Shri Dollar Kotecha, Chairman, Gujarat SCARDB Ltd.



Award for Outstanding Performance presented to West Bengal State Co-operative Agriculture & Rural Dev. Bank Ltd. received by Shri Moinul Hassan Special Officer, West Bengal SCARDB Ltd



Award for Ceaseless service to Rural Sector since 1929 presented to Tamil Nadu Coop. State Agriculture & Rural Development Bank Ltd. received by Shri Perimalazhagan, Chairman, Tamil Nadu CSARDB Ltd.



Award for Ceaseless service to Rural Sector since 1934 presented to Birbhum Cooperative Agriculture & Rural Development Bank Ltd. West Bengal received by Shri Shymal Kumar, Chairman, Birbhum CARDB Ltd.



Award for Ceaseless service to Rural Sector since 1924 presented to Ajmer Sahakari Bhoomi VikasBank Ltd. Rajasthan received by Shri Chetan Choudary, Chairman, Ajmer Sahakari Bhoomi Vikas Bank Ltd.



Award for Ceaseless service to Rural Sector since 1934 presented to Thrissur Primary Coop. Agril. & Rural Development Bank Ltd, Kerala received by Shri M.S. Sivaramakrishnan, President, Thrissur PCARDB Ltd.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARDBs -2022

- Govt to take urgent measures to revive and strengthen existing institutions in the structure. Since the structure exists only in 16 States there is a need for setting up a Multi-State ARDB to cater to the long term credit needs of farmers in other States.
- A few financially strong and good working SCARDBs may also consider converting themselves to Multi State ARDBs to cater to long term credit needs of neighboring States where LTCCS does not exist.
- NABARD needs to revive refinance support to the States of Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir and Tripura and should specify minimum essential conditions to be fulfilled by these SCARDBs for restoring refinance support.
- Federation and SCARDBs to prepare and implement action plan for each State to revamp their operations to make long term financing successful and sustainable.
- NABARD should extend refinance to SCARDBs without govt guarantee.
- NABARD should also give two year gap between refinance disbursement date and the first principal demand by NABARD to minimize the mismatch in collection and repayment demand which ARDBs are facing on a permanent basis at present as recommended by the Working Group on Enhancing the Share of ARDBs in Investment Credit under the

Chairmanship of Shri Y.C. Nanda, Ex. Chairman, NABARD.

- Central govt interest subvention scheme for crop loans and other credit linked subvention schemes should be extended to ARDBs also.
- ARDBs should be considered for Trans Union Cibil membership which will help to include loans given by ARDBs in the data base and credit score reports of credit ratio companies.
- Provision may be included in DICGC Act to extend insurance coverage of deposits of ARDBs.
- The Central Govt scheme for investment in the debentures of ARDBs which was in vogue till 2017-18 should be restored.
- Govt of India may include ARDBs also in the scheme for computerization of rural credit cooperatives.
- Reserve Bank of India needs to prescribe norms for licensing ARDBs as full-fledged banks as recommended by Kapoor Committee (1999) and Vaidyanathan Task Force II (2006).

Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman, NCARDBF said that Govt is actively taking up various recommendations with the concerned agencies and already two Review Meetings have been conducted in the Ministry regarding implementation of these recommendations.

169th Meeting of the Board of Management

The 169th Meeting of Board of Management of the Federation was held on 26th September 2022 at The Lalit Hotel, Mumbai. Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman of the Federation presided over the Meeting. Chairman, NCARDBF welcomed all delegates and Special Invitees to the meeting he further assured full cooperation to deal with the issues pertaining to the sector with the Ministry. Vice Chairpersons Shri K. Ravinder Rao, Shri Parimelazhagan, also participated in the meeting. Important action points covered in the meeting were on Proposal for Computerization of ARDBs, Draft Business Plan of the Federation submitted by Ministry of Cooperation, proposals for amending multi state cooperative societies act 2022 and also reviewed performance in key operational areas.

Annual General Meeting of the Federation

The Annual General Meeting of the Federation was held on 26th September 2022 at Lalit Hotel, Mumbai at 7.30 PM. The Meeting was chaired by Shri Dolar Kotecha, Chairman of the Federation, who welcomed the members to the General Body. The Vice Chairmen of the Federation also participated in the meeting.

The Chairman, Federation in his introductory remarks

said that the ARDBs sector which remained neglected for many years is now getting serious attention of the Govt., for its revival and enhanced role in long term financing. He requested for the active support of member banks to the Federation for making use of this opportunity to revive the structure and restore its importance in rural credit.

The AGM passed the Accounts for F.Y.2021-22 and the revised budget for 2022-23.

Appointments/Elections

- 1) Smt Parvathy Nair K.L., Joint Registrar (SC/ST) of Co-operative Societies has assumed charge as Managing Director of the Kerala State Cooperative Agricultural & Rural Development Bank Ltd., Thiruvananthapuram w.e.f. 13th July 2022.
- 2) Shri Suresh Kumar Goyal, has assumed the charge as Chairman of the Punjab State Co-operative Agricultural Development Bank Ltd., Chandigarh.
- 3) Shri Sabir Kumar Panda, J.R.C.S.(T&P), Office of the R.C.S.(O) has assumed charge of the Management-in-Charge of the Odisha State Co-operative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank Ltd., Bhubaneshwar w.e.f. 21st September 2022.

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Amit Shah exhorts banks to focus on farm sector

Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said that Agricultural and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) should extend more long-term loans to the agriculture sector, including for irrigation projects and other infrastructure. Mr. Shah was speaking at the National Conference of Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs). He congratulated the rural banks in Kerala, Gujarat, Karnataka and West Bengal that have excelled in following all the regulatory parameters. Diverting surplus funds to non-agricultural use does not serve the purpose. The objectives of NABARD are fulfilled only when all available money is spent on rural development and agriculture. But this is not possible unless we promote long-term finance, infrastructure and micro-irrigation in agriculture, Mr. Shah said.

He said 25 years ago the share of long-term finance in the Agri sector was around 50% but now it has come down to 25%. In Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, the entire infrastructure has collapsed. At present, only 13 States have agricultural and rural

Amit Shah asks cooperative banks to focus on extending more long-term financing to agriculture sector

Agricultural and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) must extend more long-term loans to the agriculture sector, including for irrigation and other infrastructure, said Union cooperation minister Amit Shah.

The government is building a database on cooperatives to expand this sector, as it is important for boosting farm growth and doubling farmers' income, Shah added. The incomes of farmers cannot be raised without improving the sector, especially irrigation, he pointed out, and urged cooperative banks to focus on providing loans for increasing irrigated land. Shah said the country, which has 49.4 crore acres of arable land, the highest after the United States, had the potential to feed the whole world if the entire arable land is irrigated. Currently, about 50% of the arable land in India is dependent on the monsoon rainfall.

Cooperative sector can play important role in making India self-reliant: Amit Shah

Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said the cooperative sector can play an important role in making India self-reliant as well as ensuring economic prosperity of 70 crore poor who are aspiring to lead better lives. Shah, also the Union Home Minister, asked the cooperatives to channelize these 70 crore people and make them financially self-reliant.

Addressing a conference to commemorate the 100th International Day of Cooperatives here, the minister highlighted that the Modi government in the last eight years has launched many programmes for the upliftment of poor and to ensure they get electricity, cooking gas, housing and health insurance. Shah noted

development banks running relatively in line with the expectations of the government, the minister said. He said the country ranked seventh in the world in agricultural land availability and in terms of agricultural activity, second only to America. That is why NABARD was established. If we make 39.4 crore acres of land completely irrigated, then the Indian farmer will be able to eradicate hunger not only in the country but also in the world. But if it has to be irrigated and there is a shortage of water, then we have to go towards the micro irrigation system and if holdings have become small, then we have to irrigate them by taking help of cooperative societies, he said.

Mr. Shah said there is no cooperative database in the country and unless there is a database, one cannot think of expansion. "We do not have any database of how many coastal States do not have fishermen's cooperative societies. We do not have any database on how many cooperatives are working in the country," he said.

Addressing a national conference in New Delhi, Shah said ARDBs have been functioning in the country under different names over the last nine decades. Most of them operated as land mortgage banks and were the first to grant long-term finance to farmer's way back in 1924. With the conversion of these banks into ARDBs, farmers' dependence on monsoon was reduced. Slowly, long-term financing evolved, he said. "If we look back and see the last 90 years' journey of long-term financing through cooperatives and how it has percolated down, if you see the data, it has not grown," Shah said. "Especially in agriculture financing, be it long or short term, it is paralysed in many parts of the country. In many places, activities are done well but in some states it is not. We need to revive them."

that these 70 crore people are now aspiring for better lives and this can only be fulfilled by the cooperative sector. While addressing a conference on the theme 'Cooperatives Build An Atmanirbhar Bharat and Better World', he attacked the Congress party for only giving slogans of 'Garibi Hatao' and not doing enough to eliminate poverty. Minister highlighted that, the capitalism and communism are extreme forms of governance and cooperative model of development is best suited for the country, adding that the cooperation ministry is working on various aspects to strengthen the cooperative sector by making them professional and multi-dimensional. Noting that the ministry is

taking many pro-active steps, he said a cooperative university will be set up to provide skills training and offer courses in subjects like accounting, marketing and management. The trained manpower can be absorbed in the cooperative societies and this will also eliminate nepotism in appointments, he added. He also said there is a need to make changes in laws as well but stressed on self-regulations among cooperatives. Further, Shah highlighted that the government recently decided to undertake computerisation of all functional 63,000 Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS) with an outlay of ₹ 2,516 crore and said the move will bring transparency in accounting and book keeping.

The government has also come out with draft model bye-laws which will enable PACS to diversify from their

Shah: Bylaws to make Agri Credit Societies multipurpose ready

Union home minister Amit Shah said the Centre is planning to make the primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) multipurpose.

While addressing the annual general meeting of seven cooperative bodies of Amreli district, Shah said the requisite bylaws for the purpose are already ready. Shah maintained that the PACS will be providing facilities such as marketing, godowns, producing biogas and collecting power bills. Before the end of the month, the model bylaws will be sent to the cooperative bodies, he said. He also said the Union government plans to raise the number of existing 65,000 PACS across the country to three lakhs over the next five years starting this December. According to Shah, once this target is achieved every panchayat will have a PACS.

63000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved computerisation of 63,000 functional Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) over 5 years with a total budget outlay of ₹2,516 cr. The Centre's share would be ₹1,528 crore. The PACS constitute the lowest tier of the three-tier short-term cooperative credit (STCC) with 130 million farmers as its members.

The government said the majority of PACS have so far not been computerised and still functioning resulting in inefficiency and trust deficit. In some of the states, standalone and partial computerisation of PACS has been done. There is no uniformity in the software being used by them and they are not interconnected. It has been proposed to computerise all the PACS throughout the country and bring them on a common platform at national level and have a common accounting system for their day-to-day business.

core business. As PACS is a state subject, he said suggestions of state governments are being sought. There are 8.5 lakh cooperative societies in India and around 12 crore people are linked directly with this sector. While mentioning about the contribution of cooperatives in many businesses like milk, fertilisers, sugar, fisheries, agri-credit and procurement of food grains, he pitched for diversification of cooperatives into other sectors. Globally also, Shah said the cooperative sector is big and its size is bigger than the economy of France. The minister emphasised that the cooperative movement should be popularised in the country and it should peak when India celebrates 100th year of independence.

Shah: Bylaws to make Agri Credit Societies multipurpose ready

The government is also planning for a cooperative policy to facilitate formation of cooperative societies in sectors such as health, insurance, transportation and tourism, he said. Shah said Amul and five other cooperative societies have been brought together to form a multistate cooperative society that will set up laboratories across states to certify organic products as Amul Organic Products and the profit will be directly transferred to the farmers.

Shah also heaped praises on Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Parshottam Rupala. Shah said that it was Rupala in his capacity of MoS Agriculture who had first talked about a separate ministry of cooperation. It may be mentioned here that Amreli used to be the assembly constituency of Rupala.

63000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies to be computerised run on common platform

The project comprises development of cloud-based software with cyber security and data storage, providing hardware support to the PACS, digitisation of existing records, including maintenance support and training. This software will be in vernacular language having flexibility of customisation as per the needs of the states. Project Management Units (PMUs) will be set up at central and state levels. District Level Support will also be provided at a cluster of about 200 PACS..., read a statement.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah said in a series of tweets said, "Whether it is the creation of the Ministry of Cooperation or decisions taken thereafter in the direction of empowering this sector, they show that PM Modi's 'Sahakar Se Samridhi' is not just a slogan, rather that the PM has an unwavering resolve to bring positive change to lives of those associated with the cooperative sector."

Cooperatives will soon be able to export, says Amit Shah

Indian cooperatives will soon be able to export their products with the government working on a plan to register "two big cooperatives as export house registration" units in which other cooperative societies can register themselves as "members", said Union cooperation minister Amit Shah.

"We will set up a channel for them to export and brand their products, including organic produce," Shah said while addressing a conference to commemorate the 100th International Day of Cooperatives at Vigyan Bhavan. In 2019, the Union government has set up the Cooperative Sector Exports Promotion Forum (CSEPF) under the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) to assist farmers export their products. There are an estimated 8.55 lakh cooperative societies in India and around 13 crore people, including farmers linked directly with this sector. Shah informed

that the ministry has come out with draft model by-laws which will enable Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS) to diversify from their core business. As PACS is a state subject, he said the suggestions of state governments are being sought. These bylaws will make PACS the centre of village activities by providing many functions and facilities. If any PACS becomes defunct, states will have the power to liquidate it within 180 days and set up a new one in its place, Shah added.

PACS constitute the lowest tier of the three-tier short-term cooperative credit (STCC) comprising mostly farmers as members. Last week, the Union Cabinet approved computerisation of about 63,000 functional PACS over five years with a total budget outlay of ₹2,516 crore.

India's rural economy has more access to banking now

India's financial inclusion in the hinterland and the credit flow to the rural economy are improving along with a rise in household sector's financial savings, setting a stage for an accelerated growth of non-urban centres. The net financial savings of the household sector grew more than 3% points to 11.5% with insurance and pension funds leading the gains, RBI annual report shows. Total banking outlets in villages had grown around 52% in the last calendar year led by business correspondents even as the total branches fell. In December last year total banking outlets were over 19 lakh versus 12.53 lakh a year ago.

To capture the extent of financial inclusion across the country, the Reserve Bank has constructed a composite FI-Index with three sub-indices, viz., FI-Access, FI-Usage and FI-Quality, incorporating details of banking, investments, insurance, postal as well as the pension sector in consultation with the government and respective sectoral regulators. The FI-Index computed for end-March 2021 stood at 53.9 as against 43.4 for end-March 2017, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.5%.

RBI issues guidelines to regulate digital lending

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued the first set of guidelines for digital lending, to crack down on illegal activities by certain players. This follows the recommendation of a Working Group on Digital Lending (WGDL) that had submitted its report recently. As per the new norms, all loan disbursals and repayments will be required to be executed only between the bank accounts of the borrower and the Regulated Entities (RE) - such as a bank or a non-banking financial company - without any pass-through or pool account of the Lending Service Providers (LSP) or any third party. Stating that digital lending channelshad become prominent recently, the RBI said certain concerns had also emerged which, "if not mitigated, may erode the confidence of members of the public in the digital lending ecosystem."

The concerns relate to 'unbridled engagement of third

parties, mis-selling, breach of data privacy, unfair business conduct, charging of exorbitant interest rates, and unethical recovery practices', it said. "A standardised Key Fact Statement (KFS) must be provided to the borrower before executing the loan contract," the RBI said in a circular. All inclusive cost of digital loans in the form of Annual Percentage Rate (APR) is required to be disclosed to the borrowers' consent. They also allow a cooling-off period in which borrowers can exit loans by paying the principal and the proportionate annual percentage rate without any penalty. The framework is based on the principle that the lending business can be carried out only by entities that are either regulated by the Reserve Bank or entities permitted to do so under any other law, it added.

Large lenders increase rural push in search of fresh business

Large banks and non-bank lenders are making a concerted push to increase their presence in rural India and generate more business from the hinterland. Both State Bank of India (SBI) and HDFC Bank, the country's two largest banks by assets, have spoken of their intent to improve penetration in villages.

SBI chairman Dinesh Khara told last week that the bank's operational support subsidiary, currently in the process of being set up, will help the lender get more business in rural India. At present, SBI's branches across the hinterland typically have two employees each – an officer and a clerk – who are often engaged in facilitating transactions. The new subsidiary will focus on generating business and carrying out functions like opening new accounts and offering doorstep services.

He further emphasised that, we are seeing this as a vehicle for support. There may be a hub-and-spoke approach within a radius of a few kilometres, the rural space is changing and we would like to sweat the opportunities in the rural economy better. SBI's lending under agriculture and allied activities crossed ₹2.27 trillion during FY22, catering to more than 1.42 crore farmers. Its agriculture gold loan portfolio rose to ₹73,601 crore in FY22, from ₹66,878 crore in FY21.

HDFC Bank has enumerated rural banking as one of its key growth engines. In an interaction with analysts earlier this year, managing director and CEO Sashidhar Jagdishan said the bank has grown well in its

Co-op societies can now procure goods from public procurement portal GeM

The Union Cabinet expanded the mandate of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) by allowing procurement by cooperatives using the platform. More than 8.54 lakh registered cooperatives and their 27 crore members would be benefitted with this initiative the government said in a statement, adding that this would help cooperatives in getting competitive prices through an open and transparent

RBI gives co-operative banks a wider canvas

Co-operative banks will be eligible for more services on par with commercial banks. Besides, enhances limits on housing loans, some will now be allowed to lend to commercial real estate. Besides, urban cooperative banks will also be allowed to offer door-step banking services to their customers. Taking into account the increase in housing prices, it has been decided to increase the existing limits on individual housing loans by cooperative banks the Reserve Bank said in its statement on regulatory and developmental policies.

The limits for Tier I /Tier II Urban co-operative banks are

commercial and rural banking division and improved its market share by 600 basis points (bps) over the last two years to 18.4% in FY22. In the rural segment, the bank is planning to expand its services to 200,000 villages in the next two years from 130,000 at present.

On agri, the bank aims to improve market share by 300 bps to 9% by FY24, analysts at Motilal Oswal Financial Services said in a report after the interaction. HDFC Bank has 1,147 rural branches, 2,036 branches in semi-urban locations, 1,312 in urban centres and 1,843 in the metros, according to its annual report for FY22. The bank's commercial and rural banking division was set up in the last financial year to cater to needs of the micro, small and medium enterprises, emerging corporates, commercial agriculture, small and marginal farmers, healthcare finance, equipment finance and commercial transport companies.

Non-bank lenders are also increasing their focus on growth opportunities in the hinterland. Piramal Finance, which has been offering loans for small business and used cars, in addition to doing unsecured lending, launched its microfinance business in the June quarter. The company has gone live in Rajasthan and Bihar with its micro loan offering and plans to expand to a few more states in the months ahead. Managing director Jairam Sridharan said, our objective and intent is to cater to the Bharat market with all core products that are important to the customer base there.

process. The commerce and Industry ministry launched the GeM on August 9, 2006 in place of Directorate General of Supplies and Disposal, to create an open and transparent procurement platform of commonly-used goods and services for all government department, ministries and public sector firms. Registration of cooperatives as "buyers" was not covered within the existing mandate of GeM.

revised from ₹30 lakh/₹70 lakh to ₹60 lakh/₹140 lakh, respectively. For rural cooperative banks, the limits will increase from ₹20 lakh to ₹50 lakh for banks with assessed net worth less than ₹100 crore and from ₹30 lakh to ₹75 lakh for other RCBs. These limits were last revised for UCBs in 2011 and for RCBs in 2009.

Also, considering the growing need for affordable housing and to realise their potential in providing credit facilities to the housing sector, the RBI has to allow state cooperative banks and district cooperative banks to extend finance to commercial real estate – residential

housing within the existing aggregate housing finance limit of 5 percent of their total assets. Today's announcements relating to home loan limits and doorstep banking are welcome steps from the Reserve Bank of India for the co-operative banking sector. The increase in home loan limits by over 100% is a big reformative step, in line with long-standing industries request said Ashish Singhal, Managing Director, SVC Co-operative Bank Ltd. This will lead to increase credit flows to the housing sector and boost revenue growth for the co-operative banking sector. In addition, the doorstep banking will help us bring more personalised attention and convenience to customer's especially senior citizens and the differently-abled. These progressive steps will further enable us to offer 360 degree services besides reaffirm our commitment to contribute to the growth of our nation.

However analysts have raised concerns on regulation

Co-op banks will soon get permission to implement govt schemes using JAM: Amit Shah

Union Minister Amit Shah announced that cooperative sector banks wil soon be given permission to implement government welfare schemes, which use the trinity of Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) for direct benefit transfer (DBT). JAM is the Centre's initiative to link Jan Dhan accounts, mobile numbers and Aadhaar cards to plug leakages of government subsidies.

At present, 52 ministries use DBT with the help of JAM to provide assistance to beneficiaries under 300 government schemes, Shah said while virtually addressing the 70th annual general meeting of Ahmedabad-headquartered Gujarat State Co-

Coops, women, farmers scripted dairy success story: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the role of small farmers, cooperatives and women in making India the world's largest producer of milk and the country's dairy sector a success.

India's dairy sector, which gives employment to 80 million families, is characterised by not mass production but "production by the masses", the prime minister said in his inaugural address at International Dairy Federation World Dairy Summit 2022 in Greater Noida. India's dairy sector "not only gives impetus to the rural economy but is also a major source of livelihood for crores of people across the world", Modi said as he enumerated the various strengths of the sector highlighted three important and unique aspects of the Indian dairy sector, starting with the small farmer who he said is the driving force behind it. "India's dairy sector is characterised by 'production by masses' more than 'mass production'. India is the largest milk-

and supervision challenges arising out of such measures which RBI tried to address. The customer demand is not generated but met through these measures. Banks now have greater flexibility to meet customer requirements of housing loans, said RBI deputy governor, Rajeshwar Rao at the post policy media conference. These are subject to prudential safeguards in terms of ceilings, etc that will take care of the risks. We have a system of close monitoring of banking entities and banking units and we are in a position to assess the vulnerability of banks very closely. I don't see any risks arising out of these measures. Separately, to provide convenience of banking services to the customers at their door-step, it has been decided to permit UCBs to extend doorstep banking services to their customers on par with scheduled commercial banks.

operative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank Ltd, popularly known as Kheti Bank. Very soon, the cooperative sector will enter these government schemes, which will increase our direct contact with the common man. The cooperative sector has been kept away from JAM DBT schemes. But the Centre has now decided to allow the cooperative banks to implement these government schemes, the Union minister of cooperation said. Shah praised Kheti Bank's management, especially its chairman Dollarrai Kotecha, for recovering ₹190 crore from loan defaulters last year.

producing country on the basis of the efforts of these small farmers with one, two or three cattle. This sector provides employment to more than eight crore families in the country".

Modi said, the second aspect is cooperative system, which can be emulated by poor nations. These dairy cooperatives collect milk twice a day from about two crore farmers in more than two lakh villages in the country and deliver it to the customers. There is no middleman in the entire process, and more than 70% of the money that is received from the customers goes directly into the pockets of the farmers. No other country has this ratio in the whole world. In the recent past, the digital system of payment has added to the efficiency of this sector and ended shortcomings and delays in clearance of dues.

The prime minister pointed out that women account for 70% workforce in this segment. Women are the real

leaders of India's dairy sector. More than a third of the members of dairy cooperatives in India are women, he said. Size of the Indian dairy sector stands at more than ₹8.5 lakh crore, which is more than the combined value of wheat and rice produced in the country. Underlining

All fertiliser cos told to sell products under 'Bharat' brand

The Centre has directed all fertiliser companies in the country to sell their products under the brand name of 'Bharat', a move that companies said will destroy their branding and reduce their engagement with farmers. All fertiliser bags, whether containing urea, diammonium phosphate (DAP), NPK, or muriate of potash (MOP), will have the prefix Bharat - for instance, 'Bharat urea', Bharat DAP', 'Bharat NPK' and 'Bharat MOP' - irrespective of whether it is manufactured by a public or a private player, the Department of Fertiliser said in an order issued. The Union government gives subsidies on fertilisers to the manufacturers who pass on the benefits to farmers.

Logo of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janurvarak Pariyojana (PMBJP) will also have to be displayed on the bags, the

After the Ban, Govt likely to allow 1 mt wheat exports

India is likely to clear exports of 1 million tonnes of wheat, in the first phase after it restricted shipments of the food grain, said trade sources. The government on May 13, 2022 banned exports of wheat amid accelerating inflation, but exempted shipments under contracts where letters of credit (LCs) had already been opened. The clearance for the shipment is expected

It is learnt that the DGFT has asked for approval of more than 1 million tonnes of export in the first phase against under this exemption. At least half the quantity is likely to go to Bangladesh, largely by rail and road. The decision is expected to be announced after commerce minister Piyush Goyal returns from Davos, where he is attending the World Economic Forum, the sources said. The Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has put up a file before the food ministry after scrutinising the LCs issued on or before May 13, the sources said. It was found that many companies had opened back-dated LCs, and the DGFT has weeded out such applications and compiled a list of genuine LCs to be approved by the commerce minister.

It is learnt that the DGFT has asked for approval of more

AgroStar: Updating farmers on best practices

More than 80% of the about 14 crore families in India which depend on agriculture for their sustenance have a landholding of less than five acres, while more than half of India's cultivable land is irrigated by monsoon

the importance of using modern technology, Modi said India is building the largest database of dairy animals and every animal associated with the dairy sector is being tagged. We are doing biometric identification of animals. We have named it - Pashu Aadhar.

products under 'Bharat' brand

government order said. PMBJP is the scheme under which the central government gives subsidies annually. Fertiliser companies said this will destroy their own branding and lead to an unnecessary uniformity in the market. "Our company's name will become very small as most of the space on the bag will be occupied by the said logo," an official at a fertiliser company said on condition of anonymity. Fertiliser firms carry out several activities such as demonstrations and crop surveys on farms to help build a recall value among farmers. There will be no point in doing those if the brand name of the company can't be displayed prominently, said an executive of another firm.

After the Ban, Govt likely to allow 1 mt wheat exports

than 1 million tonnes of export in the first phase against genuine LCs, about 5,00,000-6,00,000 tonnes of which is expected to be for Bangladesh, said a wheat exporter, who requested not to be named. Trade sources said more than 250 railway indents had been booked as on May 13 for the export of wheat to Bangladesh. At 2,450 tonnes of wheat per rake, these can carry about 6,00,000 tonnes. Also, ten railway rakes loaded with the grain have been stranded since May 13, when the ban was announced. About 2,00,000 tonnes of wheat is expected to be exported by road, while the rest may be shipped by vessels, including to other destinations.

Traders said Bangladesh was not in a hurry to import Indian wheat as it had limited storage capacity. "Bangladesh will have to first sell rice from its warehouses to make space for imported wheat," said a Kolkata-based exporter. Currently, Bangladesh is unloading a shipment from Australia at Chittagong port. As other origins are much more expensive than Indian wheat, Bangladesh is keen on getting Indian wheat.

rains. Smallholder farmers often face challenges in accessing information on weather and agronomic practices to be followed and other agricultural inputs. AgroStar, a Pune-based digital farmer network and agri-

inputs platform, was launched in 2013 to bridge this deficit. The company has three verticals – an app which provides farmers with agricultural and agronomic inputs and information on weather; retail outlets through which farmers get inputs on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc; and an export division that's into fruits and vegetables. We have created one of India's largest digital networks of farmers, helping them by offering great content, real-time advisories and quality agricultural inputs, Shardul Sheth, co-founder, and CEO, AgroStar, said. The company has built a multilingual contented commerce platform, with the AgroStar app witnessing five million downloads so far, of which one million constitute active users. Farmers use the app to read and watch agronomic content, post

Wheat procurement drops by 54%, likely to hit 13-year low

The government's wheat procurement in the current year fell by more than 54% on year to 18.65 million tonne (mt). With an arrival of only around 81,000 tonne of wheat in mandies mostly in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, purchase of the grain by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other agencies at the Minimum Support Price may not touch 19 mt against 43.34 mt purchased last year during rabi marketing season (April-June).

'Infodemic' on immunity boosters

What were the most searched and consumed foods during the COVID pandemic in India? Top nutrition scientists in the country say that Indians gorged on Vitamin C-rich fruits, zinc supplements and traditional supplements like ginger and garlic, while opting to stay away from non-vegetarian foods, frozen foods and Chinese cuisine.

Scientists studying the search trends in foods explain that though the search interest in Ayurvedic Kadha (a decoction of spices and herbs) was found to be very high, the usage was markedly low. "Rise in COVID-19 cases had a direct association with the search trends," said Dr. Subba Rao M. Gavaravarapu, scientist and head, Nutrition Information, Communication and Health Education Division, ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition, who headed the study titled "Impact of 'infodemic in pandemic' on food and nutrition related perceptions and practices of Indian Internet users". Published in PLoS One, a peer-reviewed open access scientific journal, the study explained that the uncontrolled spread of (mis)information, news and propaganda related to COVID-19 created an

their crop problems to get advice and share and comment on fellow farmers' posts, search for agri products, and transact on the platform.

Agro Star currently operates in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh where farmers avail its agri solutions for the entire crop cycle with a call to the company's agri-advisory centre, through the AgroStar Agri Doctor app or by visiting its around 3,000 retail stores. We have around 500 micro entrepreneurs delivering agricultural products sourced from various companies to farmers across these states, Sheth said. With more than 500 advisors, who are domain experts, servicing the farmers, the company says it runs Asia's largest agronomy contact centre.

Wheat procurement drops by 54%, likely to hit 13-year low

This means the purchases of the cereal by the government at MSP would hit a 13-year low this year. In the last 10 days, only 0.5 mt of wheat was procured by agencies despite the government imposing restriction on wheat exports on May 13. Food ministry last month had revised downward the wheat procurement target from 44 mt to 19.5 mt for the current rabi marketing season (2022-23).

'Infodemic' on immunity boosters

'infodemic' leading to panic and unscientific practices among the masses.

The study found that most people admitted relying on social media for gathering COVID-19 associated tips for boosting immunity, but those with a history of COVID-19 infection reported relying more on doctors and health professionals for information. With the largest number of Internet users in the world, India has witnessed a steep rise in the number of people seeking information on social media related to COVID-19. This study aimed to evaluate the trend of COVID-19 associated food and nutrition news search by Indian Internet users between 27th January 2020 and 30th June 2021 (time period between the first detected COVID-19 case and the end of the second wave in India) and its impact on their perceptions and practices, said Dr. Gavaravarapu.

"The association between the change in Relative Search Volume (RSV) on Google Trends (GT) of 34 popularly searched keywords classified by the researchers under 5 different categories — "Immunity", "Eating behavior", "Food safety", "Food

scars and concerns" and "Covid scare" — showed a steep rise in search for immunity boosters, vitamin supplement brands "ayush kadha (ayurvedic decoction) during the first wave (April-August 2020)," said the study.

An online survey conducted on adult Indian Internet users (n = 572) reported high (71.9%) consumption of Vitamin C-rich fruits as well as Vitamin C (68.2%) and Zinc (61.4%) supplements to boost immunity. Traditional Indian spices like ginger and garlic were used by 62.9% and 50.9% respondents respectively.

Parameswaran Iyer takes charge as Niti Aayog CEO

Parameswaran Iyer, who steered the Swachh Bharat Mission, took charge as CEO of top government think tank Niti Aayog.

A 1981-batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, Iyer has worked with both public and private sectors. He was the secretary for drinking water and sanitation in the Union government during 2016-20. He will steer the think tank at a time when frictions are visible between the Centre and Opposition-ruled states on many issues. He is expected to play a key role along with recently appointed vice chairman Suman Bery to lay the

Exports of all wheat products come to a halt

As India's amended export policy about wheat flour kicks, July 12, traders said export of all wheat products has come to a standstill. There is no clarity if the new regulations apply only for whole wheat flour or all other products of wheat milling. After India banned export of whole wheat on May 13, exporters had geared up to export atta, maida and semolina.

The central government issued a notification on July 6 to amend export policy of wheat flour (atta), which will come into force from July 12. As per the amended policy, the export of wheat flour remains free, however, it will have to get a recommendation from an inter-ministerial committee. However, exporters say there is no clarity about which wheat products will be subject to the new notification. There is no clarity about whether the order regulating export of wheat flour is applicable

E-NAM platform linked to private agri-services providers

The government announced integration of trading, transportation, logistics, warehousing, assaying, packaging, weather forecast and fintech services provided by 41 private entities with its electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), a move that would make more farmers use the online platform to

Though 'kadha/kashayam' (decotion of medicinal herbs) and 'chawanprash' (an Ayurvedic health mixture made of various herbs and spices) were quite hyped, fewer participants reported having consumed them (28.8% and 57.5% respectively). Dependence on homeopathy medicines for immunity boosting against COVID-19 was found to be the least (28.1%). This study highlights the need for media and health literacy to advocate use of health information cautiously, said Dr. Gavaravarapu.

Parameswaran Iyer takes charge as Niti Aayog CEO

ground for collaborative action for higher growth with sustainability, creation of jobs, education, ease of living and reforms in agriculture.

Iyer took voluntary retirement from service in 2009 to join the water and sanitation initiatives at the World Bank. He served as the global lead for strategic initiatives in the World Bank's Water Global Practice. In 2016, he returned to India and was appointed by the government to head the drinking and sanitation department, and lead the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Exports of all wheat products come to a halt

only for atta or also for maida and other wheat products like suji, restaurant atta etc. As such, the export of all the wheat products has come to a standstill, said Ajay Goyal, director, Shivaji Roller Flour Mill. Traders say if the regulation excludes maida from its purview, then it may not serve the indirect purpose of controlling the quantum of total export of wheat products. "The notification calls out for restrictions on export of "wheat flour (atta). Most of the export from India is of "refined wheat flour (maida)" and not whole wheat flour (atta). This interpretation will have zero impact on the intent of the restriction," said Dhaval Meghpara, director, Shree Vanraj Besan Mill from Gujarat. If the new policy is applicable only for whole wheat atta, then it may result in increase in export of maida, said the processors and exporters.

E-NAM platform linked to private agri-services providers

sell their produce to buyers of their choice.

More than 17.6 million registered farmers, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), traders, commission agents and other stakeholders registered with the eNAM platform can avail these services provided by these private enterprises. Entities whose digital

platforms which have been integrated with eNAM include Star Agrobazaar Technology, Kisan Network, FPO Bazaar, Arya collateral, Aryadhan, Intello Lab, Bijak and Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar formally launched the e-NAM platform-of-platforms by stating that this would give a boost to online trade and ensure better price discovery by the platform. According to an official with Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC), which operates the eNAM, the aim behind this integration of platforms by private players under e-NAM is to make available end-to-end services to farmers along with providing a platform for price discovery. The official said that SFAC is aiming at bringing on board as many players so that farmers have the choice to take agri-services after registering with e-NAM portal.

"Integration of our embedded fintech platform with eNAM will enable access to finance for historically excluded small farmers and strengthen them socioeconomically," Prasanna Rao, co-founder and CEO, Arya.ag, an agri-fintech platform, told. Currently, 1,000 mandis in 22 states and Union territories are integrated into the e-NAM platform, which was launched in April 2016. At present, 17.3 million farmers,

2100 FPOs, 0226 million traders and around 0.1 million commission agents are registered with e-NAM.

However only 586 mandis are currently providing online trading services to farmers mostly within the states. Inter-state trade in farm produce — a facility for a farmer in one state to sell his produce to buyers in another state — is yet to gather momentum. This is one of the chief objectives of this platform for price discovery. Because of small land holding of the farmers, SFAC has been focussing on formation of FPOs and encouraging them to participate in the e-NAM platform for collective bargaining power. SFAC launched FPO trading module during covid-19 restrictions to enable FPOs to upload their produce from collection centres, farm gate with picture and quality parameter for online bidding, without physically bringing their produce to the mandis.

Meanwhile, SFAC has empaneled private banks such as Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HDFC Bank, Indusind Bank and ICICI Bank for provisioning of payment and settlement services for e-NAM transactions. The empanelment of these banks enables collections and settlement of funds to various e-NAM registered beneficiaries across the country.

ICAR must focus on improving productivity of oilseeds, pulses, cotton: Agri Minister Tomar

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar asked the premium farm research organisation ICAR to focus on improving productivity of various crops like oilseeds and pulses as yields are much below the global average. While addressing the 94th foundation day of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the minister said the ICAR has played an important role in making India self-sufficient in food grain production and the country is either number one or two in terms of output of most crops. ICAR's foundation day should be celebrated as a pledge day. ICAR should take some pledge on this day and make efforts that the same gets achieved over the next one year, Tomar said.

Although a lot of success has been achieved in the last 93 years of ICAR's journey, the minister said there is a "great challenge" in terms of productivity in front of us, especially in oilseeds, pulses and cotton. "If we compare (our crop yield) with other countries, then we will feel that there is a lot of work to be done," Tomar said. The minister said the crop productivity issue should be part of the ICAR's pledge. India imports

around 60 per cent of its annual domestic demand of edible oil. The country had imported a record ₹1.17 lakh crore of edible oils in the 2020-21 oil year ending October. Pulses too are being imported but not in as much quantity. Tomar asked the ICAR to continue its research work to mitigate the challenge of climate change on agriculture. He spoke about the need to promote organic as well as natural farming, as excess use of chemicals and fertilisers impacts human health. Tomar highlighted that the Modi government has taken various initiatives and launched several programmes for the growth of the agriculture sector and doubled farmers' income. He noted that incomes of lakhs of farmers have not only doubled but more than doubled in the last 7-8 years.

The minister stressed that there is a need to attract young and educated people in the field of agriculture. On the occasion, Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Parshottam Rupala asked ICAR to document its achievements.

Packaged food item sales rising in rural areas

Rural areas have started seeing an improvement in sales of packaged food products in the last few weeks, according to some fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies. The companies attribute this uptick in sales to better affordability due to high agricultural commodity prices last year and forecast of normal monsoons.

Segments like food, snacks and lower price-point products have already seen reasonable demand in July so far, said Sanjeev Asthana, chief executive officer at Patanjali Foods. Rural incomes were decent last year due to high agri commodity prices. With more affordability coming in and price points being offered by companies, there is a reasonable expectation that demand should come back from rural areas.

Rural markets, which contribute around 35% of the total FMCG sales in the country, have witnessed subdued demand in the last few months due to steep inflation and have seen consumption declining for three consecutive quarters starting July last year. According to Nielsen IQ data, consumption in rural areas declined 5.3% in January-March quarter as an incessant price increase by companies to pass on a spike in their input cost hit customers' wallet. Last

Sustainability push: Govt asks RRBs to step up digitisation, lending to MSMEs

As part of reforms to make Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) financially sustainable, the government has asked them to move towards digitisation, including offering internet banking services to its customers, and expand their credit base further through increased lending to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. The cost of operations of RRBs were much lower as compared to scheduled commercial banks but that has increased now and the government wants them to work towards increasing their earnings, said an official source in the know adding that these are part of the government's plan to reform RRBs.

In a meeting that was convened by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in July and attended by heads of sponsor banks and RRBs, one of the key reasons for RRBs incurring losses is the fact that many of these branches do not have enough business as they focus mainly on offering government's schemes like direct benefit transfer in the rural areas of the country. He source added that almost all these rural banks are under Core Banking Solutions (CBS) meaning their branches are connected with each other. Offering

fiscal, wheat prices rose 10%, maida 7%, gram 5%, gram flour 6%, milk 11%, sugar 5% and palm oil by 38%, according to Crisil. However, now, the decline in palm oil and other commodity prices should ease pressure on other products as well which use them as key input ingredients.

"Both the prediction of normal monsoon and better agri-commodity prices have developed a favourable situation in rural areas and we have seen a revival in rural demand for biscuits, snacks and other food items in the April-June quarter", said Mayank Shah, senior category head at Parle Products. The revival in sales of packaged food products gives confidence that rural demand should pick up substantially going ahead and be the saving grace on the overall demand front, executives of the company reported.

Echoing the sentiment, Emami Agrotech told that with good monsoons predicted and also with the commodity prices cooling-off, there might be a good uptick in sales from the September quarter of the financial year, which is also the festive period. We expect to see a strong growth revival in the packaged food category almost immediately and then would see a revival in the other categories going ahead.

Sustainability push: Govt asks RRBs to step up digitisation, lending to MSMEs

internet services to customers is the next step for these banks,

According to a government release post, the Finance Minister urged the sponsor banks "to formulate a clear roadmap in a time-bound manner to further strengthen the RRBs and support the post-pandemic economic recovery and also suggested to conduct a workshop of RRBs and share the best practices with each other". This would not be the first time that the government is working to reform RRBs. After a set of reforms in the '90s, the government had, in 2005-06, initiated a consolidation programme that resulted in the number of RRBs declining from 196 in 2005 to 43 in FY21. The aim was to improve their operational viability and to take advantage of economies of scale. After two consecutive years of losses during the Covid period, RRBs reported a consolidated net profit of ₹1,682 crore in FY21, and 30 of the 43 RRBs reported net profits. The source, quoted above, added that the plan also included merging branches of these RRBs with sponsor banks once these branches reach a certain level of business.

Viral cattle disease hits milk production in Gujarat

The outbreak of lumpy skin disease (LSD), a devastating viral infection, among cattle and water buffaloes in Gujarat and several other states has set the alarm bells ringing over its likely impact on milk production. Containment measures including large scale vaccination of cattle are being launched on a war footing with over a million animals vaccinated for immunity in Gujarat alone. The disease has assumed epidemic proportions in the Saurashtra and Kutch regions of Gujarat in less than a month, infecting over 50,000 cattle heads and has spread across 20 of the 33 districts of the state.

Rajiv Gandhi, MD and CEO of the Ahmedabad-based Hester Biosciences Limited, an animal healthcare and poultry company which manufactures essential vaccines to counter several life-threatening diseases in dairy animals, reveals that several state governments and private players in the dairy segment are stocking up on the Goat Pox vaccine, which has been prescribed by government advisories for use in higher dosages to protect, prevent and reduce mortality due to LSD in cattle and buffaloes.

Hester, a leader in production of Goat Pox vaccine with an almost 95% market share, is pulling all stops to combat the spread of LSD by ramping up its production. "We are producing 1,50,000 vials this month which translates to 5 million doses, the highest we have ever

manufactured on this vaccine in our 35 years of existence," Gandhi says. The Hester MD, who has recently been nominated as a member of the National Advisory Committee for Animal Husbandry and Dairy sector, goes on to add, "We are committed to producing the vaccine at the cost of reducing the manufacture of other vaccines in our basket to meet the challenges of the fast-evolving crisis."

And while the company has not earmarked additional investment for the Goat Pox vaccine, it is "diverting investment from other, more profitable products for the time being till the situation stabilises." Dairy majors in Gujarat including the country's largest dairy player, GCMMF (Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation), better known as Amul, the Banas Dairy and the Gujarat government were among the bulk buyers of the vaccine in the past few days. Inquiries are also pouring in from other affected states including Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, UP, and even the north eastern states like Assam and Meghalaya. Across the border, countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh too are battling the disease. "LSD is one of the most devastating diseases affecting cattle and buffaloes in the recent past. While India has been witnessing sporadic cases of this life-threatening viral infection caused by Capripox virus, which is closely related to the Goat Pox virus, this is the first time that it has reached alarming proportions," Gandhi states.

Credit information firms now under Ombudsman mechanism

The Reserve Bank decided to expand the scope of Internal Ombudsman framework by including Credit Information Companies (CICs) with a view to strengthening grievance redressal system. The Reserve Bank-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) has improved the customer grievance redressal mechanism.

The turnaround time of grievance redressal under RB-IOS has declined considerably, RBI said in Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies. With a view to strengthen the internal grievance redress by CICs themselves, it has been decided to mandate CICs to have their own Internal Ombudsman (IO) framework, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said after unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy.

The RB-IOS 2021 covers Regulated Entities (REs) such as scheduled commercial banks including urban cooperative banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and non-scheduled primary co-operative

banks with a deposit size of ₹ 50 crore and above. In order to make the RB-IOS more broad based, it has been decided to bring CICs also under the ambit of RB-IOS 2021, the statement said adding this will provide a cost-free alternate redressal mechanism to customers of REs for grievances against CICs.

Further, with a view to strengthening the internal grievance redressal of CICs and to make it more efficient, it has also been decided to bring CICs under the Internal Ombudsman (IO) framework. With regard to outsourcing, the RBI said REs are increasingly using outsourcing as a means for reducing costs as well as for availing expertise not available internally. Although outsourcing of a permissible activity is an operational decision of REs, it exposes REs to various risks. The RBI has, from time to time, issued guidelines on managing risks in outsourcing of certain activities by REs. "In view of the increasing trend of outsourcing, the framework for REs to manage the associated risks needs to be

suitably strengthened. Therefore, to harmonise and consolidate the extant guidelines, a draft Master Direction on Managing Risks and Code of Conduct in Outsourcing of Financial Services will be issued shortly for comments from stakeholders". The Standalone Primary Dealers (SPDs) at present are permitted to undertake foreign currency business for limited

Exports of basmati rice rise 26% in Q1 to \$1.15 bn

Exports of basmati rice increased by 25.54 per cent in April-June 2022-23 to USD 1.15 billion, the commerce ministry said. The exports stood at USD 922 million in the year-ago period. Non-basmati rice exports too increased by 5% in June quarter to USD 1.56 billion, it said.

Exports of agricultural and processed food products rose by 31% in the quarter to USD 7.4 billion. For financial year 2022-23, an export target of USD 23.56 billion has been fixed by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) for the agricultural and processed food products basket, it said. Among these products, sectors which

Grain output hits record in 2021-22, despite a drop in wheat harvest

The government estimated wheat production to have dropped almost 3% to 106.84 million tonnes (MT) in the 2021-22 crop year (July-June), although overall foodgrain output is expected to have hit a record 315.72 million tonnes, buoyed by a record rice harvest.

The drop in wheat output is attributed to heatwave between March and June that hit the crop in the northern states of Punjab and Haryana. This eventually forced the government to impose a ban on wheat exports in May to keep local supplies steady. Of course, trade source believe the actual wheat output could have been below 100 million tonnes. Rice production, meanwhile, hit a record 130.29 MT, having recorded an increase of close to 5% from a year before.

However, according to trade estimate rice production in the next crop year (2022-23) could decline by around 10 MT because of more than 12% fall in paddy acreage in the current kharif sowing so far because of deficiency in monsoon rainfall in key growing states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Record production is estimated for crops such as rice, maize, gram (chana), pulses, rapeseed and mustard, oilseeds and sugarcane for 2021-22 crop year, agriculture and farmers welfare minister Narendra Singh Tomar said in a statement. In a major boost to reducing import dependence, pulse output rose by close to 27.69 MT in the 2021-22 crop year compared to 25.46 MT

purposes. With a view to strengthening the role of SPDs as market makers, at par with banks operating primary dealer business, it is proposed to enable SPDs to offer all foreign exchange market-making facilities as currently permitted to Category-I Authorised Dealers, subject to prudential guidelines, it said.

recorded growth during the period under review include fresh fruits and vegetables, and cereals.

"The export of meat, dairy and poultry products increased by 9.5%...dairy products alone recorded a growth of 67.15% as its export rose to USD 191 million in the first three months of the current fiscal," the ministry said. M Angamuthu, Chairman, APEDA, said by creating a necessary ecosystem of exports along with collaboration with key stakeholders in the agri-exports value chains, "we are aiming to sustain the growth in India's agricultural and processed food exports in the current fiscal as well".

estimated in the previous crop year.

Gram (chana) output, which has close to 50% share in country's pulses production, rose by more than 15% to 13.75 MT in 2021-22 from 11.91 MT in 2020-21. India imports about 10%- 15% of pulses requirement. The output of coarse cereals such as barley, bajra, maize and ragi estimated to decline to 50.90 MT from 51.32 MT reported in previous crop year. According to the agriculture ministry, in the non-food grain category, oilseeds output rose more than 4% to 37.7 MT in the 2021-22 crop year compared to previous year. Rapeseed/mustard seed production is estimated at a record 11.74 MT, which was 15% more than the 2020-21 crop year. Soybean output rose by 3% to 12.99 MT compared to previous year. India imports about 56% of its edible oil requirement

Sugarcane production in 2021-22 crop is estimated at record 431.8 MT compared to 405.39 MT in the previous year while cotton output is expected to drop to 31.2 million bales (170 kg each) from 35.24 million bales. Meanwhile, after consistently setting new records for six years in a row, India's kharif food grain production in the 2022-23 crop year is likely to witness a significant fall in the current year, owing to a big drop in paddy sowing area and marginal decline in area under pulses. Overall paddy sowing area across the country was reported at 30.9 million hectare last week

which was 12.4% less than year ago. Overall kharif crops sowing has declined by around 3.4% compared to the same period previous year. The cumulative rainfall received during June 1- August 17 was 652 mm, which was 10% more than the benchmark (above normal level) of 596 mm for the same period.

The south peninsula, central India and northwest regions have received 28%, 24% and 1% more rainfall respectively than the normal range. The rainfall deficiency in east and north east regions has been 18%. India's wheat production is projected to have declined

The crop year 2021-22 was from July 2021 to June 2022.

The country's overall foodgrain production is estimated to be record 315.72 million tonnes in the crop year that ended in June 2022, according to the ministry. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said record production of so many crops was the result of the government's farmer-friendly policies as well as tireless hard work of the farmers and the diligence of the

Digital banking units to debut with at least 10 services

Digital banking units (DBUs) will soon be launched in 75 districts across the country with at least 10 products and services, which will be scaled up to 30 in due course, sources told. These would cover both the asset (loan) and liabilities (deposits) sides.

In a meeting last week, the department of financial services reviewed the progress of the DBUs, aimed at expanding digital banking in mainly rural areas, to ensure customer satisfaction gets top priority at such units, one of the sources said. The initial set of services at the DBUs could cover facilities like savings, current, recurring deposits and fixed deposits, withdrawal, passbook printing. Customers will have digital kit for mobile and internet banking, debit card, credit card, mass transit system cards, UPI QR code, BHIM Aadhaar and point of sale.

"All the necessary preparations are done. DBUs will have a bouquet of services to choose from but they will have to mandatorily offer at least 10 of these services initially. This number will be raised to 30 once the DBU eco-system picks up pace," said another source. Unlike the usual bank branches, the DBUs will be "paperless". Also, they won't be counted as branches of a bank but its distinct digital entities, he added. "A typical branch conducts many traditional functions, which also involve paperwork. But here (DBUs), there will be machines

nearly 3 per cent to 106.84 million tonnes while the overall foodgrain production is estimated to have touched record 315.72 million tonnes in the 2021-22 crop year. The wheat production is estimated to have declined due to heatwave that resulted in shrivelled grains in the northern states of Punjab and Haryana. Releasing the fourth advance estimate for the 2021-22 crop year, the Union agriculture ministry said a record output is also estimated for rice, maize, gram, pulses, rapeseed and mustard, oilseeds and sugarcane.

The crop year 2021-22 was from July 2021 to June 2022.

scientists. In the 2020-21 crop year, the country's foodgrain output, comprising wheat, rice, pulses and coarse cereals, stood at record 310.74 million tonnes. As per the data, wheat production is pegged lower at 106.84 million tonnes in the 2021-22 crop year as against 109.59 million tonnes in the previous year. However, rice production is projected at record 130.29

and some assistants to carry out various functions digitally," he added.

Presenting the Budget for FY23, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the setting up of 75 DBUs in 75 districts to commemorate the 75 years of India's independence. While the drive is limited to less than a tenth districts in the country, the number of such entities could be raised in future, said a senior banker. At present, they are being set up only at the district headquarters. The DBUs will have assistants to help customers wishing to apply for loans (retail, MSME, etc) digitally, unlike in most normal branches. No physical cash will be accepted for deposits at the DBUs. Withdrawals and deposits through ATM and cash deposit machines would be allowed. Facilities like internet banking kiosk, national electronic funds transfer (NEFT), immediate payment service (IMPS), KYC (know-your-customer) updates, mechanism to lodge grievances and account-opening kiosks would also be in place.

These DBUs, especially of the state-run banks, will also ensure digital onboarding of customers for various government schemes, including the Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana. All state-run banks, 10 private-sector banks and one small finance bank have started work to operationalise the DBUs.

RBI unlikely to accept NBFC requests for bad-loan exemptions

The Reserve Bank of India is unlikely to give "shadow banks" exemptions from stricter bad-loan rules coming into force, sources told Reuters, essentially ending an advantage the non-bank financial firms have had over standard banks.

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have asked the Reserve Bank of India to exempt smaller loans from the rules taking effect next month that are in line with those covering banks. India had 10,000 shadow banks as of March 2021, the latest RBI data available, with assets of ₹54 trillion (\$680 billion) or about one-fourth that of the banking sector. Several of the biggest shadow banks are listed on the stock exchanges. Under the new norms, shadow banks will have to recognise bad loans on a daily basis, rather than monthly, as some now do. Non-performing loans can only be upgraded to performing after borrowers have paid all arrears. "We have been meeting the RBI regularly and have asked for several relaxations, which they have denied," said an industry source who has attended these meetings with the central bank.

The central bank did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment. Shadow banks wanted loans of up to ₹2 crore (\$250,000) to be exempt,

according to a document reviewed by Reuters, and also asked for some accounting requirements to be relaxed and for an extension to comply with the new rules. We expect that with the new regulations NBFCs across the board are likely to see an increase of 80-100 basis-point in bad loans, said the chief of one shadow bank.

Shadow banks had also asked the RBI to lower the threshold on bad loans for which they would not need court approval to take control of securities pledged against the loan, manage or sell them to recover dues. "Apart from the short-term hike in bad loans, if NBFCs do not strengthen their collection practices and enforce customer discipline then it can lead to elevated stressed loans for a long time, resulting in a significant impact on their balance sheet," said analyst Anil Gupta at credit rating agency ICRA. Arguing that their smaller average loan size puts them at a disadvantage to banks, the shadow banks in July sought this permission, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest act, for loans over ₹1 lakh (\$1,250), compared with the current ₹ 20 lakh, according to a document seen by Reuters. But the RBI is likely to reject this request as well, the sources said.

FCI resorts to short-term loans again, raises ₹ 22,000 crore

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has availed short term loan of ₹ 22,000 crore in the current fiscal to finance its operations due to inadequate provisioning of the food security expenses by the finance ministry. Sources told that against expenses of more than ₹75,000 crore in the current fiscal, the finance ministry has allocated around ₹52,000 crore under the food subsidy budget till now. In the current month, ministry has not allocated any funds under food security expenses to the FCI. The corporation has been relatively comfortable with its cash position in FY22 as the government promptly released food subsidy amounts, after ending practice of taking National Small Saving Fund (NSSF) loans for subsidy financing in the FY22 Budget for the sake of budgetary transparency.

The Corporation could go for seeking more short-term loans, if the ministry doesn't release funds soon. It has already got a loan amount of ₹75,000 crore sanctioned by banks. The ministry has also provided ₹10,000 crore in the current fiscal as wage and means advances, which is adjusted against the food subsidy budget by

the end of the fiscal. FCI avails short-term loans, which are of 90 days' duration, from scheduled banks to address cash flow mismatches because of inadequate release of food subsidy by the finance ministry.

Raising more short-term loans would have pushed up FCI's expenses because of higher interest outflow. These short-term loans carry an interest rate in the range of 3.85 – 5.5% per annum. Meanwhile, several ministries such as rural development, education and external affairs have pending dues payment of around ₹2900 crore to FCI against the grain supplied for various social welfare schemes. For 2022-23, the central government has allocated ₹ 2.06 trillion for food subsidy expenses, of which ₹ 1.45 trillion or 71% is provided to FCI. Rest of the food subsidy is directly routed to states who follow a decentralised procurement system. However, following the extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana till September 30, an additional ₹ 80,000 crore (₹ 56,000 crore through FCI) will be spent under the food subsidy budget.

Plans afoot to build 3.4-mt silos under PPP mode

The country's food grain storage infrastructure is being given a boost. The food ministry has set in motion a plan to construct silos with a combined capacity to store 3.4 million tonne (mt) grains at 80 locations across the country. The projects will be implemented under the public private partnership (PPP) mode. The ministry said surplus government land has already been identified for building silos at 33 locations in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

The silos are being built under the design, build, fund, own and transfer (DBFOT) mode, where the land is owned by Food Corporation of India and via the design, build, fund, own and operate (DBFOO) model, where land belongs to private entities. This is part of a larger project to build wheat silos with 11-mt capacity during the next four-five years under the PPP mode, across 249 locations in the country, under a new 'hub and spoke' mode. The entire project is estimated to cost ₹ 9,200 crore.

Hubs have a dedicated railway siding and container depot facility, while the transportation from spoke to hub is undertaken through road, and from hub to hub via rail. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) had floated a tender in April for the construction of 14 locations under the DBFOT mode, with combined capacity of 1 mt. In the second phase, a tender for construction of 66 silos with 2.47-mt capacity was floated under DBFOO in June.

The silos are being built across 12 states, including Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Kerala, under the PPP model, with a total estimated investment of ₹9,200 crore. The FCI will use

the silos for storage of wheat through a lease of 30 years with private entities. 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.

"As land acquisition becomes the most crucial part of the DBFOO project and in order to facilitate the availability of land to the concessionaires, this ministry took up the issue of identification of suitable surplus land, if any, with the concerned state governments," according to the statement. Sources said 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.

As part of a pilot initiative, 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 the FCI. 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. Meanwhile, in a major initiative to eliminate storage losses of food grains, the FCI will discontinue the practice of storing wheat in uncovered facilities from September this year, to augment covered storage facilities and ensure direct transfer of grains from procurement centres to the states for public distribution. The FCI stores around 50-60 mt of rice and wheat at any given point of time. Silos ensure better preservation of food grains and enhance the shelf life.



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Modest start to kharif sowing as monsoon progress tardy

Late start of monsoon has delayed sowing of kharif crops such as paddy, pulses, oilseeds, coarse cereals and cotton, to some extent.

According to agriculture ministry data, as of mid-June kharif crops were sown in 9.96 million hectares (MH), around 8% less than corresponding period last year. Though late to start monsoon this year was 3.4% above normal with even distribution except east and northeast where it was below normal till early September.

Revamped crop insurance scheme from 2023-24 season

The government is considering a slew of proposals to revamp the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) from crop year 2023-24, following a sharp drop in claims to premium ratio, rise in premium rates pushing subsidy liability of the government. Sources told that consultations with all the stakeholders are currently in progress and the revamped PMFBY will help widen the crop insurance cover for farmers. Among the likely changes are a higher claim-premium cap of 130% from 110% now—a move aimed at infusing fresh life into the scheme. Under this model, the insurance companies would have to pay the claims between 60-130% of the gross premium. If the claims are below 60% of gross premium, the insurers will pay the excess premium amount collected to the government and for claims exceeding 130% of premium the government would compensate the companies.

Also, premiums may be decided via competitive bidding by insurance companies to make the scheme more market-oriented. According to an analysis by the working group, since the scheme's 2016 launch, the PMFBY premium has increased by more than six times, raising the subsidy liability of the government.

In 2018-19, against the premium payment of ₹ 29,607 crore (for both kharif and rabi seasons) to 18 companies empanelled by the Centre, the farmers' claims were ₹ 28,512 crore (claim ratio of 99%). The ratio has been on a decline since then. In 2019-20, the claim ratio dropped to 85.5% and in the pandemic year of 2020-21, it fell further to 61.6%. The final estimate for 2021-22 will vary from the preliminary one once all the claims are assessed, but the crash in claims ratio will still be

The total area sown during the current monsoon as of mid-September was 1092.92 lakh ha showing a decrease of about 9 lakh ha compared to area sown of 1101.87 ha during the kharif 2021.

Crop wise the decrease in area sown is quite substantial for rice covering 399.03 lakh ha compared to 417.93 ha last year. There was also a dip in the area sown of Tur and Moong while area sown of Bajra and maize increased.

Revamped crop insurance scheme from 2023-24 season

substantial.

To revamp the PMFBY, the agriculture ministry had set up three expert panels, of which two groups have already submitted their reports. The ministry had entrusted with the National Rainfed Area Authority to carry out crop sustainability study in identified 50 districts where around half of the claims under the PMFBY agreeing reported. The authority's report is expected soon. The ratio has been on a decline since then. In 2019-20, the claim ratio dropped to 85.5% and in the pandemic year of 2020-21, it fell further to 61.6%. The final estimate for 2021-22 will vary from the preliminary one once all the claims are assessed, but the crash in claims ratio will still be substantial.

Under the heavily subsidised PMFBY, the premium paid by farmers is fixed at just 1.5% of the sum insured for rabi crops and 2% for kharif crops, while it is 5% for cash crops. The balance premium is equally shared between the Centre and states. But in the case of north-eastern states, the premium is split between the Centre and states in a 9:1 ratio. Another panel has recommended targeted premium subsidies for small farmers, empowering the Centre to levy penalty on states for any delay in subsidy settlements and extensive use of remote sensing data for crop yield assessment.

According to the agriculture ministry estimates, there are around 140 million farmer families in the country. Enrolment under PMFBY has not crossed 20 million in the last three years. Under the revised guidelines for the scheme issued for kharif 2020, the central government had stipulated that any state failing to pay its share of premiums would be disqualified from

implementing it from the next season. The government made adoption of PMFBY voluntary for farmers from mandatory earlier. Sources said that around 18 insurers were empanelled for implementation of PMFBY during 2019-20 and 2022-23 of which eight companies exited the scheme. "Competitive bidding on premium is virtually non-existent," an official said.

The scheme is currently being implemented in 21 states/union territories. The Punjab government hasn't adopted PMFBY. States such as Andhra

Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Gujarat had dropped out of the scheme because of the high costs. However, Andhra Pradesh re-joined PMFBY from kharif 2022 after the Centre agreed to the state government's proposal of universalising the scheme for all farmers. A parliamentary panel last year had stated that the delays in settlement of claims are mainly due to reasons like delayed transmission of yield data, late release of states' share in premium subsidy and yield data, yield related disputes between insurance companies and states, non-receipt of account details of some farmers for transfer of claims.

India's Agri Expertise can Ensure Global Food Security, PM tells G7

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the G7 that India's agricultural expertise could be deployed to ensure food security and called on the grouping to ensure regular fertiliser supplies, which have been disrupted by the war in Ukraine. He called for an end to the conflict through dialogue, pointing out that the impact of the war was global. "Can the G7 create a structured system for the widespread use of Indian agricultural talent in its member countries?" the Prime Minister said at a session on food security held on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Germany. "With the help of traditional talent of India's farmers, food security will be ensured to G7 countries."

Modi noted that India had immense agricultural manpower compared with the countries of the G7. Indian agricultural skills had helped give new life to traditional agricultural products such as cheese and olive in some of the G7 countries, he said. He also drew attention to the natural farming revolution taking place

in India. Your experts can study this experiment. We have shared a non-paper on this subject with all of you. The Prime Minister said millets offer a way to ensure food security. Next year, the world is celebrating the International Year of Millets, he said. "On this occasion, we should run a campaign to promote a nutritious alternative like millets. Millets can make a valuable contribution to ensuring food security in the world." The PM pointed out that India had supplied food grains to many countries in need, including about 35,000 tonnes of wheat as humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in the last few months. After the recent earthquake there, India was the first country to deliver relief materials. We are also helping our neighbour Sri Lanka to ensure food security. Foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra told reporters, "India is looked upon as a solution provider by all, which was quite evident by the body language and camaraderie of leaders with Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

GST Hike for pump sets will affect farm sector

The Southern India Engineering Manufacturers' Association expressed concern over the recent hike in GST rates for pump sets from 12% to 18%, as recommended by the GST Council. The average minimum cost of an agriculture pump set is ₹40,000, excluding GST. With the increase in GST from 12% to 18%, a farmer, who are the buyers of the pump set, would have to pay ₹2,400 more only towards GST. With this hike, the difference in cost between a branded pump set and a locally-assembled one would widen

and farmers would prefer to go for alternatives that would cost lower, he said. The assembled pump sets would not have energy efficiency rating and increase in use of such pump sets would indirectly result in electricity losses. The steep hike in the cost of pump sets will also hit the agriculture sector. The pump set sector had been facing a slowdown for the last six months and the hike in GST rate would be a blow to the industry, the Association said in a statement.

PM: Natural farming movement will be a big success

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the mass movement for natural farming will be widely successful in the coming years, and the sooner farmers join this change, the more they will reap its benefits. Addressing a conclave on natural farming organised in Gujarat's Surat city via video conference, Modi also mentioned about the "extraordinary success" of the Digital India Mission, and said it is the country's answer to those who used to say that bringing about a change in villages is not easy. He said adopting natural farming is akin to serving Mother Earth, by protecting the quality of soil and its productivity, and is also the "basis for economic success." Lauding the efforts made in this direction in Surat, he said the natural farming model emerging from Surat can become a model for the entire

country.

This mass movement regarding natural farming will also be widely successful in the coming years. The sooner farmers join the change, the more successful they will be in reaping its benefits, he said. The extraordinary success of the Digital India Mission is the country's answer to those who used to say that bringing a change in villages is not easy. Our villages have shown that they can not only bring about a change, but can also lead the change, he said. Modi said natural farming gives India an opportunity to lead the world in the direction of sustainable development and pure food, by sharing its benefits through thousands of years and knowledge and experience which the country has.

Farm ministry body testing 11,000 seed varieties for IPR certification

The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Right Authority (PPVFRA) under the agriculture ministry is conducting field testing and assessments of more than 11,000 new seed varieties of cereals, cotton, vegetables, oilseeds, flowers, spices and legume crops for ascertaining their uniqueness. The idea is to protect rights of plant breeders through the grant of intellectual property rights (IPR) certification and boost research and development of new seed varieties.

Kumble Vinod Prabhu, chairperson of the PPVFRA, said the statutory body has granted certification for more than 4,000 plant varieties to public and private sector institutions since its inception in 2009. Farmers have received certification for another 1,033 varieties. The purpose of such protection is to boost the seed sector and ensure the availability of quality seeds and planting material to the farmers.

While breeders have the right to sell the PPVFRA-certified seeds to private companies through licensing arrangements, the farmers have the rights to use the seeds. Of the 5,033 certificates, about 3,356 were granted to cereal varieties, mostly developed by public

sector research institutions especially those under India Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), state agricultural universities and other institutions. As many as 507 certifications for unique plant varieties were issued in 2021 and another 186 so far this year. "We have rejected 3,000 applications for certification following field testing on the claims for uniqueness," Prabhu said. The authority conducts the testing of all the varieties registered for certification at 22 locations to ascertain the unique traits.

The unique characteristics of plant breeders were studied for two years before granting a certification by the PPVFRA. Following India's ratification of the WTO agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, the PPVFRA was created after Parliament passed the plant varieties and farmers' rights Act. According to standing committee on agriculture's report on demands for grants (2021-22) released last year, there were around 540 private seed companies, including multinationals, operating in the country. Of this, about 80 companies have their own research and development programmes.

Agriculture in the amrit kaal

As we celebrate 75 years of India's Independence and enter the amrit kaal toward 2047, it is time to salute our freedom fighters, soldiers, farmers, scientists, and all

those who have contributed to the development of this country. The famous slogan of late Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, was extended by Atal Bihari

Vajpayee to include Jai Vigyan, and now prime minister Narendra Modi has extended it further to Jai Anusandhan (innovations). Let us focus here on Indian agriculture and see what our farmers and agri-scientists have achieved in the last 75 years, and what more innovations (anusandhan) need to be done in the agri-food space till 2047, with a view to have a well-fed India, zero hunger, zero malnutrition, good climate resilience, and high incomes of farmers.

When India got Independence in 1947, its population was roughly 340 million, which has gone up by a little more than 4 times since and is likely to surpass China by 2023 at 1.4 billion. By 2050, we are likely to be 1.66 billion, as per the latest UN Population Prospects data. So, the biggest challenge will be feeding India, whose per capita income still hovers around \$2,300 per annum. The per capita income during amrit kaal is likely to grow between 5-6% p.a. under normal conditions. Rising from low levels of income, people are likely to demand not just more food but safe and nutritious food. So, the first challenge would be to align our agri-policies and strategies to emerging demand pattern. A clue of this can be had by looking at the last 10 years or so, how different components of agriculture have grown.

The accompanying that poultry, fishery, etc, have grown the fastest while the cereals group has grown the slowest. Government intervention is the highest in cereals through massive procurement of rice and wheat while those sub-sectors that rely on market forces, no matter how imperfect they are, still perform better. The policy implication is very clear. Promote the markets and get them right; this will help unleash revolutionary growth in agriculture. In amrit kaal, we need to go beyond just increasing production. We need to focus on the food system as a composite entity. It has five dimensions: production, marketing, and consumption (the traditional part of the food system), and the two new additions, environmental sustainability and nutritional outcomes. And at the centre of this five-dimensional food system is the issue of farmers' income.

What we know from the past experience is that in our

efforts to boost production, and convert the country's food situation from 'ship to mouth' in the mid-1960s to the largest exporter of rice in the world today (21mmt in Fy22), we have neglected the environmental consequences. It is time to wake up and promote climate-resilient agriculture. We need to arrest the dramatic decline in our groundwater table, particularly in northwest, rejuvenate our soils, and improve the air quality by stopping/reducing stubble burning and methane emissions. We need to develop carbon markets so that farmers can be incentivised to shed existing practices that are not compatible with environmental sustainability. This requires innovations in policies, technologies related to precision farming, and also institutional engineering to include millions of small-holders, as we did in the case of the white (milk) revolution. Digitalisation of agriculture can help in this. We need to become a nation of innovators in agriculture, like Israel, Holland, and the US.

However, making the agri-food system vibrant and competitive requires significantly augmenting farmers' incomes. Against the backdrop of continuously declining average holding size, from 2.3 ha in 1970-71 to just 1.08 ha in 2015-16, cereals cannot give high enough incomes to farmers even when productivity is increased. Diversification towards high-value crops is a must as we move forward. It will require building efficient value-chains by the private sector. Policies need to create an ecosystem to promote this high-value agriculture and reduce the risks attached to that.

But some out of box innovation can almost double farmers' income quickly. And this innovation is to have "solar as a third crop". On one acre of cultivated land, which grows two crops a year, one can have more than 400 solar panels (trees) of 10-12 feet height, with due spacing for regular cultivation to continue. Solar energy generated from 400 panels will be the 'third crop' that can be bought by the power companies and channelled into the grid for distribution. A pilot in Najafgarh KVK area revealed that farmers can earn additional income of upto ₹1 lakh/acre, when the capital cost is incurred by another entrepreneur. This concept needs wider validation in different states with good sunshine. This is

the 'inclusive growth, green growth' model that needs to supplement the solar parks model being developed by big entrepreneurs. PM Modi, in 2016, had given a clarion call to double farmers' incomes by FY23, and he can do it through this single innovation, provided he takes it as a campaign and mobilises investors, farmers, renewable power companies, and discoms in that

direction. Can he mobilise the country for 'har khet main saur urja' (solar power in every farmer's field), in the manner he did for har ghar Triranga? This way we can have clean energy in rural areas, double and stabilise farmer's incomes. Only then we can say that the slogan Jai Anusandhan has true and magnificent meaning!

Production of vegetables, fruits up: Centre

The total horticulture production in 2021-22 is estimated to be 341.63 million tonnes (MT), an increase of about 7.03 MT over 2020-21. This is an increase of 2.10%, according to the second advanced estimates of area and production of various horticultural crops released by the Union Agriculture Ministry. Last year, the total horticulture cultivation was in 27.48 million hectares and according to the second advanced estimates, in 2021-22, it could be 27.74 million hectares.

The Centre said while there could be an increase in production of fruits, vegetables and honey, the cultivation of spices, flowers, aromatics, medicinal plants and plantation crops could decrease over previous year. "The fruits production is estimated to be 107.10 MT compared to 102.48 MT in 2020-21. The production of vegetables is estimated to be 204.61 MT, compared to 200.45 MT in 2020-21," the Centre said in a release.

In the case of onion, the production is estimated to be 31.70 MT against 26.64 MT in 2020-21. Potato production is expected to be 53.58 MT, compared to 56.17 MT in 2020-21 and the cultivation of tomato is expected to be 20.34 MT, compared to 21.18 MT in 2020-21. Farmers of the three crops had agitated against the drop in prices last year. There were also reports of farmers destroying their onion and tomato crops due to drop in prices.

Farmer's organisations have also been complaining about scarcity of fertilizers and increase in its price. The Centre, however, had maintained that it is addressing the situation. Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said in Bengaluru that the country has to depend on the import of fertilizers and the Centre is incurring a subsidy of about ₹2.5 lakh crore annually in the interest of farmers so that the burden of rising prices internationally does not fall on our farmers. "But there must be an end to this situation at some time," he said.

Govt clears ₹34856 cr more for farm loan interest scheme

The Cabinet approved an additional outlay of ₹ 34,856 crore towards the interest subvention scheme to help banks continue offering short-term farm loans of up to ₹ 3 lakh at 7%, even in a rising interest rate scenario. It has decided to restore an interest subvention of 1.5% on short-term agriculture loans, to be provided to financial institutions in FY23 and FY24. This support to banks for the interest subvention scheme was stopped in May 2020, as lenders were themselves able to provide such loans at 7%.

However, with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raising the benchmark lending rate thrice by 140 basis points since May (it has now exceeded the pre-pandemic level to hit 5.4%), it has become necessary to compensate

banks, so that they can continue providing the short-term farm loans at 7%.

Of course, an additional subvention of 3% is given to farmers for timely repayment of loans, which effectively implies that these farmers get credit at a 4% interest rate.

Briefing reporters after the cabinet meeting, information and broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur also said the government has not let domestic fertiliser prices rise despite the increase in global rates. Further, the minister said the fertiliser subsidy in the current fiscal year is likely to be more than ₹2 trillion. In the Union Budget for 2022-23, fertiliser subsidy was

estimated at ₹1.05 trillion, against ₹1.62 trillion in the last fiscal. However, with a spurt in global fertiliser prices in the wake of the Ukraine war, the government has decided to substantially raise its subsidy to soften the blow for farmers.

Increase in interest subvention will ensure sustainability of credit flow in the agriculture sector, as well as ensure financial health and viability of the lending institutions, especially regional rural banks and cooperative banks, ensuring adequate agriculture credit in the rural economy, the statement noted.

Centre projects record production of rice

The Union Agriculture Ministry released on August 17 the fourth advance estimates of production of major agricultural crops for 2021-22. The Ministry said the production of food grains in the country is estimated at 315.72 million tonnes which is higher by 4.98 million tonnes than 2020-21.

A Central government release said the production during 2021-22 is higher by 25 million tonnes than the previous five years' (2016-17 to 2020-21) average production of food grains. "Record production is estimated of rice, maize, gram, pulses, rapeseed and mustard, oilseeds and sugarcane," it said. Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the record production of so many crops is the result of the farmer-friendly policies of the

Need to diversify agriculture towards power, energy sectors: Gadkari

With India being energy deficient, there is a need for the country to diversify agriculture into energy and power sectors, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said. "We already have energy shortage. We are making an expenditure of ₹ 15 lakh crore every year for importing petrol, diesel and other petroleum products. So, this is the time we can diversify agriculture towards the energy and power sector," Gadkari said while addressing the felicitation programme of National Cogeneration Awards 2022 in Mumbai. He urged the industry to focus on alternative fuels with the help of futuristic technologies. "While 65-70% of our population depends on agriculture, our agricultural growth rate is only 12-13%. And the next move should be cogeneration to increase revenue from

To enable credit facility to farmers, the government provides interest subvention to the financial institutions offering Kisan Credit Card (KCCs). The fund allocated under the interest subvention is also the second biggest scheme being implemented by the department of agriculture and farmers welfare, as per budget outlay and coverage of beneficiaries. Recently, under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign, over 31.3 million farmers were issued new KCCs, out of which 27.4 million KCC holders were engaged in crop cultivation, while 1.3 million card holders were engaged in dairy.

Centre and the hard work of the farmers and the diligence of the scientists.

While the estimate of food grains production is 315.72 million tonnes, the production of rice is expected at 130.29 million tonnes, which, according to the Centre, is a record. Wheat production could touch 106.84 million tonnes and for nutri/coarse cereals it could be 50.90 million tonnes. Total production of Rice during 2021-22 is estimated at record 130.29 million tonnes. It is higher by 13.85 million tonnes than the last five years' average production of 116.44 million tonnes. Production of Wheat during 2021-22 is estimated at 106.84 million tonnes. It is higher by 2.96 million tonnes than the last five years' average wheat production of 103.88 million tonnes, the release said.

Need to diversify agriculture towards power, energy sectors: Gadkari

sugar. The industry should produce less sugar and more by products, embracing the vision for futuristic technologies and using the power of leadership to convert knowledge into wealth. This will enable the farmers to become not only food growers but energy producers as well," he added. The minister further said that the country's requirement for sugar was 280 lakh tonnes this year, while the production was more than 360 lakh tonnes.

We need to divert production towards ethanol as the ethanol requirement is very high. Last year's capacity was 400 crore (4,000 million) litres of ethanol and the government has taken a lot of initiatives to increase ethanol production, he noted.

Punjab plans crop diversification scheme

To curb depletion in ground water levels and reduce power usage, the Punjab government is firming up a plan on crop diversification, whereby around a million hectare (MH) or a third of water-intensive paddy grown areas in the state would be gradually shifted to alternative crops such as cotton, maize, oilseeds and pulses, over the next five years.

According to Gurvinder Singh, director, agriculture department, the state government will also provide incentives to farmers for shifting around 10% of wheat area to alternative crops such as oilseeds and pulses. The crop diversification would entail financial incentives to farmers, procurement of crops by state agencies under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations and processing facilities. Annually, around 0.1-0.2 MH paddy sown will be shifted to alternate crops. We are working out a detailed programme on crop diversification soon and we will provide financial support to the programme from our own budget as well as from the central sector scheme.

Stating that paddy cultivation has led to over-exploitation of ground water resources in the state, the Punjab Economic Survey (2020-21) had stated 'cultivation of rice would need the use of submersible pumps which are expensive, and unlikely to be suitable for marginal and small landholding farmers'. The survey said there was a need to diversify crops and horticulture, pulses and oilseeds act as avenues for diversification.

According to experts, crop diversification in Punjab has been virtually a non-starter as because of the open-ended rice and wheat procurement system followed by

Reviving cultivation of a traditional crop in Mysuru

Efforts are underway to popularise the inclusion of Amaranthus – a wide variety of leafy vegetables – as part of mixed cropping among farmers in the region. Though known to be highly nutritious and still consumed but in a limited quantity it has economic benefits too and farmers can have multiple harvest to supplement their income. But cultivation was gradually on the wane and with it a slice of culinary culture.

In a bid to popularise Amaranthus, Sahaja Samruddha are organisation promoting cultivation of indigenous

Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies, farmers are reluctant to adopt less water intensive crops because of lack of procurement or marketing avenues.

In the current procurement season (October-September) for 2021-22, Punjab has contributed more than 12.5 million tonne (MT) or 20% of total rice procurement of 56.81 MT to the central pool managed by FCI. In the ongoing rabi procurement drive for wheat (2022-23), Punjab has contributed more than 51% of the 18.77 MT of wheat purchased from farmers so far.

Officials said the Punjab government, from the current kharif season (2022-23), is promoting direct seeding of rice (DSR) which consumes less water, improves percolation and reduces dependence on farm labour. An incentive of ₹ 1,500 per acre is being provided to farmers who adopt DRS technique and a budget of ₹ 450 crore has been earmarked for it. The state government is also encouraging farmers to take up short duration varieties of rice (which matures in 125 days instead of conventional varieties that take 135-145 days) such as PAU 126, 127 and 128 so that transplantation could be done using monsoon rains in July.

Official estimates indicate that farmers in around 50% of 2.4 MH of non-Basmati grown areas in the state have adopted short duration varieties of rice. The state government agency, Markfed has started to procure summer moong through payment of MSP of ₹ 7,275 per quintal. This year, short duration pulses variety was sown in around 0.1 MH.

Reviving cultivation of a traditional crop in Mysuru

crops acquired 30 varieties of the traditional crop from different parts of the country and all of them were cultivated on an experimental basis in a private farms in Mysuru. The organisation also wanted to assess as to which traditional variety was adaptable to local climatic conditions so that it could be promoted for cultivation among the local farmers.

Aravinda Kumar, Assistant Professor, College of Horticulture, Mysuru, pointed out that amaranthus was an excellent source of calcium, magnesium,

potassium, vitamin A, B and C, and an incredible source of vitamin K and the crop offered the most nutrition per calorie than most foods. For the participants the field visit was also an effort to orient the farmers to include

Cotton season expected to close with lower stocks

The current cotton season is expected to end on September 30 with 39.27 lakh bales as closing stock. The Committee on Cotton Production and Consumption had estimated the closing stock at almost 41.27 lakh bales at its meeting held in May. After a meeting, the Committee said imports were expected to be 15 lakh bales, production 315.43 lakh bales and opening stock 71.84 lakh bales.

With this, the total availability for the season was estimated at 402.27 lakh bales. On the consumption

amaranthus in the bouquet of crops under mixed cropping template and promote both crop diversity and empower rural communities to build upon indigenous and traditional knowledge, skills and practices.

Centre to promote dragon fruit cultivation

Following the footsteps of the Gujarat and Haryana Governments, the Centre has decided to promote the cultivation of dragon fruit, known as a “super fruit” for its health benefits. The Centre feels that considering the cost effectiveness and global demand for the fruit due to its nutritional values, its cultivation can be expanded in India. At present, this exotic fruit is cultivated in 3,000 hectares; the plan is to increase cultivation to 50,000 hectares in five years.

The Gujarat Government recently renamed dragon fruit as kamlam (lotus) and announced an incentive for

side, textile mills (non SSI units) were likely to consume 285 lakh bales against the Committee's estimate 289 lakh bales. With weak demand for yarn, demand for cotton had reduced, industry sources said. Consumption by SSI units were likely to be 20 lakh bales whereas 16 lakh bales were estimated to be the non-textile consumption. Exports were estimated at 42 lakh bales, said the Committee. There are both supply and demand side constraints, said an official in the Ministry of Textiles.

Towards climate-smart farming

For a planet bedevilled by uncertainties like droughts, floods, and erratic weather conditions thanks to ever-rising temperatures and facing challenges when it comes to energy demand, a transformation from the conventional, industrial food system to sustainable agriculture can be quite promising, especially in the long run. We can no more ignore the fact that groundwater depletion and worsening of soil health have been significantly accelerated by industrial agriculture. The top 6-8 inches of soil decide the survival of humanity, and it is time to take a serious view on saving the soil.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the premier international agency for climate change assessment, agricultural activities

farmers who cultivate it. The Haryana Government also provides a grant for farmers who are ready to plant this exotic fruit variety. The fruit is considered good for diabetic patients, low in calories and high in nutrients like iron, calcium, potassium and zinc.

According to the authorities, and the Indian Council of Agriculture Research, the fruit plant doesn't need much water and can be cultivated on dry land, too. Presently, Dragon fruit is sold at a price of ₹400 per kg and the effort is to make it available to consumers for ₹100 per kg.

account for around a fifth of the greenhouse gases emitted because of human action. Today, the amount of CO₂ in the Earth's atmosphere is almost 412 parts per million (ppm), and it is constantly rising. This is a 47% increase since the dawn of the industrial period when the concentration was around 280 ppm, and an 11% increase since 2000, when it was 370 ppm.

Agricultural activities like rice farming, cattle rearing and biomass burning account for 22-46% of worldwide methane emissions. Paddy fields are the most significant source of methane emissions, accounting for 15-20% of global emissions generated as a direct result of human activity. These numbers further reflect an urgent need to develop climate-conscious alternatives and substitutes for existing agricultural

practices that add to GHG emissions, with the aim to ensure economic activity does not take place at the expense of the environment and eventually account for mankind's doom.

With this very intent, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations created the concept of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) 12 years ago, to manage farming, livestock, forests, and fisheries holistically. CSA is now being increasingly accepted globally, in countries rich and poor. In India as well, especially in states like Odisha and Tamil Nadu, there has been a growing list of initiatives to champion renewable energy, develop sustainable and resilient infrastructure for agriculture, and build smart-cities so as to adapt to climate-change impacts with greater resilience and, at the same time reduce, the collateral damage to the ecology. In fact, since 2014-15, India has had a National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) to promote climate-friendly agriculture.

ITC implements a Climate-Smart Sustainable Agriculture programme that aims to protect farmers from erratic weather events by disseminating a relevant package of practices that focus on reduced water use (more crop per drop), yield-improvement and climate resilient varieties, adoption of appropriate mechanisation, reduced stubble-burning, and provision of institutional services. The programme is closely associated with India's NMSA, which aims to make agriculture regenerative, productive, sustainable, profitable, and climate-resilient. Over 15 lakh acres and 4.5 lakh farmers are currently covered by the scheme.

Mahindra, on the other hand, has also been working with farmers and helping them transition from chemical-intensive farming to chemical-free biodynamic farming that helps nurture the soil and also reduces the financial burden on farmers. Industry leaders also become becoming sustainability champions is very heartening to note; Puri has been

trying to transform villages chosen by ITC in its key catchments into Climate Smart Villages (CSVs) as part of its CSA programme, with the goal of reducing farmer vulnerability and improving resilience while cutting emissions and promoting food security. The programme, which has shown promising results in a short while, is now being significantly scaled up.

In 600 villages in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra, the CSV programme has covered seven key crops—soybean, paddy, wheat, sugarcane, onion, mango, and gram. Assessing climate risks and identifying climate-smart, no-regrets technologies are among the key interventions, as are adopting practices and services to improve production and reduce climatic risks, and prioritising technological options based on stakeholder preferences (farmers, local governments, and research institutions). Yield-improving and climate-risk-reduction technology are among the approaches that have been marketed to farmers.

The outcomes have been notable and encouraging, and this intervention in MP increased soybean and wheat yields by 38% and 15% above the baseline, respectively. In addition to lower farming costs, this has led to an average increase of 93% in net income for soyabean and 46% for wheat over the baseline. Also, average GHG emissions have fallen by 66% for soybean and 13% for wheat crops as compared to the baseline.

Various green initiatives by these companies have proven that it is possible to work in harmony with nature and achieve significant and encouraging results of sustainable agriculture. After all, the benefits are immeasurable, ranging from better soil-nourishment to significant energy and water saving, in addition to a better structured food-supply. The results yielded by ITC and Mahindra are not just a step towards greater penetration of sustainable-agriculture activities at the pan-India level, but also a motivation to other corporates to consider agriculture as part of their corporate-social-responsibility initiatives.

as Bajaj Hindusthan turns NPA

Lenders' decision to declare Bajaj Hindusthan Sugar Ltd (BHSL) a non-performing asset (NPA) has caused uncertainties for cane farmers in Uttar Pradesh, given the company's unpaid dues of `2,860 crore to them for

the current season. Sources in the industry and farming circles say that lenders must opt for change in management and asset sales via the insolvency process to protect the interests of all stakeholders. The previous

two restructuring schemes aimed at salvaging the company had failed. BHS, the country's largest sugar producer, was declared an NPA as it defaulted on payments related to debt of ₹4,814 crore.

As on July 5, the company paid only 35% of its total cane dues of ₹ 4,398 crore to farmers who supplied cane to its 14 mills in the state. In the just-concluded sugar season, 120-odd mills in the state had purchased

cane worth ₹ 35,198 crore from farmers. As on July 5, the unpaid dues to farmers by all mills in the state stood at ₹7,400 crore. Farmer leader VM Singh said the state government could not ensure that the company adhered to the 14-day payment cycle mandated under the Sugarcane Control Act. BHS and a few other mills had kept farmers waiting for even 12-14 months for the payments to be cleared, even after the payment schedule was tightened, he added.

As sowing crosses 10m-ha mark, cotton prices may fall

With cotton sowing already crossing the 10-million-hectare mark in the current kharif season, prices are likely to fall further in the domestic market. At present, cotton prices are hovering around ₹ 80,000-85,000 per candy (1 candy = 356 kg), said Atul Ganatra, president of the Cotton Association of India, adding, In the wake of increased acreage under cotton cultivation, we are expecting further correction in prices. At one point of time, prices of cotton went up to ₹110,000 per candy earlier this year.

Sowing continues till the second week of August in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, said Ganatra. According to him, at least 10% higher sowing is expected compared to previous kharif season's 12 million hectare. "Looking at the current trend, cotton sowing in Maharashtra is expected to cross 4.2 million hectare. In Gujarat, it would be around 2.7 million hectare. The cotton acreage in north will be around 1.5 million hectare and the same for southern states is likely to remain at around 3.5-4.0 million hectare. The area under cotton

cultivation in Madhya Pradesh is likely to remain at nearly 600,000 hectares," he said.

Although the acreage of cotton exceeds targets in Maharashtra every year, production is higher due to better yield per hectare. In Maharashtra, farmers produce 2 bales (170 kg per bale) per hectare on an average, while in Gujarat it is 3 bales. Apart from northern states, most of the area under cotton cultivation is heavily dependent on rain water. In Punjab and Haryana, where 80% growing area gets benefits of the irrigation facility, productivity goes as high as 4 bales per hectare, Ganatra said.

Avdhesh Sejpal, president of the All India Cotton, Cotton Seeds and Cotton Cake Brokers Association, said farmers are shifting to cotton as they are anticipating better return compared to other monsoon crops. He, however, said farmers need to be watchful as prices may go down to below ₹60,000 per candy by October in case of a bumper crop. CM Patel, joint director of agriculture with the Gujarat government, said farmers are bullish over cotton crop as sowing has crossed 2.05-million hectare mark till July 10.

Sugarcane sowing up 4% in UP

Uttar Pradesh, the country's largest sugarcane producer, is expected to see another bumper crop in the coming season. The total area under sugarcane cultivation is estimated to be up by 3-4% year-on-year. According to industry sources, there is a continuous uptick in sugarcane planting for the 2022-23 (October-September) season, with higher cane prices providing the incentive for farmers to grow the crop instead of paddy and wheat. As per data, the state is estimated to have upward of 2.93 million hectare of land under sugarcane cultivation in 2022-23, against 2.84 million

hectare in 2021-2022 season. The total area under cane was 2.76 million hectare in 2020-21 and 2.74 million hectare in 2019-20. The area under cane cultivation has seen a continuous upswing over the years, despite the fact that a clutch of sugar mills still owed farmers more than ₹ 7,400 crore. The major reason behind the farmers' keenness to plant sugarcane is the fact that cane prices in the state are more remunerative as compared to wheat and paddy. Added to this is the fact that most of the sugar mills have cleared their payment to farmers in a time-bound manner, said a miller.

The sugarcane department, on its part, has ensured the easy availability of high-yielding breeder seed to the farmers. We have engaged women self-help groups (SHGs) in growing new varieties of sugarcane seedling in nurseries. We are also providing fertilisers, pesticides and other essential inputs on easy terms to farmers, said cane commissioner Sanjay Bhoosreddy, adding that while sowing will continue till October, current data show that the area under cultivation has already seen an increase of 80,000 hectare.

Another reason for farmers turning to cane production is the fact that sugarcane is a sturdier crop compared to

Horticultural crops output increase marginally to 341 million tonne in 2021-22

India's production of horticultural crops consisting of fruits, vegetables, spices, medicinal plants and plantation crops in the crop year 2021-22 (July-June crop year) grew by around 2% to 341 million tonne (mt) against 334 mt reported in 2020-21. The horticultural crops production continues to be higher than the food grain production. As per the third advance estimates for the food grains production released in May, India's output of rice, wheat and pulses in 2021-22 crop year was estimated at a record 314.51 mt.

"Increase in production of fruits, vegetables and honey while decrease in production of spices, flowers, aromatics and medicinal plants and plantation crops over previous year, is envisaged," according to an official statement after the release of second advance estimates of horticultural crops production. The

Tourists flock to this family run farm in Kasaragod

A 10-acre land in Kasaragod, converted into a flourishing farm by a family by adopting Responsible Tourism tenets, is garnering tourists' attention these days. Named Pathayapuram, the farm in Madikai panchayat sports over 300 wild trees, mostly native and fruit-bearing. There is a mini forest, spread over an acre of land; a large area for paddy cultivation where varieties of paddy are grown; and on the bunds there is pineapple farming to prevent soil erosion.

Drought resistant rice to be available for farmers by 2026

A drought-resistant rice variety developed through application of genome-edited technology for the first time in the country, is expected to be available for field

wheat and paddy and can withstand the vagaries of weather better than the rest. "While timely and adequate rains are absolutely necessary for wheat and paddy, deficit or late rains are conducive for the sugarcane, which is a major reason for the farmer turning to this crop," said another miller. This year, the state advised price of sugarcane was ` 350 per quintal for the early variety, `340 for the normal variety and `335 for the rejected variety. While cane payments of `27,780 crore were cleared till July 5, another `7,400 crore was pending.

horticultural crops output increase marginally to 341 million tonne in 2021-22

vegetables production grew marginally to 204.61 mt in 2021-22 compared to 200.4 mt as per the final estimate for 2020-21. The production of onion is estimated to rise by close to 19% to 31.7 mt in 2021-22 against 26.6 mt reported in the previous year.

At the same time, the production of potato is estimated to decline by 4% in the current crop to 53.6 mt from 56.2 mt reported in 2020-21. The output of tomato is estimated to decline by 4% in the current crop year to 20.3 mt compared to 21.18 mt as per final estimate for 2020-21. In case of fruits production, the second advance estimate pegs the output at 107.1 mt in 2021-22 compared to 102.5 mt reported in the 2020-21 crop year. Amongst the key fruits, banana production is estimated to witness a growth of 6% to 35.13 mt in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21.

Tourists flock to this family run farm in Kasaragod

For those with an affinity for animals, the farm has cows, goats, chickens, ducks, fish, and birds. There is also a huge pond in which visitors can enjoy swimming. A small bamboo hut amidst the mini forest is a perfect place for them to relax. This farm is a good model of farm tourism which is growing popularity and becoming a good source of income for farmers and increases general awareness and interest on farming activities among societies.

evaluation by kharif 2024 and for commercial cultivation by farmers by 2026, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said. The environment

ministry and Department of Biotechnology (DBT) have given the sanctions for the field evaluation of genome-edited rice variety during the kharif 2024 season to Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Delhi, Tomar stated in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

The research work is carried out with the approval of institutional biosafety committee constituted by DBT under Environment Protection Act, 1986. "New variety of rice is expected to improve water use efficiency in paddy cultivation and help farmers in taking up the crops despite rainfall deficiency," KC Bansal, secretary, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, told.

This is expected to be the first variety of agricultural crop developed using genome-edited technology to go for commercial release in the next four years in the country.

The government in March had exempted certain types of genome-edited crops from the stringent bio-safety regulations applicable to genetically-modified (GM)

crops to ensure wider use of this technology and accelerate genetic improvement of crops in the country. There are several crops being developed through using genome-edited technology that are in the pipeline for field trial. The environment ministry, in a notification had exempted site directed nuclease (SDN) 1 and 2 genomes from Rules 7-11 of the Environment Protection Act, thus allowing it to avoid a long process for approval of GM crops through the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).

Scientists associated with the Indian Council for Agricultural Research said the technology has great promise. Scientists say that genome-edited plants are different from genetically-modified organisms (GMO) technology. Genome editing is a group of technologies that gives scientists the ability to change an organism's DNA. The US and China are leaders in usage of this technology for developing crop varieties like rice, maize, soyabean, canola and tomato which withstand biotic and abiotic stresses arising out of climate change.

Women farmers of Jhargram reap fortunes with organic rice

Panchabati Baske of Damodarpur village and Nirmala Mahato of Murakhati village are trendsetters in their respective villages in West Bengal's Jhargram district. Though not highly educated, Ms. Baske and Ms. Mahato have started a revolution by cultivating indigenous varieties of rice organically, without using any chemical fertilisers. There are 55 women farmers in Damodarpur village and 21 women farmers in Murakhati village following in their footsteps by growing indigenous varieties of rice. Hundreds of women farmers have taken up the cultivation of indigenous rice varieties like Kalabhat (Black rice), Mallifullo (brown rice) and Kerala Sundari (raw aromatic full bran folk rice) and Red Rice, locally called as Sathia, in the remote villages of Jhargram.

What started in 2017 with a dozen women has taken the form of a company with 2,677 women farmers as shareholders to Aamon Mahila Chasi Producer Company Limited. The number of women cultivators, across the five-gram panchayats of Nayagram block in Jhargram, participating in this initiative now stands at over 4,500. The area of land cultivated this year is more than 1,100 hectares. Ms. Baske started by cultivating the indigenous rice varieties in two to three cottahs of

land in 2016-17. This year, she has cultivated black rice in 1.5 bighas (1 bigha = 20 cottahs) of land and Sathia rice in one bigha land. "We are saving ₹4,000 to ₹5,000 per bigha on fertilisers and there is not much difference in the yield," she said. Both Ms. Baske and Ms. Mahato told. The Hindu that they have made profits by cultivating organic indigenous rice varieties. They also said that as stakeholders to Aamon, they have a greater say in decision making when it comes to farming.

PRADAN, a non-government organisation, have handheld the women by providing training in the cultivation process. The body has also set up a rice processing mill and has started marketing the indigenous produce to different parts of the country. A bio-fertiliser unit has also come up in the region replacing the chemical-based fertilisers used in high-yielding varieties by farmyard manure and other natural inputs.

Madhura Kanjilal, an executive with PRADAN, said that the turnover for Aamon this year is pegged at ₹3 crore. The women who are part of Aamon have a voice now. Though agriculture is considered a male domain, most of the labour is provided by women. Women farmers at Aamon have the final say as to what to do when it comes to agriculture. According to the women farmers,

the yield varies with the varieties. While it is about five to six quintals per bigha for indigenous varieties, for the high-yielding paddy cultivated with chemical fertilisers, this can be about nine to ten quintals. With the price of the indigenous varieties being three times, the women farmers are making profit. The women also produce

After Andhra Pradesh, Telangana too re-joins crop insurance scheme

Telangana, which had opted out of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) citing 'highest cost of premium subsidy', is likely to re-join the crop insurance scheme. Sources told that the Centre has agreed to the Telangana government's demand for 'universal coverage' of farmers under the scheme.

Telangana is likely to implement PMFBY from rabi 2023. Six states — Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Gujarat dropped out of the scheme citing the high cost of premium, which had led to delays in release of their share of premium subsidy. Delayed premium caused issues of claim settlement by the insurance companies.

Earlier this month, the Andhra Pradesh government announced its decision to re-join the PMFBY, effective kharif 2022, after the Centre agreed to the state government's proposal of universalising the scheme for all the farmers. A delay by the Telangana government in releasing its share of premium under the PMFBY, in 2018-19 and 2019-20, led to the Centre stopping the release of its component of a matching sum, thus leading to delay in claim settlement for the farmers. Subsequently, the Telangana government stopped

Kerala keen to replace wheat with ragi

The Kerala government has sought Central assistance to distribute ragi powder and chickpea instead of wheat atta in at least three districts where anaemia cases and lifestyle-related diseases are high. Kerala Food Minister G.R. Anil told reporters after a meeting with Union Food Minister Piyush Goyal that the demand was in place of about 6459.04 metric tonnes of wheat, which had been stopped by the Centre from its quota recently.

Mr. Anil said the demand to distribute ragi powder was made after studies by Kerala Health Department and the State Food Commission recommended millets and pulses for anaemia-hit districts such as Wayanad, and Palakkad and Idukki. He said in a letter to Mr. Goyal that as 2022-2023 was the International Year of Millets,

plates made of sal leaves, which are abundantly found in the region. This year onwards, the women farmers are also selling this eco-friendly product. Attempts are being made so that the rice varieties are available to individual customers through online platforms, said Buddhadeb Jana of Amon.

After Andhra Pradesh, Telangana too re-joins crop insurance scheme

implementing the PMFBY from the 2020 kharif season. As per the revised guideline for the PMFBY issued since kharif 2020, the Centre had stipulated that in case of non-payment of the state's share of premium, subsidy within the prescribed timelines would lead to disqualification of the state government from implementing crop insurance from the next season. Under the heavily-subsidised PMFBY, the premium to be paid by farmers is fixed at just 1.5% of the sum insured for rabi crops and 2% for kharif crops, while it is 5% for cash crops. The balance premium is equally shared among the Centre and states and in the case of the north-eastern states, the premium is split between the Centre and states in a 9:1 ratio.

In recent years, claims by farmers under the PMFBY have been on the decline. The ratio, which was 93.9% in kharif 2018, has come down to just 41.9% in kharif 2021, as per provisional data. Similarly in rabi 2017, the claim to premium ratio was 106.9%, which declined to 47.1% in 2021. In February 2020, the government made the PMFBY voluntary for farmers; previously, it was mandatory for farmers to take insurance cover under the scheme.

Kerala keen to replace wheat with ragi

Kerala was planning to supply ragi powder to ration card holders to provide adequate food security, especially to tribal families in the hilly areas of Palakkad, Wayanad and Idukki districts and through fair price shops in at least one panchayat on a pilot basis.

For this, the State had demanded 991 metric tonnes of ragi powder. It was the quantity required at the rate of one kg for an average of 500 ration cardholders of each fair price shop under the purview of 1,034 local self-governments and at the rate of one kg for ration cardholders of about 948 fair price shops in Idukki, Palakkad and Wayanad. "As part of ensuring more nutrient-rich food to people, especially tribals, I humbly request you to look into the above proposal and take

necessary steps for the allotment of ragi at the earliest," Mr. Anil said in the letter.

The State has also requested protein-rich white gram (chickpea) along with other food grains. "This may help reduce malnutrition among the tribals also. Hence, it is high time to provide nutritious food like white gram through the Public Distribution System. As envisaged in the Food Security Act, to provide adequate food security, we are planning to provide one kilogram of white gram or chickpea per card, as a protein

supplement through one fair price shop in each local self-government and every fair price shop in hilly areas of Idukki, Palakkad and Wayanad District on a pilot basis," Mr. Anil added. The State has demanded 991 MT of chickpea from the Centre. The Centre had cut down wheat allocation and replaced it with rice for at least 10 States recently. The matter was raised by States such as Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh at a recent Food Ministers' meeting. The States demanded restoration of wheat quota. Kerala, on the other hand, has demanded ragi instead of wheat.

Bihar, West Bengal issue advisory on water usage for kharif crops

West Bengal, the largest rice-producing state in the country, and neighbouring Bihar have issued advisory on water usage for kharif crops, as there has not been enough rains for the transplantation of paddy saplings. Paddy saplings are transplanted from the seedbed to the fields that need to hold water for several weeks for the healthy growth of the plants.

The West Bengal government has stepped up irrigation to paddy fields, and is restoring the irrigation installations that have become non-functional and bringing farmers under crop insurance to ensure compensation to them if there is a crop failure. Pradip Kumar Majumdar, Bengal's panchayats and rural development minister, said it had asked farmers to use minimum water so that it was not wasted.

Bihar has advised its farmers to use irrigation for transplantation and announced a diesel subsidy of ₹75

per litre for running submersible pumps for irrigating the paddy fields. The state government has also asked farmers to grow alternative crops for which seeds would be provided by the government. In West Bengal, paddy acreage is 4.2-4.4 million hectares and the state produces 16 million tonnes of kharif paddy. The state's rice production is 15.57 mt.

Minister Majumdar told "Nearly 90% of the irrigation installations which were not working due to non-payment of electricity charges have become operational. We have asked the farmers to use minimum water for irrigation so that water is not wasted. A high-level committee has been formed to tackle the situation. 2,500 shallow tube wells are working." The minister said the India Meteorological Department had predicted heavy rainfall in the state. "If that happens, then the farmers face no problem in transplantation," he said.

Fertilizer scarcity may hamper crop cycle, cautions scientist

South Asian countries may see fertilizers scarcity in the next crop cycle as a result of the conflict situation in Ukraine and Russia, cautioned Bram Govaerts, Director General of International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) and the Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA).

Dr. Govaerts, who is here to address a two-day high-level conference of South Asian countries on Agriculture Research for Development, said the big challenge was how to feed the world, which arose because of the three sub-challenges — climate change, COVID-19 and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The meet, which began specifically discussing the food grain situation in Sri Lanka and the impact of the recent floods on Pakistan's food security.

Talking to a select group of journalists, Dr. Govaerts said

the world was seeing fragility on the food systems. On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, he said the world needed to dissect the impact of it. The first impact was that 25% of the grains globally stuck not reaching the areas where it should have reached. The number two impact is on fertilizers. A lot of fertilizers is also coming from this area. But that fertilizer scarcity is going to impact only in the next growing season, but this will have an impact on the whole world not only in those areas that import wheat from the conflict-hit regions, he said. For the food grain shortage problem, he said India was potentially a solution as the country produced a lot of wheat. He said there were several policy changes that could be adopted to address these crises, but the key element was to stimulate investment in research and innovation.



Telangana State Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd.

(State Govt. Partnered Scheduled Bank)

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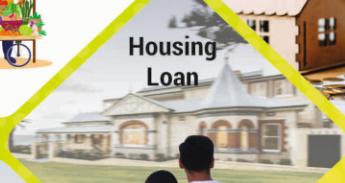
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BBPS Services



ATMs at Metro Stations



Mobile Banking/IMPS



Financial Performance of TSCAB

(₹ In Crores)

S.No	Particulars	31.03.2021	31.03.2022 (Unaudited)	Percentage Increase (YOY)
1	Share Capital in Rs. Crores	230.64	289.25	25.41
2	Reserves	556.53	625.33	12.36
3	Deposits	5466.41	6941.95	26.99
4	Borrowings	5413.42	6261.80	15.67
5	Business Turnover	13245.69	16276.71	22.88
6	Loans & Advances	7779.28	9334.76	20.00
7	Investments	1467.72	2058.78	41.95
8	Operating Profit (Profit Before Tax)	59.38	96.63	62.73
9	Gross NPAs %	0.17	0.14	(-)17.64
10	CRAR %	9.90	10.53	6.36
11	CD ratio	142.31	134.47	(-)5.51

“Your Prosperity is our Priority”



THE GUJARAT STATE CO-OP AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT BANK LTD

489, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009.

Website: www.khatibank.org Email: info@gacardbank.org

Phone: (079) 26585365-70-71

The Bank was established in 1951 to extend long term and medium term loans to farmers for agriculture and allied agricultural activities through 176 branches and 17 district offices located at each taluka places and district places respectively in the State of Gujarat. The Bank has significantly contributed 71 years towards rural development of Gujarat since Inception by advancing Rs 4543.25 crores long term loans to farmers for agriculture and allied agricultural activities up to 31.3.2022

FINANCIAL DETAILS OF THE BANK AS ON 31-03-2022

Sr. No.	Particulars	2021-22 (Rs In Crores)
1	Owned Funds	643.42
2	Loans Disbursed	151.28
3	Investment	545.27
4	Fixed Deposit	238.10
5	Loan Outstanding	550.43
6	Net Profit	29.29
7	Dividend	20%
8	CRAR	75.10%
	Audit Class (2020-21)	A

SALIENT FEATURES

1. New loan policy with reduction in Rates of interest with the effect from 1st April, 2022 is 10% per annum.
2. 2% rebate on amount of Interest paid by borrower who pays Installments regularly.
3. All the loans issued by the Bank are by registered mortage of land.
4. Bank has covered accidental insurance of Rs. 2 lakhs for all the loan borrowers of bank on Hon;ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji's Birthday.

INVEST YOUR SAVINGS IN KHETI BANK

Deposit Period	Interest Rate Individual/Member	Interest Rate Trust/society/other banks etc.
1 Year	6.00%	5.20%
2 Year	6.10%	5.30%
3 Year	6.25%	5.40%
4 Year	6.25%	5.50%
5 Year	6.25%	5.60%
6 Year and above	6.25%	5.75%

Additional 0.50% interest to Bank Employees & Senior Citizen

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Vice Chairman

K.B. Upadhyay
Managing Director
I.A.S(Retd.)