

Weekly Agri Policy & Trends Update, August 21- August 26, 2015

1. How a Karnataka experiment can revolutionize agriculture in India, Business Standard, August 24, 2015

The single biggest challenge in farming is debt. A large share of farmers' insurmountable debt burden comes from purchase of farm equipment. Mechanized farming results in higher productivity but is notoriously capital intensive. A 40 HP tractor with 2 basic implements (a rotator and a cultivator) and a trolley costs about Rs. 8 lakhs after subsidies. Given the highly fragmented small landholding in our country and rapidly shrinking labour force, most farmers lack the resources to upgrade from animal powered farming to fossil fuel powered cultivation. In fact, maintaining a pair of bullocks too has become an expensive proposition.

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2. US to support fellowship in agriculture, allied sciences in India, The Hindu, August 25, 2015

United States of America's Ambassador to India, Richard R. Verma, on Monday presented some good news to the students of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. He said his country would support fellowship in India in agriculture and allied disciplines. Interacting with the students at the University, he said that the fellowship was to explore animal health, post-harvest treatment, biological control, biotechnology and agricultural marketing.

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3. Bt cotton: Govt admits Monsanto never had patent in India, The Times of India, August 26, 2015

Thirteen years after US multinational Monsanto launched Bt cotton seeds in the country, the government has woken up to the fact that the first version of the genetically modified crop was not patented in India. Monsanto ended up earning huge royalties on the Bt seeds even without a patent, changing the economics of cotton farming in India. In 2002, Monsanto came up with the Bollgard version of the seeds, which have an inherent resistance against bollworm, a common pest for cotton crop. The Mon-531 or cry1Ac gene, which was used in the seed, was not patented by Monsanto in India. In 2006, Monsanto launched the Bollgard II variety, which has a patent.

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4. Farmers seek support price or end to trade with India, The Tribune, August 22, 2015

They said the government must announce a support price for their crops if it could not do so. They spread potatoes on the road in front of their sit-in camp on The Mall and blocked it for traffic to protest government's failure to meet their demands. The blockade continued till the filing of this report. Meanwhile, traffic was diverted to adjoining roads including McLeod Road and Queens' Road.

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5. Prospects in agricultural economics, The Tribune, August 26, 2015

The overriding goal of our country's agricultural policy is to achieve food security. And to achieve this goal, we need not only agricultural scientists but also agricultural economists who can apply the principles of economics to ensure greater productivity in agriculture. As technology and economic forces drive growth in this sector, the demand for agricultural economists also increases. The programme teaches you how to deal with the constantly changing economy and make decisions concerning risk and uncertainty of agricultural production, reliance on natural resources, key aspects of institutions that govern food and agriculture, and the competitive structures within agribusiness.

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6. Haryana government clearing sugar mill dues: Agriculture Minister Om Prakash Dhankar, The Economics Times, August 26, 2015

Haryana Agriculture Minister Om Prakash Dhankar today said that most of the dues accruing to the 14 sugar mills in the state have been paid and the balance would be cleared within the next few days. The minister said that 11 cooperative sugar mills had purchased sugarcane worth Rs 1,077 crore during 2014-15 crushing season. Of this, payments of more than Rs 1,022 crore have already been made to the farmers, he added.

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7. Onion prices fall as supplies arrive from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh & Karnataka, August 26, 2015

Onion prices fell Rs 5 to Rs 10 a kilogram in wholesale markets on Tuesday as fresh supplies arrived from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. With imports from Egypt too reaching the market, traders expect prices to remain weak for the next few days though they don't see any major decline. In the retail market, prices fell Rs 2 to Rs 5 a kg, which led people to rush to buy. Mother Dairy's Safal stores sold onions at Rs 38 a kg on Tuesday, while roadside vendors cut prices to Rs 50-80.

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8. Government to raise funds to complete impending irrigation projects, The Economic Times, August 26, 2015

The Maharashtra finance department is considering raising project-wise loans from the open market to complete impending irrigation projects in the state without disturbing the Governor's directives on fund allocation for projects. According to the Governor's directives, funds from the state budget meant for different irrigation projects have to be allocated as per a prescribed formula to Marathwada, Vidarbha and remaining Maharashtra region.

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9. 'Unfortunate that Punjab is facing water shortage', The Times of India, August 26, 2015

It is very unfortunate that a state like Punjab, which is known for its rivers, is facing shortage of water. "When I share this problem with the people of other states, they don't believe it and laugh it off. But in reality, conditions are becoming worse and there is a need to take immediate steps to improve the conditions," Union minister for water resources Uma Bharti said here on Tuesday. She was speaking at the inauguration of two-day regional convention of the Water Users Associations (WUAs) at the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU). Experts at the convention shared various techniques to encourage water conservation for irrigation purposes and also urged farmers to use the water resources properly. Bharti said that there was a dire need to save Punjab from the crisis of depleting groundwater and for that people should come forward. She said there was also a need to encourage WUAs which should guide people for proper utilization of water resources.

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