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NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 29TH TO FEBRUARY 4TH 2017

AGRICULTURE HAS MORE TO OFFER

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, January 29th, 2018

An appraisal of the agriculture sector raises hope that it has more to offer in the near future—but only after stakeholders learn to co-exist peacefully.

Pakistan will most likely miss the downward revised cotton production target of 12.6 million bales this year, along with the wheat target of 26.5m tonnes, owing to anticipated shortages in water supply.

Relying on estimates by the Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC), the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) recently released first quarter report shows cotton production at 12.6m bales. However, market sources and officials of Sindh and Punjab agriculture departments talk about 12m bales in the best case scenario.

Since arrival in cotton ginneries remained at 11.33m bales till January 15, the second assessment seems more realistic. Quoting the water authority of the country, the Indus River System Authority, the SBP report admits that meeting wheat output target may be challenging due to expected shortfall of 40 per cent in water availability.

Output of rice and sugar cane has remained above expected levels and maize production may also remain close to target. This means that crops will, by and large, post sufficient growth during the current fiscal year. Even if smaller crops fail, it will not make a huge impact in this proposition.

Officials of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) say that in FY18, contribution of all crops in agriculture growth should be slightly more than FY17. Agriculture posted 3.5pc growth in FY17 of which around 1.1pc came via crops. In FY18 the agriculture sector as a whole is likely to grow 3.5-3.6pc.

According to officials, anticipated Chinese investment in the country's agriculture as part of CPEC should give further impetus to the sector's growth rate. They say Beijing has already committed to setting up a fertiliser plant with output capacity of 800,000 tonnes per year in addition to investing in high-yield seeds production.

Besides, the Chinese have already agreed to set up a meat processing plant in Sindh to produce 200,000 tonnes of meat a year and two milk plants with a similar capacity. They have also indicated setting up a vegetable processing plant to process 200,000 tonnes of vegetables and fruit juice, along with a jam production plant with output capacity of 100,000 tonnes.

The SBP has further observed in its report that enhanced yield, better output prices, accelerated farm lending and government support (such as Khadim-e-Punjab Kissan Package) is augmenting crop sector performance.

Though water shortages can negatively impact Rabi crops, officials and farmers say supply of other basic inputs like fertilisers, seeds and pesticides is on target and can keep crop output stable.

Officials of provincial agriculture departments claim that smaller crops, including those of gram and oilseeds, will remain higher this year than in FY17. Though these crops carry little weight in the crop basket, yet a rise in their output should positively impact food industry and trade.

During this fiscal year, authorities have woken up to the seriousness of a long-neglected issue of the crop sector: digging deeper into the root cause of a traditional tiff between sugar cane growers and sugar millers, on the directive of the country's apex court, they are facing two reality checks.

First, allowing multiple sugar mills 'on political consideration' and putting up with their unfair practices have shaken small cane growers. And second, permitting sugar cane plantation to feed a larger number of mills has resulted in shrinkage in the area under cultivation of cotton.

Senior MNFSR officials privately admit that the country needs a more judicious distribution of land for growing various crops based on their total contribution to the economy.

After agriculture's devolution to the provinces from FY11, all four segments (crops, livestock, fisheries and poultry and forestry) have gotten increased policy attention. But, for obvious reasons, discussions on agriculture mostly revolve around crops despite the fact that livestock has a more than 50pc share in the sector, according to FY17 sector-wise GDP.

So, even if crop performance in FY18 remains better than in FY17, much will depend on livestock to push agricultural growth at 3.5pc or beyond.

In FY17, out of the 3.5pc growth in agriculture two per cent originated from livestock, yet livestock's prospects are seldom discussed. The nation is to date unaware whether a physical census of animals, due in 2016, has even been conducted.

The animal population for each fiscal year is worked out on the basis of inter-census growth rates of two previous physical animal head counting, the last one carried out in 2006. That also opens up avenues for working out milk and meat production in the country.

This has to change. At the very least the authorities must inform about the reason for delay or, if the activity has been carried out, make public the preliminary results.

However, since domestic sales of meat and dairy products have been growing and export of meat, despite some slippage, remains large an estimate can be made regarding the livestock sector's performance.

Besides, food sector companies that not only use cereals as raw materials but also milk, cream and other locally produced dairy products continue to do a roaring business. That, along with the sale of sacrificial animals on Eid-ul-Azha gives an optimistic picture of the livestock sector.

Without being specific, officials of MNFSR say livestock's contribution in agricultural growth in FY18 is expected to remain more or less the same as in FY17. Some of them even agree with the notion that provincial departments dealing with livestock and fisheries must share more information with media and the general public.

Until that is done, performance of crops alone would continue to dominate discussion on agricultural growth prospects as is also evident from the notes on agriculture in the SBP report.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1385789

PLAN TO BOOST PULSES PRODUCTION
Dawn,The Business and Finance Weekly, January 29th, 2018

Ahmad Fraz Khan

THE federal government seems to be waking up to rising imports of pulses, which surged by more than 60 per cent to Rs100 billion during the previous fiscal year.

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research considers approving a Rs3bn plan to promote research and boost productivity of four major pulses — gram (chickpea), mash, moong and masoor.

The plan — involving some 18 local and international institutions — is aimed at genetically improving seeds, mechanising production and increasing seed production.

The latest impetus for such planning came from the last year's import bill. Imports of grams alone swelled more than 55pc to Rs44bn in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Similarly, imports of masoor (or lentil) more than doubled to Rs15bn. Mash imports increased from Rs6.6bn to Rs7.2bn while that of dried peas stood at Rs25bn.

Apart from the ministry's plan, the plant sciences division of the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) noted in a recent meeting that the import bill of smaller crops — such as kidney, white and broad beans — are also costing over Rs7bn.

The division has come up with a strategy to strengthen research and development of these beans. Participants of the meeting noted that the country has a huge reservoir of germplasm lines for these beans because they were used to be part of regular diets and sown in many parts of the country before falling out of farmers' favour.

For example, the Bio-resources Conservation Institute at the PARC has over 1,200 germplasm lines of kidney beans and around 200 lines of cowpeas in its gene bank. They could form the basis for future research and development plans and help cut the import bill.

In addition to this massive gene pool, the organisation has research facilities in almost all ecological zones of the country and they can be turned into genetic improvement centres.

On the basis of ecology, research on kidney bean and arhar pulse was assigned to research institutes in Swat and Tando Jam, respectively. For moth bean, facilities at Dera Ismail Khan and Umerkot would be utilised.

Germplasm acquisition will be the responsibility of the National Agricultural Research Centre.

A coordinated programme on minor pulses will also be developed for improving productivity, profitability and soil fertility through indigenous resources.

“Some beans can only grow in colder areas, whereas some need sandy lands or rain-fed areas. These ecological needs cannot be met by one province alone,” says Dr Anjum Ali, member at the plant sciences division of the PARC.

Pulses production lacks central planning after the devolution of powers to provinces, and the PARC’s plan is an effort to fill the gap, he says. He hopes that once the quality of seeds improves and profitability grows, these minor pulses will be back on the farmers’ list of priorities.

Plans like this have been overdue, as pulses have lost their economic sheen over the last few years, both because of climate change and competition from high-value crops.

Climate uncertainties have hit pulses production more because of their peculiar cropping requirements. They all require different temperature and amount of water to grow, which mostly conflict with other crops, especially wheat, in their areas. For example, if it rains heavily the chances of wheat brighten but that of lentil get ruined. And both suffer if it does not rain at all.

Lentil also does not have uniformed maturity. Sometimes a third of crop matures early and farmers have to harvest it. They have to either pick pods from individual plants or risk destroying the entire crop if they go for mechanised harvesting.

The nature of sowing areas also increases pulses’ susceptibility. For example, in Punjab all of them are sown either in rain-fed areas or on river beds. This gives climate change an additional significance, as untimely rains and floods could damage the crop. Put together, all these factors have made pulses uncertain crops for farmers.

On the other hand, official planning in the last few decades has tilted in favour of high-value crops. With cropping intensity in most parts of the country increasing beyond 150 per cent, there is hardly any space left for low-yielding pulses.

These factors highlight the obstacles to cultivating pulses. Strategies should be made to overcome these problems, both for achieving food security and improving farmers’ earnings.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1385787/plan-to-boost-pulses-production

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OF COTTON MAY BE GIVEN TO FOOD SECURITY MINISTRY

Business Recorder, 31 January 2018

ISLAMABAD: Government is considering bringing the cotton crop management under the administrative control of Ministry of National Food Security and Research in order to streamline the issues and challenges being faced by the major cash crop of country. The measure would also help enhance per acre crop output and produce quality and world-class cotton in the country.

Before 18th Constitutional Amendment and devolving of the food ministries to provinces, the cotton crop was the subject of federal ministry of food and agriculture. But after the constitutional amendment, cotton crop was put under the control of ministry of textile industry. In this regard, a committee headed by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Sartaj Aziz was also formed, seeking the suggestion from all the stakeholders to streamline the matter, said an senior official in the Ministry of Textile Industry.

Talking to APP here on Tuesday, he said that the committee after its due deliberations had recommended the government for bringing all matters related to cotton crops under the control of ministry of national food security and research. Besides, it had also proposed to establish a special research cell in Pakistan Agriculture Research Council to expedite research and development activities in cotton sector for preparing high quality seed varieties to enhance crop output in the country. The recommendations of the committee would be presented in the next meeting of the federal cabinet for approval, he remarked.

He said that the move to put cotton crop under food security ministry would be a positive step for the policy formulation and would help in policy making for the production of cotton crop and other competitive crops in the country. It would also help to overcome the increasing issues of crop shifting and each crop would be equally focused in collaboration with the provincial agriculture departments, adding that the output of other crops would not be suffered.

The official said that ministry of national food security and research was already looking into the matters related to fertilizers, pesticides and seeds and putting the cotton crop under the same ministry would help in adopting a holistic approach to build the cotton crop pattern on strong lines. Giving the cotton crop back to food security ministry would also help in enhancing the cooperation, communications among and the provincial governments and their allied departments and international agencies for the promotion of agriculture sector, particularly growth and development of cotton crop across the country, he added.—APP

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/31/3-page/697088-news.html

CABINET LIKELY TO REVERSE FARMER-FRIENDLY MECHANISM
The Express Tribune, January 31st, 2018

The federal cabinet, which is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, is likely to reverse a grower-friendly decision on timely payments for their produce, taken by the previous Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government, in the wake of pressure from the influential sugar barons.

During the PPP’s tenure, the cabinet in February 2012 had agreed that the sugarcane purchase receipts, to be issued by sugar millers, would be converted into cheques. It was also agreed that sugarcane purchase quantity and price would be printed on the receipts in a bid to ensure payment of a fair price to the farmers.

However, in November 2013, the sugar barons made an attempt to get the decision scrapped in the light of opposition from the Law Division.

The Ministry of Industries and Production also endorsed the sugar millers’ stance and made a request in that regard to the Cabinet Division. However, the division turned down the request, insisting that in terms of Rule 24 of the Rules of Business 1973, cabinet decisions were required to be implemented in letter and spirit.

On the contrary, the current PML-N government has not particularly worked to protect the interest of and stop the exploitation of growers, instead it has doled out billions of rupees in export subsidy and other support measures to the sugar millers.

In this situation, the growers have been left at the mercy of the millers, many of whom had stopped buying sugarcane during the current season, which prompted the apex court to step in to resolve the matter.

The millers are accused of paying for less than the actual weight of sugarcane as well as offering only Rs140 per 40 kg compared to the set support price of Rs180 per 40 kg.

The Ministry of Industries and Production and the Law Division have joined hands with the millers, which will lead to delay in payments to the farmers. In that regard, the ministry had sent a summary to the cabinet in November last year. Now, the cabinet has decided to take up the matter on Wednesday.

This came despite the fact that an association of commercial banks had supported the growers and even the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) had endorsed the old mechanism, saying it would guarantee timely payments to the farmers.

Apart from this, all key stakeholders including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Federal Board of Revenue, cane commissioners of Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh and the Kisan Board had supported the printing of sugarcane purchase quantity and price on the receipts.

In its summary, the ministry of industries said it had consulted all stakeholders and the Law Division and Pakistan Sugar Mills Association expressed serious reservations about converting the receipts into cheques.

It argued that the mechanism could not be implemented due to opposition from the Law Division and sugar millers, therefore, the cabinet should revoke the previous decision.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1622368/2-cabinet-likely-reverse-farmer-friendly-mechanism/

SUGARCANE FARMERS GET BITTER END OF THE DEAL
The Express Tribune, January 30th, 2018.

Zafar Bhutta

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government has failed to implement a grower-friendly decision of the previous Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) administration about printing sugarcane purchase quantity and price, apparently in the wake of pressure from influential sugar millers.

Now, growers have been left at the mercy of the millers, many of whom are paying far lower than the set support price for sugarcane.

The PPP government, in its 2008-13 tenure, had agreed on printing the quantity and price of sugarcane on the purchase receipt in a bid to avoid exploitation of the farmers.

The mechanism was also endorsed by different ministries and organisations including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Federal Board of Revenue, State Bank of Pakistan, cane commissioners of Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, and the Kisan Board.

However, according to sources, the sugar millers are now paying for less than the actual weight of sugarcane and are also offering Rs140 per 40 kg of sugarcane, which was much lower than the support price of Rs180 set by the provincial governments.

The policy adopted by the current government seems to have been more favourable for the millers in comparison to the farmers. It has doled out billions of rupees in export subsidy to the millers.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet, in its meeting held in December last year, approved a minimum benefit of Rs15 billion for the millers through procurement of 300,000 tons of surplus sugar stock.

The total hit to the exchequer, both for the federal and provincial governments, would be at least Rs20.4 billion including the cost of subsidy on sugar exports. This was in addition to the benefit of Rs30 billion that the millers would get by claiming Rs20-per-kg subsidy on the export of 1.5 million tons.

During discussions in an ECC huddle in January last year, Minister of State for Information Technology Anusha Rahman had referred to minutes of the Sugar Advisory Board meeting held on December 19, 2016.

The board was informed that sugar prices had been consistently increased over the years despite virtually no change in sugarcane rates for the past three years.

During the PPP government’s tenure, the federal cabinet in February 2012 had decided that in order to ensure timely payments to the growers, the adviser to prime minister on law along with secretaries of finance and industries would examine the feasibility of converting the sugarcane purchase receipts into cheques in consultation with the growers.

Later in July 2012, it was recommended that the sugar mills should pay sugarcane growers through a cheque with an attached cane purchase receipt showing the purchase price and quantity.

It was also agreed that provincial cane commissioners would ensure the inclusion of sugarcane purchase quantity and price in the receipt. In case of any problems, they would seek assistance of the district coordination officers (DCOs).

The Pakistan Banks Association also backed the plan, saying under the mechanism where purchase receipts would be backed by cheques, the growers would have the option of recourse to legal action. Apart from this, the sugar mills would ensure that funds were available in their accounts every time they issue a cheque.

The bank would disburse the amount as per details of the cheque and subject to the availability of funds in a sugar miller’s account.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1621421/2-sugarcane-farmers-get-bitter-end-deal/

TO PROMOTE AGRI FINANCE: SBP GOVERNOR URGES BANKS TO SET UP AGRI CREDIT BODIES
Business Recorder, February 1 2018

KARACHI: Tariq Bajwa, Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has urged all banks to set up agricultural credit committees comprising of all group heads in their institutions.

While presiding, the mid-term review meeting of Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) held in Karachi on Wednesday, governor SBP asked the Presidents and CEOs of all banks to personally head these committees.

While reviewing the progress on agricultural credit disbursements during July December 2017, the Governor lauded the efforts of banks in promoting agriculture credit. By disbursing Rs432 billion during the first six months of FY2018, banks have demonstrated that agricultural credit disbursement target of Rs1001 billion will be achieved, he said. Adding further, he said that due to improvement in agricultural credit infrastructure, the disbursement trend has turned positive in the underserved provinces like KPK and Balochistan, however, concerted efforts are required to narrow the regional disparities by further enhancing the agricultural credit infrastructure. To prioritize agriculture lending, Bajwa advised that internal agricultural credit committees would enhance collaboration and ensure effective monitoring of the agricultural credit within institutions. He also advised banks to adopt an effective agricultural credit management structure with integrated reporting lines of agricultural credit teams to make agricultural finance a key indicator of banks' performance.

In his keynote address, Bajwa also took stock of the four key points identified during the last ACAC meeting held on 25th August 2017. These included achievement of Rs1001 billion disbursement targets, increasing financial inclusion of small farmers to address their credit needs, particularly for production loans, rationalizing the markup rates on agricultural financing to pass on the benefit of historically low discount rate and increasing banks' footprint in underserved regions and provinces for reducing regional disparities.

The Governor while appreciating the increase in agricultural credit borrowers of banks by 182,000 mainly due to inclusion of borrowers by the Microfinance Banks, expressed his concern over the attrition of borrowers of five big commercial banks and specialized banks and advised banks to take corrective measures to increase their number of small borrowers to achieve the overall target of 1 million fresh borrowers during FY 2018. He also urged Islamic banks to play their due role in the promotion of agricultural finance by strengthening their agricultural credit infrastructure and developing innovative products.

He added that during last six months, no change has been witnessed in the agricultural lending rates of banks. He encouraged commercial as well as Microfinance banks to look into their business propositions and ensure provision of agricultural loans to small farmers at affordable lending rates. He also encouraged commercial banks to take advantage of the extensive network of MFBs or MFIs especially in underserved areas by providing wholesale funding to these institutions.

Representatives of Agri. Chambers highlighted the need of financing for setting up agricultural processing units and controlled sheds for livestock farming. Officials of Federal and Provincial

Governments also supported measures for enhancing agricultural credit. Banks pledged their full commitment to achieve SBP's assigned targets.

Concluding the meeting, the Governor reiterated his commitment to continue efforts for the achievement of overall agricultural credit target for FY 2017-18, provision of production loans to small farmers, enhancing agricultural credit infrastructure especially in underserved provinces by arranging job fairs. He encouraged banks, provincial agriculture departments and chambers to create synergies to resolve issues hindering flow of credit to small farmers. He thanked the participants and hoped that the financial institutions will also achieve their provincial/regional targets particularly in underserved areas like Balochistan, KPK, Gilgit Baltistan and AJK.

The meeting was attended by senior officials of SBP, presidents and executives of banks, representatives from federal and provincial governments, and provincial chambers of agriculture.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/01/7-page/697297-news.html

AGRICULTURE: PUNJAB PRIORITISES FARMER-FRIENDLY PROJECTS
The Express Tribune, February 3rd, 2018.

Punjab Agriculture Department Secretary Muhammad Mehmood has said that timely completion of agricultural development projects for the benefit of farmers is the mission of the provincial government.

In order to ensure the achievement of goals and objectives in a given time frame, he directed the officers concerned to play an active role so that fruits of the projects could reach the farmers in a transparent way.

He was speaking at a biannual performance review meeting held at the Mango Research Institute where divisional and district heads of the Agriculture Mehmood said the Punjab Agriculture Department had started a five-year project to distribute high-value date plants free of charge and seedless kinnow plants at subsidised rates. The project is worth Rs780 million.

According to the programme, the Agriculture Department will provide high-value varieties of date plants to the farmers of nine districts of south Punjab whereas seedless kinnow plants will be provided to the growers in six districts.

The agriculture secretary said that heavy subsidy schemes had been introduced for the high-efficiency irrigation system, fertilisers, tube wells, electricity tariff, canola and sunflower cultivation. Judicious use of public resources would be ensured at every level, he remarked.

"Sowing of cotton before the start of April is completely banned in the province, hence, farmers are advised not to sow cotton before the first of April."

He directed the officers concerned that final assessment of pesticides and fertilisers at laboratories for ISO certification should be completed till February 28.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1625130/2-agriculture-punjab-prioritises-farmer-friendly-projects/

SINDH FARMERS SEEK AGRICULTURE POLICY
Dawn, February 4th, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) on Saturday demanded an agriculture policy for the province.

The body also sought the activation of the provincial irrigation system and enhancement in the agri research budget.

The monthly meeting was chaired by SAB President Abdul Majeed Nizamani and attended by Dr Bashir Nizamani, Mahmood Nawaz Shah, Dr Zulfikar Yousfani, Azam Rind, Aslam Nawaz Marri, Yar Mohammad Leghari and others.

SAB members expressed concern over the withdrawal of duty and sales tax on import of cotton and delay in finding out a permanent solution to sugar cane crisis. The meeting resolved to devise a strategy for the sugarcane pricing issue, including legal course.

SAB advised farmers to submit their written complaints before the Sindh Cane Commissioner if they are not receiving Rs160/40kg sugarcane price or face deduction/delay in payment. In this regard, SAB has established a complaint cell.

The meeting expressed concern over water shortage at Kotri barrage and non-availability of water even for livestock.

The board noted that the dilapidated irrigation system in Sindh was partially to blame. SAB suggested that regulators of the system should be activated and gauges should be installed.

The meeting called for an end to water shortage and demanded action against those who had installed direct pipes in canals.

Inspection paths of canals should be improved with tree plantation, SAB members suggested.

SAB also decided to hold seminar on the state of irrigation system in the province.

It expressed grave concern over the fact that Sindh doesn’t have agriculture policy with the result that the agrarian economy was adversely affected.

The present situation necessitates introduction of agriculture policy for Sindh, the meeting stressed.

It said that research budget should be enhanced from present 0.6 per cent in order to introduce innovation and research officers should collaborate with farmers for research activities.

The meeting noted that the agro-commodities’ marketing is not taking place properly and farmers are not getting adequate prices for their produce because of commission agents.

SAB said that commission should be capped at 5pc.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1387100

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 22ND TO JANUARY 28 TH 2018
GOVT INACTION STOKES SUGAR INDUSTRY CRISIS
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, January 22nd, 2018

SINDH'S sugar cane sector continues to face a crisis-like situation, with millers refusing to accept the government-notified price and growers selling their produce on the cheap.

Primarily, it is the medium and small sized sugar cane growers who are the most vulnerable.

They are forced to sell their produce through the middlemen at prices much lower than the notified rate of Rs182 per 40 kilograms or stopped harvesting crop.

The Sindh High Court put its weight behind growers when it directed millers in December last week to purchase sugar cane at Rs172 per 40kg till further orders and deposit the differential amount of Rs10 per 40kg in the court as security.

On their part, sugar millers say the rate is not viable. They have also yet to receive the payment of Rs10.70 per kg subsidy on exports allowed by the federal government for 500,000 tonnes.

The exports were allowed on Sept 14 by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, and the subsidy was to be equally shared by the Centre and provinces.

On Nov 28, the committee allowed exports of another 1.5 million tonnes of sugar at the same rate of subsidy, ie Rs10.70 per kg — or Rs16.05 billion on overall exports.

However, Sindh later announced an additional subsidy of Rs9.30 per kg on sugar, under which each mill could export a maximum of 20,000 tonnes.

Moreover, Asim Ghani, chairman of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association's Sindh chapter, says the federal excise duty of Rs6 per kg is unfair, as it should be 10 per cent of the production cost under the fixed tax regime, ie Rs4.20 given the current cost of Rs41-42 per kg.

Until Jan 15, the retail price of sugar was Rs53-Rs54 per kg against the wholesale rate of Rs50.20 per kg inclusive of the transportation cost.

But despite the claims of hardship by sugar millers, the number of mills has increased in recent years. There are 38 sugar mills in Sindh and 45 in Punjab, mostly owned by powerful political families.

The government also tends to take sides with mills. No serious regulatory action has been taken as millers continue to refuse notified prices, which are Rs180 per 40kg in Punjab and Rs182 in Sindh.

Sindh has witnessed both horizontal and vertical growth of sugar factories. In one case, a powerful mill owner is believed to own four sugar mills in Ghotki district, a rich cotton zone.

Another powerful industrial group owns more than 15 factories in lower Sindh. With all the right connections and clout in the government, it dictates terms as government looks the other way.

A couple of years ago two factories were occupied under police patronage. Cops forced farmers to supply sugar cane to the mills owned by the group.

The Sindh government has lately put a moratorium on setting up new sugar factories, according to an official.

As many as 32 mills are operational this year compared to 35 last year.

Given the combined crushing capacity of 204,800 tonnes a day last year (or 30m tonnes during the entire November-March season), Sindh sugar mills crushed 22m tonnes of cane in the 2016-17 season — including supplies from Punjab — compared to 18m tonnes a year ago, which is also the average annual crushing.

Threat to cotton

Veteran growers say growth in mills is an encroachment on the cotton sector which is struggling to survive owing to inadequate prices, declining per-acre yield and a lack of quality seeds.

“Sugar cane is seriously impacting strategic crops such as cotton which helps earn foreign exchange and wheat which ensures food security,” said Sindh Abadgar Board President (SAB) Abdul Majeed Nizamani.

Medium and small cane producers are the most vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen who buy the produce at lower rates for factories. Growers, unable to hold the crop for long as it needs a lot of irrigation water, have to comply.

“The middleman will make cash payment to growers to buy their crop for Rs150 or so per 40kg and sell it for Rs155 to mills. I myself got payment at the rate of Rs130,” SAB vice-president Mahmood Nawaz Shah said.

Advocate Shahab Usto contends that the Sugar Factories Control Act of 1950 needs to be revisited as it is a weak law. He said growers are at a disadvantage as they have to agree to lower prices. “It has now become a game of subsidy. It’s time we looked into the whole gamut of the sugar industry.”

Ibrahim Mughal, who heads the Pakistan Agri Forum, said there should be no subsidies for the sugar industry. “Let millers close their factories if it is a loss-incurring business for them. We can import sugar for Rs35 per kg while saving our cotton crop.”

A meeting of Sugar Cane Control Board chaired by Sindh agriculture minister on Jan 19 under Sindh High Court’s directive to settle the issue remained inconclusive as millers and growers stuck to their positions. The meeting is now scheduled for Jan 22.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1384445/govt-inaction-stokes-sugar-industry-crisis

FRESH ROUND OF TALKS BETWEEN CANE GROWERS, SUGAR MILLERS REMAINS INCONCLUSIVE
Dawn, January 23rd, 2018

HYDERABAD: The fresh round of talks between sugar cane growers and millers held in Karachi on Monday to settle their row over cane procurement price remained inconclusive. It was chaired by Sindh Agriculture Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal.During the meeting, which continued for about five hours, the minister heard growers and millers separately to seek their views on the issue.

The growers declined to accept anything short of Rs172/40kg which was to be paid to them by the millers in line with the Sindh High Court's Dec 21 order.

According to the growers, the millers claimed that they could at the most pay Rs153/40kg in view of their cost of sugar production.

"We have told the meeting that we will not accept fewer than Rs172/40kg," said Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) general secretary Zahid Bhurgari. If the government wanted to pay a subsidy, they had no objection, he said.

A source attending the meeting told Dawn that "both sides are being persuaded to review their positions". Elaborating, he said, millers were asked to increase the rate in order to lessen the difference between Rs172 and Rs153. Likewise, he said, growers should accept a price close to Rs172/40kg or so. The next meeting has been scheduled for Jan 24, said the source.

Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) Mahmood Nawaz Shah said that if government wanted to offer a subsidy, such a move might be put before the provincial cabinet.

He said that in the 2014-15 season, a subsidy of Rs12/40kg was announced by government which was calculated at close to Rs4 billion.

Then millers paid Rs160/40kg against the notified price of Rs182/40kg as they had moved the apex court after losing their case in the Sindh High Court, he said.

The Sindh government has to submit the outcome of the meeting in court on Jan 25 after consulting other stakeholders.

The provincial government had notified a price of Rs182/40kg on Dec 5, but the millers did not agree to it and they moved the SHC. A grower had become intervener in their petition.

After the Dec 21 ruling was issued, the Sindh High Court again heard the two sides on Jan 17 and fixed the price at Rs172/40kg. It asked the provincial government to notify the rate and ensure that millers procured the current season's cane crop at this rate.

MIRPURKHAS: Some sugar cane growers in Mirpurkhas have alleged that the management of Al Abbas Sugar Mills, Mirwah Gorchani, was unfairly deducting five to 15 per cent weight per a tractor-trolley load on different pretexts, causing heavy losses to growers.

Speaking at a press conference here on Monday, Ghulam Fareed, Haji Wahid Bux, Mohammad Ismail Shaikh, Ajaz Panhwer, Barkat and others said they were already getting as low the rate as Rs130/40kg for their cane crop owing to inefficiency of the Sindh government.

They said the mills management had failed to make payment of the sugar cane supplied to them two weeks ago and now they were deducting weight unfairly, which was illegal and creating resentment and unrest among growers.

They said when they complained to the management of the mills about it, they tried to blackmail them by threatened to stop issuing indents.

They urged the higher authorities to take notice of the illegal practice on the part of the Al Abbas Sugar Mills and stop them from deducting this much weight.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1384622/fresh-round-of-talks-between-cane-growers-sugar-millers-remains-inconclusive

IRANIAN DELEGATION SHOWS INTEREST IN PAKISTAN'S AGRICULTURE SECTOR
The Express Tribune, January 24th, 2018.

A team of entrepreneurs from West Azerbaijan, led by Urmia Chamber of Commerce and Industry Head of Agriculture Commission Behnam Tajodinni, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that his province has great potential to promote cooperation in agriculture sector with Pakistan.

Tajodinni stressed that the agriculture sector of both countries should develop close cooperation to promote bilateral trade of products between Iran and Pakistan.

He said that about 32 Iranian trucks loaded with agriculture products were stuck at the Pakistani border in Balochistan, adding that Pakistan has not officially conveyed the reasons for the stoppage.

Also addressing the delegation, ICCI President Sheikh Amir Waheed said given the size of both the economies, bilateral trade is far below the actual potential.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1616368/2-iranian-delegation-shows-interest-pakistans-agriculture-sector/

PAKISTAN'S AGRICULTURE PRODUCTIVITY AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD
The Express Tribune, January 24th, 2018.

Pakistan's low crop yield per hectare has not gotten any better for a long time and now it has sunk to one of the lowest levels in the world, according to a report released recently by the Pakistan Business Council – a business policy advocacy group.

A major part of Pakistan's economy relies on the agriculture sector, which had a 19.5% share in the gross domestic product – the total size of the economy – in 2016.

Pakistan's agricultural productivity ranges between 29% and 52%, far lower than the world's best averages for major commodities, the report says.

Pakistan produces 3.1 tons of wheat from one hectare, which is just 38% of the 8.1 tons produced in France – the world's best productivity.

Similarly, Pakistan produces 2.5 tons of cotton per hectare, which is 52% of the 4.8 tons produced in China.

Sugarcane yield stands at 63.4 tons per hectare in Pakistan, which is 51% of the 125.1 tons Egypt produces from every hectare while maize productivity is estimated at 4.6 tons per hectare, 41% of the 11.1 tons that France is producing. In the case of rice crop, Pakistan produces 2.7 tons from every hectare, which is merely 29% of the 9.2 tons per hectare in the US.

"Low crop yields hamper Pakistan's ability to realise its full potential; Pakistan is not an agriculture country any more," comments Gada Hussain, founder of the Sindh Abadgar Board – a lobby group of farmers.

Agricultural commodities, particularly cotton, provide critical inputs for Pakistan's major manufacturing industries. However, lower harvests translate into low industrial production and higher costs, says the report.

Pakistan exports a number of agricultural commodities and their value added products. Sugarcane is used to make sugar and confectionery items that are exported. Rice and maize are also exported.

According to the report, the low productivity acts as a major barrier to Pakistan becoming a major player in the world's processed food industry.

The agriculture sector employs around 42% of the labour force. A thriving and more efficient agriculture sector will help lift living conditions of a large number of people and also improve competitiveness of the industry, the report says.

However, 50% of the agricultural products are wasted in Pakistan due to unavailability of sufficient cold chain, logistics and processing facilities.

"Absence of efficient, new seed varieties, intermittent water supply and unenthusiastic marketing are killing our agriculture," says Hussain. Urbanisation is also gaining pace as a lack of basic facilities like safe drinking water, health care and children education is compelling farmers to move to cities.

After toiling for four to five months to grow a crop, a farmer earns less than Rs100 per day, which is far lower than the Rs600 to Rs800 he can earn in cities as a labourer, according to Hussain. "So, we are losing agriculture which is the main driving force behind the economy."

Media reports suggest the Chinese government is looking for avenues to enter Pakistan's agriculture sector. The Chinese state and banks are expected to provide capital and loans to the Chinese companies interested in setting up ventures in Pakistan.

China is going to set up a fertiliser plant that will produce 800,000 tons per year. It plans to establish meat processing plants in Sukkur with annual output of 200,000 tons and two milk processing plants to produce 200,000 tons a year.

Chinese will also invest in high-yield seeds and aim to build a nationwide logistics network, warehousing and distribution system from Gwadar to Islamabad.

China will also install vegetable processing plants with annual output of 20,000 tons along with fruit juice and jam production plants with a capacity of 10,000 tons.

"Though self-sufficiency is desirable, there are fears Chinese investors may dictate their terms due to their huge investments," says Hussain.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1616347/2-pakistans-agriculture-productivity-among-lowest-world

MILLERS NOT READY TO ACCEPT CANE PROCUREMENT RATE FIXED BY SHC
Dawn, January 24th, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: The Sindh government has failed to evolve a consensus between sugar millers and growers over sugar cane price for 2017-18 as the millers refused to pay Rs172/40kg while the growers said they could not agree to a price that was fixed by the Sindh High Court i.e Rs172/40kg in millers' petition.

The third round of meeting between the growers and millers remained inconclusive on Tuesday in Karachi. Sindh Agriculture Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal presided over the meeting attended by representatives of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) Sindh zone, secretary agriculture Sajid Jamal Abro, Sindh cane commissioner Agha Zaheer, Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) senior vice president Syed Mehmood Nawaz Shah, Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) president Qabool Khatiyan and general secretary Zahid Bhurgri.

According to the secretary agriculture, no consensus could be developed in the meeting as both sides struck to their respective positions. He said the SHC would accordingly be informed on Jan 25, when the matter is fixed for further hearing. He confirmed that the deadlock between the millers and growers over sugar cane price continued.

SCA general secretary Zahid Bhurgri told Dawn that the PSMA offered Rs160/40kg as sugar cane price, but the growers could not agree to it because the Sindh government had already notified the price whereas the government's notification of Rs182/40kg was also in the field.

Mr Bhurgari said the millers wanted a subsidy to pay Rs172/40kg which was done a few years ago, but apparently the government was in no mood to offer any such subsidy as they had already approved Rs9.30/1kg subsidy for Sindh based sugar mills on export. "It will be a death warrant if we agree to anything less than Rs172/40kg," he said.

A participant of the meeting said the Sindh cabinet was scheduled to meet on Wednesday and it might discuss the matter, but no decision could be taken on Tuesday. "The government can't take any coercive measure against the millers right now as the matter is sub judice," he said. He further said that if any adverse action was taken, the millers would find an excuse to close the mills and growers would suffer.

Under present circumstances middlemen are purchasing sugar cane from the growers for Rs130/40kg to Rs135/40kg directly. The sugar cane producers are hard pressed to sell their crop to them to avoid any losses as the crop was drying. The Sindh government has also taken a position before the SHC that the Dec 5 notification for fixation of Rs182/40kg was not approved by the Sindh cabinet.

According to SCA vice president Nabi Bux Sathio, past practice of notified rate was that such notification was not usually got approved by the government and it was just issued by the agriculture department after fixation of rate in the meeting jointly attended by the growers and millers.

He said the government took this position before the court in the PSMA's petition in order to benefit the millers.

The Sindh government had already come up with a belated notification on Dec 5 and it did not take any action against the millers when they closed the mills instead of offering Rs172/40kg in view of the SHC's Dec 21 order. The Sindh cane commissioner could only issue show cause notices to the mills. Later, the mills resumed crushing of sugar cane, but did not pay notified rate of Rs182/40kg or the one ordered by SHC i.e. Rs172/40kg.

The Sindh cabinet has already okayed a subsidy of Rs9.30/1kg on sugar's export from Sindh, fixing a ceiling of 20,000 tonnes for each sugar factory. Such subsidy is in addition to Rs10.70/1kg announced by the federal government last year.

Qaim Ali Shah led Sindh government had paid a subsidy of Rs12/40kg (close to Rs4 billion) to the millers when in view of a similar row millers had refused to pay the notified price of Rs182/40kg in 2014-15 season. In the next season, the then CM Sindh had flatly refused to offer any subsidy to the sugar millers over sugar cane rate.

Mahmood Nawaz Shah holds the PSMA responsible for the present mess while the government is not performing its regulatory role in this situation. "If they are serious with the millers over their increasing cost of production then they can be given a margin of a few rupees, but how can they expect the growers to agree to a rate of Rs130/40," said Mr Shah.

He said that this year the decision had already been delayed and closure of mills for close to 10 days had aggravated the situation. "We don't object if the government is willing to offer them another subsidy (in addition to Rs9.30) to the millers, but we can't accept a price less than Rs172/40kg," he said.

This year sowing of wheat crop has already been delayed in the areas where sugar cane harvesting was delayed over price row.

The growers went for late sowing of wheat crop, which would certainly affect their per acre yields. Around 32 sugar mills are said to be functioning this year in Sindh.

Last year 35 mills had crushed sugar cane. Sindh has 38 mills, in all.

The Sindh government, said a source, is leaving it to the SHC to take a final decision so that it should not get any flak from the millers for any adverse action. “If the SHC issues a contempt of court notice then it will be a different issue,” said an official.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1384826/millers-not-ready-to-accept-cane-procurement-rate-fixed-by-shc

‘BILAWAL SHOULD NAME OPPRESSORS OF CANE GROWERS’
Dawn, January 24th, 2018

MIRPURKHAS: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Sindh general secretary Syed Shah Mohammad Shah on Tuesday observed that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) suffered from ‘Sharif phobia’ and, as such, they must seek appropriate treatment.

Speaking to the media here after condoling the death of the mother of his party’s district president Chaudhry Sajjad Ahmed, Mr Shah said that instead of slinging mud on the PML-N, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari should tall the masses as to who was responsible for the oppression being faced by sugar cane growers in Sindh.

He criticised the PPP for jumping on the bandwagon of PTI, which had made it a daily routine to come up with some new unfounded allegations against the Sharif family.

He advised the PTI chairman to change his routine by saying prayers in the morning instead of starting every day with false allegations.

None of his allegations could be proved so far even after formation of JITs and long deliberations in courts, he added.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1384827/bilawal-should-name-oppressors-of-cane-growers

SINDH CABINET DECIDES AGAINST GIVING SUBSIDY TO SETTLE CANE PRICE ROW
Dawn, January 25th, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh cabinet, which met at CM House on Wednesday with Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in the chair, to resolve dispute over sugar cane price between growers and sugar millers decided that the provincial government could not allow subsidy to offset low price offered by mills.

The meeting, one of several on the issue that also remained inconclusive, directed the agriculture department to hold another meeting with stakeholders to try to find some other workable solution to the dispute as advised by the court.

Sindh Minister for Agriculture and Home Sohail Anwar Siyal briefed the meeting on the background of the price issue and said that Sugarcane Control Board had fixed minimum price of sugar cane at Rs182 per 40 kg which was challenged by sugar miller in the Sindh High Court.

The court then directed the agriculture department to try to settle the dispute and come up with a solution. He, therefore, held a number of meetings with growers and millers in which growers were demanding Rs216 per 40kg while the millers remained stuck to Rs132 per 40 kg.

The agriculture department proposed fixing the minimum price at Rs142 per 40 kg but the parties did not agree to it, he said. He said that another meeting was held in which Pakistan Sugar Mills Association proposed Rs153 per 40 kg but growers wanted the minimum price fixed at Rs160 per 40kg and that too on condition that the Sindh government would allow subsidy of Rs12 per 40 kg to correspond with the rate of Rs172 per 40 kg as was fixed in 2014-15.

The cabinet discussed the matter and finally decided that the government could not allow the subsidy and directed the agriculture department to hold another meeting with stakeholders and try to find some other workable solution to the dispute as advised by the court.

The meeting also discussed amendment to the Sindh Public Private Partnership Act, 2010, and approved it after detailed deliberations.

About the need for amendment to the Act, the chief minister told the cabinet that the Sindh government had requested the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to expand and improve PPPs in Sindh.

Under its provincial support project of Enhancing Public Private Partnership (EPPP) in Pakistan, the ADB would support the Sindh government to develop a more financially sustainable and fiscally responsible PPP project portfolio, he said.

He said the total project value was $184.13 million to which the ADB was contributing $100 million, Sindh government was adding to it $64.90 million as counterpart funding and DFID was chipping in with $19.23 million as grant.

The project had been approved by Executive Committee of the National Economic Council and subsequently the loan and project agreement had been signed, he said.

The CM said that certain amendments were required to be incorporated in the Act to provide functionality of project support facility which would finance, manage and monitor projects initiated under the Act as amended or substituted from time to time and the accompanying regulations, policies and ordinance.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1385076/sindh-cabinet-decides-against-giving-subsidy-to-settle-cane-price-row

VEGETABLES GROWN IN SEWAGE WATER DESTROYED IN QUETTA
The Express Tribune, January 27, 2018

On the specific instructions of Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, officials of the provincial government departments have destroyed all vegetables grown by using sewage and polluted industrial water on Sabzal Road.

Deputy Commissioner Capt (retd) Farrukh Ateeq, ACT Batool Asadi, AC Samina Safi, Engineer Ishaq Mengal, Engineer Ghulam Ali Sarwar Zehri and Chief Sanitation Officer Muhammad Anwar Lehri were the officers who had taken action.

Addressing media-persons, the deputy commissioner said, "Cultivation of vegetables through usage of sewage water is being done on more than a thousand acres of Quetta's land which is the reason behind various diseases."

Section 144 has been imposed in Quetta against those cultivating vegetables while using polluted water. Implementation of the section will be monitored strictly, he added.

In Quetta, all vegetables being cultivated by using sewage waters will be wasted and compensation will be provided to the labourers by the government.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1619278/1-vegetables-grown-sewage-water-destroyed-quetta/

INDONESIA LIFTS QUOTA RESTRICTIONS ON PAKISTANI KINNOW
The Express Tribune, January 27th, 2018.

Indonesia's commerce minister on Friday announced the lifting of quota restrictions on kinnow imports from Pakistan, allowing shipment of an unlimited quantity of the citrus fruit to the Southeast Asian country.

The announcement came during the Indonesia-Pakistan Business Forum in Islamabad, which was attended by commerce ministers of the two countries.

Pakistan exported 36,000 tons of kinnow to Indonesia worth $19.8 million last year. "After the removal of quota curbs, it is expected that Pakistan's kinnow exports will increase to 60,000 tons," said All Pakistan Fruits & Vegetable Exporters, Importers & Merchants Association (PFVA) former chairman Waheed Ahmed.

Indonesia Minister of Trade Enggartiasto Lukita said the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed between the two countries in 2005 and the preferential trade agreement (PTA) in 2012, which became operational the following year.

He said a review of the PTA was still under way and three meetings had been held since 2016. Under the review, Indonesia has included 20 more tariff lines from Pakistan in the duty-free list including mangoes and rice.

Pakistan has also started export of white rice to Indonesia for the first time after unilateral concessions. A protocol will be signed by the two countries on Saturday.

The Indonesian minister also invited Pakistani businessmen to explore investment opportunities in his country.

Speaking on the occasion, Commerce Minister Pervaiz Malik said imbalance in bilateral trade following the PTA raised questions about the viability of the agreement and threatened the transformation of the original plan into a free-trade agreement (FTA).

"Trade growth [since the PTA] has been one-sided. Whereas Indonesia's exports to Pakistan increased from $1.2 billion in 2012 to $2.2 billion in 2016-17, Pakistan's exports to Indonesia unfortunately declined from $196 million to $137 million," said Malik.

To address the imbalance, Indonesia has agreed to remove impediments to Pakistan's current exports and has unilaterally granted zero-rated market access for 20 priority items of Pakistan's export interest.

The minister said Pakistan's economy had been on the path of recovery since 2013, registering a growth of 5.3% in 2016-17, which was the highest in the past 10 years.

"Government's efforts to restore peace and stability and meet energy requirements have helped Pakistan make strides towards economic prosperity."

The minister was of the view that CPEC-related projects would boost foreign direct investment.

Recalling PricewaterhouseCoopers's forecast, he said Pakistan could become the world's 16th largest economy by 2050, overtaking countries like Italy and Canada. The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) signed an MoU with its Indonesian counterpart to establish linkages between businessmen of both sides.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1619130/2-indonesia-lifts-quota-restrictions-pakistani-kinnow/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 15 TH TO JANUARY 21ST 2018
TCP LINKS SUGAR PAYMENTS TO CLEARANCE OF GROWERS" DUES
Rizwan Bhatti

Business Recorder, January 15th, 2018

KARACHI: Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has linked sugar procurement payments to clearance of growers" dues by the sugar mills. Following the directives of the federal government, the state run grain trader has recently issued a tender for purchase of 0.3 million metric tons of sugar to ease the financial difficulties of sugar mills and ensure the procurement of sugarcane from the growers at the prescribed rate. The tender will be opened on January 25, 2017.

As per terms and conditions of the tender issued by TCP, mills will get payment of sugar in three phases. As per payment schedule, forty (40) percent or first installment of payment of total value of procured commodity from the sugar mills will be made on submission of required documents including commercial invoice and surveyor certificate.

Second installment of forty (40) percent will be made on submission of a certificate from the Provincial Cane Commissioner of the concerned province to the effect that the mills have cleared all the dues of sugarcane growers up to and including the Crop Year 2017-18. While, the remaining 20 percent payment (final installment) will be released after completion of lifting of entire quantity from the mill premises by TCP, subject to submission of original delivery order, sales tax invoice, final lifting report and clearance certificate issued by TCP.

As per tender"s terms and conditions, the procurement price will not exceed Rs 48,000/per metric ton (Rs 48/- per kg). Moreover, preference will be given to the lowest bidder in ascending order to the maximum limit of Rs 48 per kg. All offers/bids must remain valid for acceptance for fifteen (15) working days.

Mills have been asked to made offices for a minimum quantity of 5,000 metric tons and maximum 10,000 metric tons in multiples of 1,000 metric tons. However, TCP reserves the right to increase /decrease minimum/maximum quantity/limit to be purchased from each bidder in order to achieve the targeted/tender quantity.

Bids will be accompanied by a Bid Money/Security equivalent to 2 percent of the total value of offered quantity of the Bid and Bid Money/Security of successful bidder(s) will stand forfeited without any notice, if they fail to provide Performance Guarantee within the prescribed time and the successful bidder will be required to furnish a performance bond within five (5) working days of acceptance along with signed contract.

TCP will accept the sugar of required specifications, in sound and saleable/exportable quality of crop year 2017-2018, in 50 kg (net) Poly lined translucent polypropylene (PP) woven bags. The stocks purchased by the TCP will be stored at mills" godowns, free of charge until final lifting and no tampering with the stock by the supplier shall be allowed.

Ten percent of the total value of the sold quantity Performance Bond/Bank Guarantee will be forfeited without any notice in case the supplier commits default in supply of the contracted quantity within the given timeline or any breach or fails to fulfill any of the terms and conditions of the tender.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/01/20180115335634/

'PTI TO STAND FOR FARMERS' RIGHTS'
Dawn, January 15th, 2018

MULTAN: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan says his party will stand for the rights of the farming community.

"We raised our voice for the farmers' rights in the past and we will also stand for their rights in the future," said Mr Khan who was in Multan to attend the Valima ceremony of Zain Qureshi, the son of PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, while talking to a delegation of the Pakistan Kisan Ittehad at the residence of Jahangir Tareen.

He said the PML-N leadership always exploited the farming community whenever the party came into power. He said steps would be taken for the prosperity of the farming community whenever his party would be in power.

Mr Tareen said the sugar mills which were running under the umbrella of the government were paying Rs140 against 40kg sugarcane instead of Rs180.

Meanwhile, the Valima ceremony was held at the Bahauddin Zakariya University and the walls of separate grounds were removed to accommodate about 25,000 guests, according to some reports.

Some of the prominent figures who attended the ceremony including Malik Rafique Rajwana, Ghaus Ali Shah, Arbab Ghulam Rahim, Dr Firdos Ashiq, Farooq Sattar, Chaudhry Sarwar, Khursheed Shah and Javed Hashmi.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1382954

THE PATH OF MODERNISING AGRICULTURE
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, January 15th, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

IF you have not seen a drone flying over the fields of corn or sugarcane or wheat or rice, soon you will — initially in Punjab but hopefully in Sindh and elsewhere in Pakistan as well after some time.

Punjab plans to introduce farm drones that will kill pests and weeds by spraying pre-identified fields with pesticides.

Another idea being pursued in the province is to monitor water theft from canals with the help of electronic sensors. In fact, authorities have already selected a certain canal system in Bahawalpur to run a pilot project of this kind and are testing the sensor there.

Time is running out for Pakistan to accelerate growth rate and yields of crops to feed and clothe local population and to increase food and textile exports. For this to happen, it is imperative to modernise our farming.

The World Bank has recently approved a $300-million, five-year plan — titled Strengthening Markets for Agricultural and Rural Transformation (SMART) — for Punjab.

The project will support reforms to increase agriculture and livestock productivity, make agriculture more resilient to climate change and foster agribusiness in the province, according to an official announcement made last month.

The project will also reduce inequality and expand opportunities for women and youth. “Additionally, SMART will help improve the sustainability of agricultural production by strengthening the management of irrigation water, and help tackle ground water depletion,” the announcement said.

It is not clear whether the provincial government’s plan for using farming drones and installing sensors to control water theft from canals is a part of the World Bank’s SMART project. But if implemented honestly, these measures can revolutionise our ways of farming and make them efficient.

After complete devolution of agriculture in 2011, provinces had a chance to boost the farming sector activity with zeal. And had there been no bureaucratic delays and meddling of politics with economics, modernising agriculture would have covered many milestones by now.

Before our entry into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), we kept hearing about the corporatisation of agriculture — and in the name of it leasing large swathes of land to foreign countries, notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. But we still don't know which foreign country got which the piece of land, on what conditions, and how that has helped in boosting agricultural productivity.

Now that CPEC's master plan is before us, we know that Pakistan is going to involve China in a big way in agricultural development. That also means leasing out our land to the Chinese firms, again for developing and modernising agriculture.

Will we ever come to know about the outcomes of such moves? Why is it so that matters of national importance in the economic arena are handled with excessive discretion that for many look nothing short of secrecy? And why don't the authorities inform people about what good the country has achieved with foreign collaboration, be it in the fields of agriculture or anywhere else?

So, it will serve a great purpose if our federal and provincial authorities present to the nation a complete map of how they plan to "revolutionise" agriculture and what role our foreign friends including China are going to play in it. That will clear the air of suspicion and mistrust that sadly prevails and prevents successful implementation of even very honest and ambitious plans for revolutionising our farming sector.

In the second step, it is important to devise new plans or review the existing ones only after factoring in informed feedback of all stakeholders for ease of implementation as well as for transparency.

Take, for example, the case of using farming drones. Have the authorities taken into account the land distribution pattern to tell the nation how many farmers can actually afford to buy these farming drones? Or have they shared with small farmers (who cannot afford to buy costly drones) the details about how they can get the same on rent.

All that farmers have come to know (ie if they care to read English dailies carrying agricultural news) is that they will have to turn to district officials of agriculture extension department.

"This is not how revolutionary plans are implemented, more so in challenging times," remarks the head of agricultural credit of a leading bank when asked whether banks were involved in the drone scheme.

In Bangladesh, Kallyanis or 'info ladies' visit villages on their bicycles equipped with tablets connected with the internet. They are dynamic rural entrepreneurs whose job it is to share with other rural women videos of best farming practices available in a centralised digital library.

Why this can't happen in Pakistan where the need for imparting practical training to women farmers is high and where social and religious biases restrict the majority of them from interacting with men?

During this decade, two good things have happened in the field of agriculture. One is greater use of solar tubewells and the other is the expansion in tunnel farming. However, much still needs to be done on both counts.

Dearth of data: How serious we are in modernising our agriculture is evident from the fact that the publicly available data on agricultural machinery is of 2004. No one can say for sure how many solar-powered tubewells are operating in the country, let alone estimate how many more are needed.

Similarly, we don't know the exact number of tunnel farms that are in operation. Such ambitious plans like introducing farming drones and installing electronic sensors for checking water theft are good, but the absence of credible data on already executed modernisation plans will certainly have a negative impact on these and other future plans.

Likewise, a post-execution cost-and-benefit analysis of any previous plan for modernisation of agriculture is not available, not at least publicly.

Every year, provincial authorities set aside billions of rupees for modernising agriculture. But they have never bothered to present a cost-and-benefit analysis of any such plan. Instead, the nation keeps hearing about stories of corruption and mismanagement.

A higher level of transparency in formulating, executing and sharing results of modernisation plans can help us attract more excited participation of local and foreign investors.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1382879/the-path-of-modernising-agriculture

SINDH AGRICULTURE GROWTH PROJECT MAKES PROGRESS
Mohammad Hussain Khan

The Express Tribune, January 15, 2018

The Sindh High Court (SHC) directed on Monday the provincial advocate-general (AG) to seek instructions from the Sindh government as to whether it will give any subsidy or relief either to the sugar cane growers or sugar mill owners on the sale and purchase of sugar cane this year.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, also asked lawyers representing the growers and mill owners to assist the court on the possibility of such assurance from the government today (Tuesday) when the matter will be taken up again.

The bench passed these directives after hearing arguments from the parties in the matter involving dispute over fixation of price of sugar cane by the provincial government for the sugar mill owners to purchase it from the growers.

After hearing arguments from the lawyers representing both the parties and AG Barrister Zamir Ghumro, the judges observed that there was a likelihood of the settlement of dispute between the parties in terms of orders passed by the court under similar circumstances in another petition, whereby petitions were disposed of by consent on the point that the government will give subsidy to the growers.

Barrister Ghumro requested the SHC for a short adjournment to intimate the provincial government regarding court remarks and seek instructions in this regard.

Accordingly, by consent, the bench adjourned the hearing till today. It directed the lawyers to come prepared and assist the court as to whether the petitions can be disposed of by consent in terms of earlier order passed by a division bench of the SHC on a petition relating to the crushing season for 2014-15, whereby any assurance of the Sindh government regarding subsidy or relief to either party shall be duly signed by the competent authority. Such assurance, if offered, will be made part of the court order, the judges told the parties.

The growers had approached the court last month, arguing that they were paid a lesser price for sugar cane against the minimum price of Rs182 per 40 kilogrammes (kg) fixed by the government. They alleged that sugar mills operating in the province also did not fulfil their obligations in the previous crushing season and the fixing of the price was pending before the Supreme Court, which covered the entire range of the issue.

The mill owners' lawyer had challenged the government notification on fixing the price at Rs182 per 40kg, arguing that the millers were not under any legal obligation to give effect to the same as the notified price was not viable and would result in losses to the mills.

On the request of both the parties for interim relief, the court had on December 23 directed the sugar mills to pay Rs172 per 40kg to sugar cane growers and furnish security of the differential amount to the nazir of the court.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1609394/1-shc-inquires-govt-willing-offer-subsidy-growers-millers/

MONSANTO PARTICIPATES IN HORTICULTURE EXPO 2018
Business Recorder, 16 January 2017

LAHORE: Monsanto a global modern agriculture company participated in Pakistan Horticulture Expo 2018, organized by Government of Punjab held at the Lahore Expo Center on January 13 & 14, 2018.

The event consisted of more than 150 exhibits by agriculture technology and input providers, fruit and vegetable processors, wholesalers, retailers, exporters and various government and non-government organizations. Over 15,000 visitors attended this addition of the expo, including foreign delegates and prospective buyers from 40 countries. At the exhibition, agriculture technology providers highlighted the need for farmers to embrace latest technological innovations to achieve competitiveness in the international marketplace.

Speaking to visiting delegates at the Pakistan Horticulture Expo 2018, Monsanto Pakistan's Country Lead Aamir Mirza explained that "advancements in plant breeding, biotechnology and precision agriculture continues to improve crop productivity, yields and produce quality across the world. In addition to augmenting farmer profitability and competitiveness, sustainable agriculture technologies will be central to ensuring global food security for our future generations" he further added.—PR

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/16/3-page/694184-news.html

SHC FIXES INTERIM SUGAR CANE RATE AT RS172/40KG, TELLS GOVT TO ISSUE NOTIFICATION
Dawn, January 17th, 2018

Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court on Tuesday directed sugar mills owners to purchase sugar cane from growers at the price of Rs172 per 40 kilograms till further orders.

Headed by Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, a two-judge bench was hearing the matter pertaining to fixation and purchase of sugar cane price over a dispute between growers and mills owners.

The court further directed the government to convene a meeting within two days with all stakeholders and the cane commissioner and notify the sugar cane price within one week.

It ordered that the matter should be decided with the approval of the provincial cabinet and the chief minister after the consultative meeting, and the approved rates should be notified accordingly.

The matter was adjourned till Jan 25.

According to growers, the mill owners had refused to accept any price over Rs130 per 40 kg.

They said that the mill owners were not paying the rate of Rs182/40kg as fixed by the government through a notification.

Besides, they did not follow the due procedure in the previous crushing season, they submitted, adding that the price regulation case, covering the entire range of the issue, was pending before the apex court.

The mill owners have also challenged the notification fixing the price at Rs182/40kg, arguing that millers were not under any legal obligation to give effect to the same as the notified price was not viable and would result in losses to them.

With the consent of both the parties for interim relief, the SHC had on Dec 23 directed the sugar mills to buy the current crop at the rate of Rs172/40kg and deposit the differential amount at the rate of Rs10/40kg with the nazir of the court as security.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1383357/shc-fixes-interim-sugar-cane-rate-at-rs17240kg-tells-govt-to-issue-notification

MOU SIGNED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HORTICULTURE SECTOR
Business Recorder, 17 January 2018

KARACHI: Punjab Agriculture Department, Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and All Pakistan Fruit & Vegetable Exporters, Importers & Merchants Association (PFVA) have signed a tripartite agreement of assistance, co-operation and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) recently.

According to this agreement, the three parties will render full support and cooperation for improvement of horticulture supply chain and enhancement of export of fruits and vegetables, strengthening the cooperation for skills development, research & development (R&D), marketing the horticulture sector in Pakistan and support initiative taken by the Agricultural department of Punjab, in this context.

The agreement was mutually signed by Special Secretary of Agriculture Department Punjab Silwat Saeed, Secretary General PFVA Mohammad Ilyas Khan and Waheed Ahmed, Vice President of the FPCCI.

Punjab Agricultural Department would prepare a 4-year work plan for the province of Punjab for enhancement of export of horticulture produces and development of resources while special centres of R&D will also be established in the province.

In addition, assistance for skill development in horticulture sector and technical support for research activities would also be extended. It will also provide training of farm and pack houses workers to generate skilled and technically sound workers for exporters of fresh produce. Strategy to enhance export of fruits and vegetables and promotion of local trade will be part of the plan.

The PFVA as a representative of horticulture sector through platform of the FPCCI will provide extensive support to the Agricultural Department Punjab to attain its targets of 4-year plan with cooperation of national and international organizations by improving skills of workers associated with this promising sector and render assistance to enhance export of the horticulture with mutual cooperation of Horticulture Export Development Company, National and Vocational Training Commission and Punjab Skill Development Board.

According to Waheed Ahmed, patron-in-chief of the PFVA, Punjab government realized the challenges of horticulture sector and has taken initiative at right time to address these issues and he emphasized that the other provinces must follow this timely steps taken by the Government of Punjab. Due to lack of research and development facilities, major part of the crops is wasted while growers and exporters also suffer huge financial losses due to Global Warming, he cautioned.

With improvement in production and quality of fruits and vegetables, it will also facilitate in provision of superb quality fruits and vegetables and fetch valuable foreign exchange by exporting surplus production.

The PFVA has been struggling hard for several years for establishment of Research & Development facilities while consultative process in this connection with various provincial governments has also been concluded, Waheed said.

Currently, PFVA is preparing speedily for the forthcoming National Conference on Horticulture Sector which will ultimately lead to prepare a comprehensive roadmap for uplift of the sector. PFVA will aggressively render extensive support for further improvement of agriculture and horticulture sectors, he said.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/17/7-page.html

PAKISTAN PLANS RS10B RESEARCH FUND TO BOOST COTTON OUTPUT
The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2018.

The Pakistan government is likely to announce a Rs10-billion research development fund in an effort to boost cotton production next season as the harvest remains unimpressive for the past few years.

Talking to The Express Tribune, a senior government official disclosed that a high-level meeting on Wednesday tried to prepare a plan for enhancing the production of cotton that had been virtually stagnant for the past few years sparking concerns among government circles.

Representatives of major cotton-producing provinces – Punjab and Sindh – attended the meeting held at the Planning Commission. Other stakeholders were also present.

Cotton production has been estimated at 11.1 million bales in the ongoing season against the target of 12.6 million bales. The harvest was even lower at 10.7 million bales last year.

In the huddle, the idea of creating the research development fund was floated which was welcomed by Punjab and Sindh.

Elaborating, the government official said it was a 10-year plan, which would be sent to the federal cabinet for approval. It is likely to be formally announced in next fiscal year's budget in May this year.

Under the plan, the government will spend Rs1 billion every year on research activities to find out ways of increasing the production of cotton, which feeds the massive textile industry of Pakistan.

The plan came after spinning mills went to court challenging the cotton cess amounting to Rs400 million that they had been paying every year for spending on research work.

However, for the past two years, they had refused to contribute and went into litigation with the federal government.

According to the government official, it was decided in the meeting that the research fund would be disbursed in the form of competition grant to the researchers.

In recent years, the cotton plantation area has shrunk in the wake of setting up of sugar mills in the cotton zone of south Punjab.

Absence of a support price has also pushed cotton farmers towards planting other crops such as wheat and sugarcane for which the government has been announcing support prices to ensure a fair return to the growers.

Cotton farmers have not been able to notch up satisfactory earnings and have switched to sugarcane cultivation in areas where sugar mills have been set up.

Country's economic managers had decided last year to frame a national sugar policy in a bid to secure the cotton belt that had come under threat from the growing number of sugar mills and planting of sugarcane in such zones.

Almost 70% of sugar mills are located in the core cotton zone of the country, especially in Punjab. The presence of mills in top cotton-growing areas and their increasing crushing capacity have caused a 26% decline in cotton-sowing areas, especially in south Punjab including Rahim Yar Khan and Muzaffargarh.

The Ministry of Textile Industry has also demanded that provinces should stop granting permission for establishing new sugar mills in the cotton-growing areas.

In the meantime, sugarcane cultivation has increased in the wake of improved returns and timely supply of inputs. Simultaneously, the prices of sugar have also gone up from Rs31 to Rs68 per kg over the past 10 years.

According to the Ministry of Textile Industry, the higher sugar prices have been an attraction for setting up more sugar mills, which went up from 45 to 85 across the country. Of these, 45 were located in Punjab, 32 in Sindh and eight in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1612216/2-pakistan-plans-rs10b-research-fund-boost-cotton-output/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 8TH TO JANUARY 14TH 2018
WHEAT FARMERS FEAR PRICE CRASH IN ELECTION YEAR
Dawn,The Business and Finance Weekly, January 8th, 2018

Ahmad Fraz Khan

AS the current sugarcane crisis in Punjab and Sindh rages, farmers are now worried about wheat as well.

The emerging crop context is threatening for all — provincial and federal governments, traders, millers and, above all, farmers.

Stocks are running high, the domestic support price is unrealistically higher compared to the world and efforts to increase exports have failed in the last two years. Stocks are mounting every year and a support price policy is missing.

All these factors would haunt the wheat market once crop hits the market 70 days down the line, and farmers fear they would suffer the worst in shape of a price crash, as has happened in the case of sugarcane.

A look at the stocks' position and the cost of maintenance explains farmers' fears. Punjab alone now holds 5.8 million tonnes, which are sufficient to see it though for the next two years. Its releases are down to less than 10,000 tonnes a day, which are up to 70 per cent below the traditional releases at this point of time.

With around 70 days to go before Sindh's wheat hits the market, the fear is that the Punjab Food Department may start the next season with a monstrous stock of around 5m tonnes and avoid or slow down the next procurement.

The cost of current stocks is over Rs164 billion and the Punjab has been servicing the loan with an unsustainable Rs2bn per month. These stocks are in addition to 2m tonnes with the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) and another 1.7m tonnes with the Sindh Food

Department. Both of them are bearing their costs, which should be as high as half of what Punjab is bearing.

After Sindh’s wheat would start trickling in the market, the Punjab crop would take another 30 days, only to overburden the domestic market with another 19m tonnes.

Fresh crop could only double these stocks within a matter of month, leaving these procuring agencies with an unbearable burden: administratively managing stocks of 10m to 12m tonnes and servicing these loans with Rs5bn to Rs6bn a month.

The elections year has added its own complications to the market. Its first result was keeping a high domestic support price despite opposition from Punjab.

The federal and provincial governments maintained a price of Rs1,300 per 40kg against the advice of saner elements because they wanted to pander to the rural voters.

The next compulsion would be procuring till the last grain because elections would be closely following the procurement drive. This would further escalate domestic stocks and their administrative and fiscal cost of maintenance.

Pakistan’s attempts to export even part of the stocks have failed miserably in the last two years owing to high domestic cost and failure to adjust to international wheat realities.

In June 2016, it offered 800,000 tonnes for export, with a subsidy of $120 a tonne. Of this, only 280,000 tonnes could be sent abroad. How much of it actually went abroad and how much was only on papers is now a matter of investigation with the National Accountability Bureau.

In the second attempt, the government is offering another 1.5m tonnes for export, with a subsidy of $159 a tonne by sea and $120 by road. The Economic Coordination Committee has already approved the summary and the provinces are in the process of notifying the same.

The exporters are, however, not so sanguine about prospects. Khurram Shahzad, an exporter from Lahore, said, “It would really be hard to export right now. Due to ad hocism in export policies in the past, Pakistan has lost almost all market.”

“Even in Afghanistan, which is always taken as natural extension of Pakistan’s market, the entire export is restricted up to Kabul,” he said. “North of Afghanistan is out of reach now. Dubai and some African markets may have some potential. But export markets need consistent policy, not ad hoc or desperate measure. The current attempt is a desperate measure, which has limited scope of success.”

With official stocks already overflowing, the new crop would throw another 8m to 9m tonnes of tradable surplus in the market. There are always two major players in the wheat market, ie official agencies and the private sector led by the millers. This year, the fear is that official agencies will already be overwhelmed and reluctant. Even if forced to purchase high quantity, they could always go slow.

Private purchases always depend on official stocks. If millers know that the government has sufficient stocks and they would have liberal releases, they hardly go for purchases, which cost them both in finances and infrastructure.

That is precisely where farmers fear lie. If one of the players goes slow and other is missing, even partially, the price crash would be the natural corollary, which could double their miseries after the cane crash.

This situation puts governments, both federal and provincial, between a rock and a hard place. If they go for high-speed liberal purchases, the financial cost would be unbearable. If they don't, the political cost could unaffordable.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1381426/wheat-farmers-fear-price-crash-in-election-year

FARMERS WILL STOP CULTIVATING CROP FROM NEXT SOWING SEASON, WARNS SCA
After almost three months when it began, the sugar cane procurement price controversy still seems unresolved with the growers complaining of being paid lower than the official rate.

After around a two-week halt, the mills resumed the cane purchasing a couple of days ago but the farmers' claim of being paid not above Rs140 per 40 kilogrammes.

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) warned on Sunday that the farmers have grown disgruntled by the low price and an apparent government support to the sugar mill owners. "A large number of farmers will stop cultivating the sugar cane crop [from the next sowing season]," a statement issued after a meeting of the SCA, attended by its representatives from Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and others districts, warned.

"In the past, the mills used to start crushing by October 10 every year and now, they delay the process by three or more months and pay a low price," the meeting, chaired by SCA General Secretary Zahid Hussain Bhurgari, observed with dismay.

Under Sindh Sugar Factories Control Act, 1950, the provincial government notified the crushing season belated in the first week of December, 2017, and fixed Rs182 per 40 kilogrammes rate for the crop. However, the mills started paying Rs40 to Rs60 less in price to the farmers who later took the matter to the Sindh High Court.

The court ordered on December 21 the mills to pay Rs172 per 40 kilogrammes to the farmers and deposit Rs10 per 40 kilogrammes in the court until the petition is decided. However, instead of paying the price, 25 out of 32 mills in the province closed the mills.

The crop is cultivated on around 600,000 acres in Sindh. The SCA also claimed that the mills are unjustifiably deducting 28% from the total weight from each farmer selling the crop.

The Sindh Taraqi Pasand (STP) party blocked the Hyderabad-TM Khan road for four hours on Sunday, staging a sit-in against the mills and in solidarity with the farmers. The protesters raised slogans against the Sindh government.

"The Omni group owns 19 sugar mills and dominates Pakistan Sugar Mills Association [Sindh chapter]. Because of this group, Sindh's agricultural economy has been put on the path of destruction," alleged Dr Abdul Hameed Memon, STP's vice president.

He said the growers are being fobbed off by resuming operations of the closed sugar mills so that their protest movement can be weakened. The Sindh Sugarcane Joint Action Committee announced the blocking of the highways for today (January 8) but the call was withdrawn after the mills resumed the process of cane purchase.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1602955/1-farmers-will-stop-cultivating-crop-next-sowing-season-warns-sca/

'2M TONNE WHEAT TO BE EXPORTED THIS YEAR'
Dawn, January 10th, 2018

LAHORE: The National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research heard on Tuesday that the country would export two million tons of its surplus wheat stock this year.

"Two million tons of wheat will be exported, of which Punjab will export 1.5 million tons and Sindh 0.5 million tons of the commodity," committee chairman MNA Malik Shakir Bashir Awan was quoted as saying at the meeting of the body at Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) office in Lahore.

At least 70 percent of the export consignments would be carried out through sea route and 30 percent via land, he said, adding the export task would be completed by June 30.

The meeting discussed the stock situation of wheat, the next crop outlook, and procurement of the new wheat crop.

Federal National Food Security and Research Minister Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan said on the occasion that reduction in cost of production of different crops was of high importance for farmers.

He said that about 98 percent of the wheat sowing had been completed and sufficient wheat was available in stock as well.

Mr Bosan said if electricity loadshedding could be overcome in the country, the agriculture sector could also flourish as well and what needed was only special attention for the uplift of the sector.

The meeting was attended by MNAs retired Capt Muhammad Safdar, Chaudhry Iftikhar Nazir, Shahnaz Saleem, Kishwer Zehra and Parveen Masood Bhatti.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1381946/2m-tonne-wheat-to-be-exported-this-year

REAP TO STRENGTHEN BOND WITH INTERNATIONAL BUYERS
The Express Tribune, January 12th, 2018.

LAHORE: The Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) is looking to strengthen its ties with international buyers of Pakistani rice in a bid to streamline and promote the export-oriented commodity, REAP Chairman Sameeullah Naeem said on Thursday.

At a press conference, Naeem said Pakistani rice exports are expected to cross the $2-billion mark during the current fiscal year, acknowledging the contribution of global buyers in achieving the landmark.

Pakistan exported rice worth Rs168.244 billion in fiscal year 2017, down from Rs194.2 billion in the previous year.

Pakistan suffers from low exports, putting pressure on its foreign exchange reserves. However, different sectors, including rice growers, are now targeting an increase given the recent fall in the rupee.

REAP is also looking to acknowledge buyers' and their confidence in Pakistani rice to promote exports.

"Contribution of 30 top international buyers will be acknowledged at an event to be held on February 20, 2018 in Dubai," said Naeem. "This will witness participation from around 100 international buyers, ambassadors, representatives of different departments of Gulf states, representatives of different government departments including Trade Development Authority (TDAP), federal ministry for food security, provincial agriculture departments and members of REAP.

"We are planning to make it an annual feature which will eventually be turned into a 'Rice Conference' providing a platform not only to acknowledge buyers but also to discuss future trends and new technologies in the rice sector," he added.

He hoped the awards, named 'International Buyers Recognition Trophy 2018', will provide a chance to the buyers to interact with Pakistani government departments to provide a sense of authenticity of rice sellers. He said such an award will also promote the country's soft image besides winning the loyalty and trust of the international buyers.

The REAP chairman said that the total awards would be 30 which would be distributed on the basis of maximum import by any region and import on the basis of quantity. Naeem said that issues related to rice will also be discussed with relevant stakeholders.

"A documentary will also be shown to participants explaining how Pakistan is the original 'house of Basmati', our agronomic practices are traditional and close to organic, ratio of using pesticides is low and Pakistani growers comply with sanitary and phyto-sanitary practices thus, producing a healthy product which is safe for human consumption," Naeem said.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1606345/2-reap-strengthen-bond-international-buyers/

EXPORT OF MORE UREA ALLOWED DESPITE FOOD MINISTRY'S OPPOSITION
Business Recorder, 12 January 2018

Mushtaq Ghumman

ISLAMABAD: Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has allowed export of additional 35,000 Metric Tons (MT) of urea to Sri Lanka, in addition to extending the deadline for export of the remaining quantity of 41,000 MT upto February 28, 2108 despite stiff resistance from Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research, official sources told Business Recorder.

Giving the details, sources said, Commerce Division informed the ECC on December 29, 2017 that in order to facilitate export of surplus urea, the ECC on 23rd January, 2017 took the following decisions : (i) export of urea fertilizer upto 0.3 million tons be allowed on the pattern of modalities adopted for export of sugar, implemented and monitored by the State Bank of Pakistan; (ii) export of urea would be effected no later than April 28, 2017; (iii) Fertilizer Review Committee (FRC) would meet immediately after April 28, 2017 to review the exported quantities, and if the originally estimated surplus materializes, the committee may recommend additional quantities of export; (iv) FRC would monitor domestic prices of urea on a monthly basis to ensure that there was no increase in retail price [as per weekly sensitive price index]. FRC would recommend to ECC of the Cabinet for discontinuation of further exports if there was an increase in retail price; and (v) the subsidy available on domestic sales of urea shall not be available for export of urea.

According to sources, Commerce Division further revealed that ECC took the following three decisions: (i) an increase in quantity of urea for export be allowed from 0.3 MMT to 0.6 MMT;(ii) deadline for the export of urea be extended from 28th April 28, 2017 to October 31, 2017; and (iii) other terms and conditions imposed by the ECC on January 23, 2017 on export of urea shall remain applicable.

The Commerce Division revealed that against the approved quantity of 0.6 MMT of urea, only 0.041 MMT remains to be exported. Fertilizer Review Committee (FRC) held a meeting on December 15, 2017, wherein following availability of urea during Rabi 2017-18 was provided according to which closing inventory in October, November and December 2017 will remain at 707 MT, 523 MT and 164 MT respectively. However in January 2018, inventory would be around 198 MT.

The committee discussed the extension and obtained views of the stakeholders regarding allowing export of the remaining quota of 41,000 MT of urea whereupon many of the stakeholders expressed their reservations. It was suggested that it was not safe to extend the timeline for exports of urea during the Rabi season.

However, Ministry of Industries & Production has now clarified that the quantity of 41000 MT stuck at the port since October 31st, 2017 is not part of the strategic reserves. The Ministry of Industries & Production further requested the Commerce Division to submit the case before the ECC for allowing extension in time up to February 10, 2018 to export the remaining quantity of Urea i.e. 41,000 MT.

The Commerce Division requested ECC of the Cabinet that the deadline for ongoing export of urea allowed may be extended to February 28, 2018 from October 31, 2017.

During the ensuing discussion, the Secretary National Food Security & Research stated that the provinces have reservations on the export of urea; and argue that availability of buffer stock of 200,000 MT of urea should be ensured in the country to meet the requirement for Rabi 2017-18. He stated that November and December 2017 were the peak months for urea demand. However, there would be less demand in January and February, 2018.

Secretary, Commerce Division stated that sufficient stock of urea was available in the country for Rabi crop. The Secretary, Planning, Development and Reform Division emphasized the need to augment urea production to cater the needs of the country.

Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who is also the chairman of the ECC, observed that contrary to last year, urea production in the country has increased considerably in 2017 on availability of imported LNG and now surplus urea is being exported. He stated that Sri Lanka is interested in procurement of 76,000 MT of urea from Pakistan. He directed the Commerce Division to make necessary arrangements in this regard.

He agreed to extend the deadline for export of urea from 31st October, 2017 to 28th February, 2018. He further directed that urea being produced using imported gas must be utilized for exports.

After detailed discussion, the ECC approved extension in the deadline for the ongoing export of urea from October 31, 2017 to February 28, 2018 for export to Sri Lanka. An additional quantity of 35,000 MT is also approved to enable total exports of 76,000 MT of urea to Sri Lanka.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/12/1-page/693385-news.html

FARMERS WARNED TO PROTECT CROPS
Business Recorder, 14 January 2018

KARACHI: Farmers should ensure measures to protect crops, nurseries and orchids from extreme cold weather, the Met Office has said.

It said that the farmers should also remove weeds from standing crops to help improve yield. It warned that weeds cause a considerable loss in production annually. Growers should also plan crops irrigations during the winter season.

Temperature during night is expected to drop slightly by 1 to 2 degree Celsius while in day likely to remain slightly normal in the most parts. Normal wind pattern is likely to prevail over the most agriculture plains. It alerted farmers of Southern Punjab and Upper Sindh to sandstorms until Jan 20.

Mainly dry and cold weather is expected to prevail over agriculture plains of Punjab and Balochistan while in the most parts of Sindh and Kashmir. A light to moderate rainfall and snowfall over the mountains of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan are expected over the period.

In next 24 hours: Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country with light rain and with snowfall over the hills at places in Malakand Division and Gilgit-Baltistan. Fog is expected to grip plains of Punjab and Upper Sindh in morning hours.

Temperature in Skardu was minus 9 degrees Celsius, Gupis minus 8, Quetta, Gilgit, Astore and Hunza minus 7, each, Ziarat minus 6, Kalat, Kalam, Dir minus 5, each, Bagrote minus 4, Dalbandin, Rawalakot and Chitral minus 3, each over the past 24 hours.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/14/17-page/693946-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1ST TO JANUARY 7TH 2018

AGRICULTURE: GOING UPWARDS, LETHARGY IN ADDRESSING KEY CHALLENGES MAY DAMPEN PROSPECTS

Dawn,The Business and Finance Weekly, January 1st, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

The prospects of key crops and the livestock sector in 2018 are somewhat promising but structural issues remain and need increased attention.

Only three out of five key crops are expected to do well, showing an increase in production and a modest growth in yield, and the livestock sector also seems set to perform better than the year before.

Wheat, sugarcane and rice are all heading in the right direction, and we may see additional output and yield enhancement this year.

Officials and growers say the output of maize, however, may either remain stagnant or record a slight decline due to multiple reasons. If all goes well, cotton output, too, may touch the 13 million-bale mark but will still remain below the original target of 14.04m bales.

Two key challenges to crops that have so far continued to haunt the agriculture sector might also remain there in 2018 even if their severity weakens.

The first is to bring the national average yield of key crops closer to the global average and the second is to improve supply and the value chain.

How closely we chase the objective of bridging the yield gap depends upon how seriously ongoing yield enhancement programmes based on seed research and modernisation of farming practices are implemented.

Lethargy on this count will not only result in a slower growth of the crop sector but will also constrain the country’s ability to meet the growing demand for food grains and cotton at home, and to achieve the desired growth in the export of grains, food items and textiles.

If distortions in supply chain of crops are not managed well the country can neither maintain a sober inflation nor get a high per-unit value for food and textile exports.

Cotton: The current season’s cotton output looks set to exceed 13m bales against the second assessment of the cotton crop assessment committee. This is by no means a very optimistic assessment as by mid-December the country had already produced 10.685m bales.

Sindh is sure to contribute 4m bales, up from the earlier estimates of 3.7m bales—a number already achieved by mid-December.

However, even a 13m-bale output would not only be lower than the original target of 14.04m bales but also insufficient to cover growing demand from the textile sector after the recent spike in textile exports.

Had Punjab's cotton output not come under pressure (despite an increase in the area under cultivation) due to climatic reasons, the total national production would be around 13.5m bales.

Wheat: The target for wheat output in the upcoming season is 26.46m tonnes, up from 25.75m tonnes in the previous season.

A shortage of irrigation water and less or no rain in some wheat-growing areas might make the achievement of this target difficult, according to a Suparco assessment. But officials of provincial agricultural departments say, on the basis of field reports received so far, that the target could be achieved despite some reduction in the area under cultivation.

They are pinning their hopes on the projected increase in yields, thanks to the introduction of some new varieties in the past couple of years and a greater awareness created among farmers about the proper care of the crop.

According to Dawn reports, experiments on winter wheat are being conducted in four high-altitude regions. If encouraging results emerge, the country will begin growing this crop as well, though on a limited scale. The winter wheat crop is expected to offer a 20-30pc higher yield than spring wheat — an added advantage.

Rice: The rice harvest in 2017 is estimated to have reached 7.55m tonnes, according to officials who say that in 2018 production would cross eight million tonnes even if the area under cultivation remains the same.

Their optimism springs from a faster growth in production of coarse rice — thanks to an expanding use of high-yield varieties— and a modest increase in even Basmati rice.

For several years, Pakistan has been promoting the use of paddy seeds that survive and grow on less water and has also been teaching farmers how to reduce post-harvest losses.

Mechanised paddy harvesting and newer techniques of replanting the saplings, too, have been playing their role in boosting the rice output for some years now. Hopefully these trends should become stronger in 2018, officials of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) say.

Sugarcane: The sugarcane output has been growing steadily leading to surplus sugar production in the country and a crash in domestic prices.

Sugar exports continue to bring in the much-needed foreign exchange into the country. Delays over the fixation of the support price of cane by provinces continue to occur, and the year 2017 was no exception.

Farmer lobbies persist in demanding an upward revision in support prices even when the same are notified. The same is expected to happen in 2018.

But on sugarcane farms we can expect changes: a straight 10pc increase in cane production (to 89m plus from 81.4m tonnes in 2017) and a rise in per-hectare yield to 64 tonnes per hectare from 62 tonnes per hectare, according to initial official projections, not yet finalised.

Maize: The maize output that exceeded 6.1m tonnes for the first time in 2017 may remain under pressure in 2018 for the simple reason that the 2017 output gain came from a big 12pc increase in the area under cultivation.

In 2018 this might not be the case and the area under cultivation could shrink, officials say, adding that total production could range between 5.3m and 5.5m tonnes.

They are, however, optimistic that the per-hectare yield of a little less than 4.6 tonnes in 2017 may actually rise to 5 tonnes per-hectare due to a wider adoption of high-yield varieties of the grain.

Livestock: In the absence of data obtained via physical animal surveys, authorities continue to make calculations about milk and meat production on the basis of inter census growth rates between 1996 and 2006.

Much has changed since 2006 and the entry and progress of large milk and meat processing companies have changed the entire landscape of value-added livestock industries.

An increase in economic growth, the consequent rise in income levels in recent years and the proliferation of chains of super markets also continues to boost demand for dairy and milk products. That is why officials of MNFSR remain upbeat about growth in the livestock sector in 2018.

But whether an anticipated growth in the sector's performance will also help in the export of meat and meat preparations and of food items in which milk is used as the main ingredient cannot be predicted right now as competition in export markets is getting tougher.

One way of looking at the high impact of grains and livestock sectors' performance could be the growth of the food and beverages segment of large-scale manufacturing. Here, an 11.49pc expansion in output in FY17 topped by a further 14.24pc growth in five months of this fiscal year indicates that things are moving in the right direction.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1380113/agriculture-going-upwards-lethargy-in-addressing-key-challenges-may-dampen-prospects

RIGHTS OF PEASANTS TO BE PROTECTED: MINISTER
Business Recorder, January, 2nd, 2018

Minister Food Punjab Bilal Yaseen has vowed that Provincial Minister and concerned officials shall continue surprise visits to sugar mills till the end of crushing season and no stone will remain unturned to protect rights of the peasant. On special directions by Chief Minister Punjab the minister food inspected three sugar mills located in T.T Singh, Faisalabad and Tandlianwala and observed sugar cane procurement process.

While talking to sugarcane cultivators, he assured them all sort of relief from the government. He directed district administration and sugar mills management to strictly follow weighing standard and issue CPR at every cost. "Take action against any role of middleman" he further stressed. While talking to Minister Food, sugarcane cultivators expressed satisfaction on steps taken by the government especially they were grateful on pro peasant vision of CM Punjab.

Bilal yaseen said that "Agriculture is the major part of national economy and welfare of farmers mean betterment of the country, for the first time in the history of Pakistan present Punjab Government started to serve farmer community by announcing "Kissan Package" resultantly a sense of security has been emerged among farmers.

A sense has prevailed in the growers that they were not alone and the government was providing them all possible relief" he further said. "Presence of illegal weighing scales any where will not be tolerated" the Minister categorically concluded.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/01/20180102332099/

SUGAR CANE FARMERS GIVE GOVT A TWO-DAY DEADLINE
The Express Tribune, 2 January 2018

Giving a new deadline of two days to the Sindh government to meet their demands, sugar cane farmers have again warned of an indefinite sit-in protest on the National Highway.

The announcement of the new deadline was made by the Joint Sugar Cane Growers Action Committee during their meeting with Agriculture Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal and Information Minister Nisar Hussain Shah at the Hyderabad Gymkhana on Monday.

The ministers reportedly assured the farmers' body that the government would start taking action against mills who defied the Sindh High Court's (SHC) order regarding the sugar cane rate. However, the farmers took the assurance with a pinch of salt and announced the sit-in in case their demands were not met in two days.

The ministers' meeting was deemed an attempt to prevent protests during the public meeting of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on January 5 in Mirpurkhas where the party's top leadership will be addressing supporters.

"We will stop any further negotiations after two days. This will be followed by an indefinite sit-in on the National Highway [in Hyderabad] on January 8," Abdul Majeed Nizamani, president of Sindh Abadgar Board which is one of the four farmers' organisations constituting the action committee, told participants of a press conference.

The action committee claimed that after the SHC's order, 25 out of 32 sugar mills stopped operations and buying sugar cane. The court had ordered on December 21 the sugar mills to pay Rs172 per 40 kilogrammes (kg) of sugar cane to the farmers and deposit in the court Rs10 for every 40kg they purchased. The deposited amount would either be paid to the farmers or returned to the mills after the court disposed of the case.

"The cane is drying up and farmers are suffering huge financial losses," lamented Sindh Chamber of Agriculture President Qabool Muhammad Khatian. The crop is cultivated on around 600,000 acres in Sindh, he said, adding that delay in the sugar cane harvest would lead to a delay in the sowing of wheat and other winter crops.

Under the Sindh Sugar Factories Control Act, 1950, the provincial government has to notify crushing season and the crop's rates in the month of October every year. "If action isn't taken against mills in two days, we will stop holding further negotiations with the government," Nawab Zubair Talpur, head of Sindh Abadgar Ittehad, warned.

Representing the Sindh Abadgar Board, Mehmood Nawaz Shah said the Sindh government was trying to find an excuse by blaming the federal government for the crisis.

Meanwhile, growers continued protests in Ghotki, Sukkur, Sujawal and other districts on Monday. "We have been sitting on the highway for three days but no elected representative or an official has come to listen to our complaints and assure redress," bemoaned Lal Baksh Siyal, who led the protest in Ghotki district.

"Sindh government seems helpless in front of the PPP's co-chairperson [Asif Ali Zardari]," alleged Jamal Mehmood Khuhro. The protesters warned the government that if they were forced to end the sit-in, they would block the railway tracks. The protesters appealed to the chief justice of Pakistan to take suo motu notice of the issue and provide justice to farmers.

In Sujawal, protesters led by Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz MPA Hasnain Shah Sherazi and former nazim Syed Shafqat Shah Sherazi blocked the Karachi-Badin highway. The sit-in continued for over three hours.

Talking to the media in Mirpurkhas district on Sunday, the agriculture minister said some conspirators were using the farmers' protests for their vested interests. Referring to the hearing of the sugar cane issue in the SHC, Siyal said the government would submit its reply in court on January 10.

"Under the 1950 Act, the provincial government can only impose a penalty of Rs100,000 on a mill for the violation [and] cannot do anything more," Siyal said, tacitly suggesting that even the government strictly implemented the law, the growers' demands would still not be met.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1598435/1-sugar-cane-farmers-give-govt-two-day-deadline/

PARB, UAF INK MOU TO EXTEND AGRI RESEARCH
Business Recorder, 4 January 2017

FAISALABAD: The Punjab Agricultural Research Board (PARB) and University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) on Wednesday inked a Memorandum of Understanding to foster agriculture research collaboration.

The MoU was duly signed by UAF Vice Chancellor Dr Muhammad Iqbal Zafar and PARB Chief Executive Dr Noorul Islam Khan at VC Chamber.

The collaboration aims at fostering advancement in agricultural research, and commercialization to enhance sustainable agricultural productivity, reduce poverty, and to ensure the food security.

In the agreement, it was agreed upon that mutual scientific and technical cooperation under PARB identified research themes will advance the state of science and technology in Punjab and strengthen scientific infrastructure.

The PARB will also fund scientists to attend the scientific workshop seminar as per PARB rules and Punjab Government policy. It was decided to mutual cooperation in research projects and activities for commercialization of their outcome of the PARB projects for mutual benefit. The PARB will fund 41 projects of Center for Advanced Studies in Agriculture and Food Security.

UAF VC said that the PARB was playing a pivotal role for the development of the agriculture sector. He said that the collaborations will help address the issues of the agricultural sector. He said that UAF was working on the development and promotion of machine picking of cotton. He said that fruit fly has emerged one of biggest threats to agricultural productivity.

Dr Noorul Islam said that collaborative efforts are needed to address the issue of fruit fly. He said that PARB was making all out efforts to address the problems of the agricultural sector for the uplift and prosperity of the country. He said that PARB massive projects on whitefly and pinball worm are being run with UAF that will bring tangible results.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/04/9-page/691855-news.html

COTTON PRODUCTION UP BY 7.2PC
Dawn, January 04, 2018

Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana

KARACHI: Higher cotton production by Sindh and Punjab helped the country improve its overall output by 7.16 per cent year-on-year up to Dec 31, according to the latest figures issued by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association on Wednesday.

Yet the production level remained lower than the official revised estimate of 12.6 million bales.

The country produced 11.11m bales against 10.36m bales in the corresponding period of the last season.

The government initially estimated that cotton production would be 14.1m bales because of the higher acreage of land coming under cultivation. But the cotton crop faced a lot of issues as the season progressed.

Heavy rains affected the crop at one stage. In addition, a heat wave retarded the growth of cotton plants. Pest attacks in many cotton-growing areas of Sindh and Punjab also hurt the crop.

Sindh continued to post a higher production growth than Punjab. During the period under review, Sindh recorded a growth of 12.38pc to 4.21m bales. In contrast, Punjab recorded a growth of 4.2pc to 6.89m bales.

Consequently, cotton prices soared to the seven-year high of Rs8,100 per maund. They stood at Rs14,000 per maund in 2010-11 amid a worldwide surge in commodity prices.

The higher flow of phutti (seed cotton) in the last fortnight (Dec 15-31) was instrumental in improving cotton production. Around 0.42m bales reached ginneries compared to 0.22m bales a year ago.

Spinners tried to import cotton in large quantities earlier in the season. But they shifted their focus on local cotton as world prices surged. As a result, spinners purchased 9.56m bales compared to 8.82m bales last season. Exporters also purchased 0.21m bales against 0.12m bales that they lifted in the corresponding period of the last year.

Ginners are holding unsold stocks of 1.33m bales compared to 1.35m bales a year ago.

Of 609 ginning units still operating in the country, 446 are in Punjab and 163 are in Sindh.

A substantial quantity of unpicked phutti is still in the cotton fields, which means the national output may reach 11.5m bales.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1380604/cotton-production-up-by-72pc

CENTRE SPARS WITH SINDH AS SUGAR CRISIS ESCALATES
Dawn, January 05, 2018

Amin Ahmed | Shahid Iqbal

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan said on Thursday the federal government has nothing to do with the sugarcane crisis in Sindh.

Providing farmers with the subsidy is the provincial government's responsibility, Mr Bosan said at a news conference.

"The allegation levelled by the Sindh government that its federal counterpart did not provide the subsidy on sugarcane is wrong and baseless," he said.

"It is the responsibility of the provincial government to ensure that farmers get the fixed price," he said, adding that he will speak to the Sindh chief minister in this regard.

Mr Bosan said it is the responsibility of Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments to ensure that farmers get the support price against sales of sugarcane.

The price of sugarcane is determined by the provinces in consultation with the federal government, he said.

The federal government pays the subsidy only on the export of sugar, and not on sugarcane purchase by mills, as being claimed by ministers in Sindh, he added.

The government has allowed mills to export 1.5 million tonnes of sugar, Mr Bosan said, noting that the Trading Corporation of Pakistan will also purchase 300,000 tonnes of surplus sugar.

As per the decision of the Economic Coordination Committee of the cabinet, the federal government is providing the subsidy of Rs10.70 per kilogram for the export of sugar.

The provincial governments have to pay subsidies to farmers under their respective Sugar Control Acts. The problem in Sindh is not new, he said, adding that it has existed for the past several years. Sugarcane growers in Sindh are to be paid Rs182 per 40kg, but they are not getting this price, he said.

The country has so far produced 7.5m tonnes of sugar this year against domestic demand of 5.3m tonnes. In terms of sugarcane, production has been 85m tonnes, up 12.5pc from a year ago.

Representatives of Sindh-based sugar mills claim that they face a crisis-like situation. They said the price of sugar is Rs47 per kg, including sales tax of Rs6 per kg. This brings the payable cane rate to Rs120 per 40kg. They said sugar mills are in no position to run a loss of Rs20 per kg of sugar as each of them will incur a loss of up to Rs1 billion.

They are of the view that mills suffered huge losses last year due to the late approval for sugar exports by the federal government. The federal government has still not paid the last year's subsidy on exports, they said.

The minister announced that the government has released Rs100m as the first instalment of the sugar export subsidy, adding that a notification has also been issued.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance Rana Afzal Khan said in Karachi National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) should ensure credit availability for the sugar industry.

"We have discussed the sugarcane crisis, but no final decision has been taken to resolve the issue," the minister told Dawn.

"I believe that the sugarcane industry should be provided with credit so that farmers get paid against their crop," he said.

"Banks are the biggest supplier of credit to agriculture and NBP is one of them. We are trying to resolve this crisis with the support of banks," said the minister.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1380814/centre-spars-with-sindh-as-sugar-crisis-escalates

YEAR 2017-18: 97PC SOWING OF WHEAT CROP COMPLETED, SENATE INFORMED
Business Recorder, 5 January 2018

FAZAL SHER

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research has been informed that 97 percent sowing of wheat crop for year 2017-2018 has been completed on 8.7 million hectares of land against the total target of 8.9 million hectares in the country.

An official of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research briefed the parliamentary body presided over by Senator Muzaffar Hussain Shah that 97 percent sowing of wheat crop has been completed in the country. "The provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have completed sowing of wheat, while sowing of the crop is in progress in Sindh and Balochistan," he added.

He informed the meeting that the total target of 8.9 million hectares of land for year 2017-18 is 0.117 million hectares less than the last year's target because of surplus wheat stock in the country. The provincial governments were advised to announce subsidy schemes for diversification of cropping pattern, he said, adding the government of Punjab has identified 200,000 acres for cultivation of sunflower and canola with a subsidy of Rs5,000 per acre for small growers having land up to 12.5 acres.

He said that main reasons behind the delay in wheat sowing in the country include delay in sugarcane crushing, water shortage and seasonal closure of irrigation water canals, and fog and smog issues in the country.

The official also briefed the committee about the cost of production and support price of wheat during the last five years. The cost of production of wheat in Punjab increased from Rs1045.62 to Rs1222.9 per 40kg during the last five years (2012-13 to 2017-18). The cost of wheat production increased from Rs1040.62 up to Rs1133.63 per 40kg during last five years in Sindh.

He further told the committee that in India, 26 commodities are currently covered under the support price mechanism. "In India price of per urea bag is INR264 equal to Rs464, while in Pakistan price of per bag of urea is Rs 1408," he said, adding that price of DAP per bag in India is INR1235 which is equal to Rs2136.55, while in Pakistan DAP per bag price is Rs 2945.

Chairman Akhuwat Organization Dr Amjad Saqib also briefed the committee about the working of the organization and loans provided to small farmers.

Senators Muhammad Mohsin Khan Leghari, Gul Bashra, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan and Hamza, and Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan attended the meeting.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/05/22-page/692159-news.html

CENTRE SPARS WITH SINDH AS SUGAR CRISIS ESCALATES
Dawn, January 5th, 2018

Islamabad/Karachi: Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan said on Thursday the federal government has nothing to do with the sugarcane crisis in Sindh.

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“Banks are the biggest supplier of credit to agriculture and NBP is one of them. We are trying to resolve this crisis with the support of banks,” said the minister.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1380814/centre-spars-with-sindh-as-sugar-crisis-escalates

SUGAR MILLS MAY RESUME CRUSHING WITHIN TWO DAYS
Dawn, January 6th, 2018

MIRPURKHAS: All sugar mills will resume crushing within next 48 hours in the province while all four mills in Mirpurkhas division have promised to restart crushing within two days in the division, according to sources.

However, the sources said, that no official statement had been issued so far in this regard.

Mirpurkhas commissioner Shafique Ahmed Mahesar told journalists after a meeting with officers of the four mills that the officers had promised to him that the sugar factories would reignite boilers and restart crushing within 24 to 48 hours under a decision of Sindh High Court and make payments to growers.

Talking to journalists, the commissioner said that mills must resume crushing as almost half of the season had already elapsed and harvested and standing sugar cane had started losing weight, inflicting losses on growers.

Meanwhile, Sindh Minister for Home Sohail Anwer Siyal visited Abdul Majeed Qambrani at the civil hospital on the directives of PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. Qambrani, a peasant, had suffered burns when he attempted to commit self immolation during a sit-in by growers a couple of days back.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1381043/sugar-mills-may-resume-crushing-within-two-days

DIRECT SUBSIDY ON FERTILIZER PROGRAMME LAUNCHED
Business Recorder, 6 January 2017

LAHORE: The Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and the Agriculture Department have jointly launched a direct subsidy on fertilizers programme, replacing the earlier indirect system used to provide subsidy to farmers by cutting down the price of fertilizers to ensure maximum transparency and evaluation mechanism, said Dr Umar Saif founding Vice Chancellor of Information Technology University (ITU) the Punjab, Chairman PITB and Advisor to the CM Punjab during an informal talk with a group of media persons here Friday.

Dr Saif said PITB has developed a web portal for the purpose of enabling fertilizer marketing companies to generate unique codes for their products (MOP, SOP and DAP). The codes are printed and pasted inside fertilizer bags. The registered farmer after purchase of bag, scratch the coupon and send an SMS to the designated number and the system recognizes the detail and sends a confirmation. Then the registered farmer can go to an agent with the SMS and original CNIC to encash the subsidy money.

The developed system updates in real-time every successive transaction, location and usage details resulting more transparency and accuracy in delivering cash subsidies to registered farmers. It also provides a vast database of registered farmers and statistics regarding geographical use of certain fertilizers.

He also said the Punjab Government buys 40% of the wheat produced in the province every year to stabilize market price of this staple crop. The PITB has also developed a centralized system based on an android application to verify and record data of farmers from whom wheat is purchased by the government. The centralized system provides real-time reports of wheat procurement process from each Centre. The application has an inbuilt feedback system that sends SMS and makes automated calls to farmers to gather their feedback on the procurement process. The Punjab Province has established 382 online procurement Centres in 36 districts and 144 Tehsils, benefiting more than 300,000 farmers every year, he stated.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/06/19-page/692327-news.html

February 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 26TH TO MARCH 4TH 2018

REVISED COTTON PRODUCTION TARGET MISSED

Business Recorder, 27 February 2018

Tahir Amin

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has missed the revised cotton production target by around eight percent as the production has been recorded at 11.5 million bales against the revised target of 12.6 million bales for 2017-18.

Documents available with Business Recorder revealed that 11.48 million bales of cotton have been recorded so far and the number may reach 11.5 million bales by end-March (closing time); however, the number surpassed the cotton production of 10.6 million bales recorded during the same period of the last year (2016-17).

The country missed cotton production target by around 30 percent in 2015-16 and 25 percent in 2016-17.

The Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC) had in its first meeting downward revised cotton production estimates by over 12 percent to 12.6 million bales against the initial estimate of 14.04 million bales for the current season (2017-18), after missing the sowing target.

Cotton Commissioner Dr Khalid Abdullah confirmed to Business Recorder that cotton target will be missed by around 7-8 percent and production would be around 11.5 million bales in 2017-18, but has surpassed the last year production of 10.6 million bales.

Cotton crop area target for the year 2017-18 was set at 3.11 million hectares (7.68 million acres) with production of 14.04 million bales. About 13.9 percent higher cotton sowing of 2.753 million hectares (6.803 million acres) was achieved during the outgoing season with major increase in the Punjab province (5.3 million acres) compared to last year 2016-17.

But the target set for the current season was missed as decline in the cotton sowing was recorded in Punjab which is the major cotton producing province. Punjab which produces about 70 percent of the total cotton has been hit hard as 5.3 million acres were covered against the target of 5.97 million acres. It is 88 percent of the target for current season but is higher as compared to 4.48 million acres during the previous season.

Punjab has produced 7.23 million bales against the estimated target of 8.8 million bales of cotton, Sindh produced 4.25 million bales of cotton against the production target of 3.7 million bales and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have produced 0.10 million bales of cotton.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/27/1-page/702071-news.html

DAJAL CANAL: FARMERS TAKE TO STREET AGAINST CANAL CLOSURE
The Express Tribune, February 27th, 2018.

A large number of farmers staged a sit-in against the long closure of Dajil Canal outside the commissioner office on Monday.

Protesters, under the Farmers Board, marched from Rajanpur to the Indus Highway, covering over 100 kilometres on foot. They also took out a symbolic funeral of the chief engineer of irrigation department to lodge their protest.

Speaking on the occasion, Farmer Board District President Khwaja Mohsin Riaz said that the only canal Dajil canal that used to irrigate millions of acres of Rajanpur land was closed down a few months ago. Water beneath district Rajanpur land is also bitter due to which Dajil canal water is used by them for drinking purposes, he added.

He said that water provision is the basic necessity of the masses. "Both humans and animals are yearning for water. The crops under cultivation are being destroyed. "

He urged that the canal water, instead of being released for six months, should be allowed to flow the entire year.

Other officials said that the restriction of the canal water is badly affecting the crops under cultivation on millions of acre of land. They added that they have to fetch water from far-flung areas to feed their animals. This practice is badly affecting crops and on the other hand, their animals are also dying, they said, adding that rulers of Lahore were after turning our lands into barren. At the time of floods, the water flow is directed towards them. They said, today, the farmers are united.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1645581/1-dajal-canal-farmers-take-street-canal-closure/

OUTREACH PROGRAMME FOR AGRI SECTOR UNDER STUDY: SIDDIQUI
Business Recorder, 28 February 2018

KARACHI: President and CEO Meezan Bank, Irfan Siddiqui has said that the bank is working on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector and soon new services would be available for SMEs sector.

Speaking at a meeting of Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), he said that Meezan Bank is also working on an outreach programme for agriculture sector.

He said that stability of banking sector is a matter of national interest.

Irfan Siddqui informed that awareness programmes and seminars about Islamic Banking were being arranged for every level of the society including parliamentarians, bureaucracy, business community and other stakeholders. President KATI Tariq Malik said that industrial sector and SMEs were facing huge burden of exceeding cost of doing business. He said that the growth of banking sector in general and Islamic banking in particular, was remarkable, now banks should play their role to cooperate with industry and trade by making process easy and low rated lending.

He was of the view that banking sector ignored SMEs, which is the most important element of the economy.

Malik urged Meezan Bank's officials to focus on SMEs and industrial sectors.

Chairman and CEO KITE DMC Zubair Chaya and Senator Abdul Haseeb Khan suggested that awareness drives should be launched regarding concepts of Islamic banking.

On this occasion, President KATI Tariq Malik, Vice President Junaid Naqi, Abdul Haseeb Khan, former Presidents and Chairmen of KATI Zubair Chhaya, Syed Farukh Mazhar, Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui, Akber Farooqui, Dr Samiuzzaman and others also expressed their views.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/28/7-page/702300-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 19TH TO FEBRUARY 25TH 2018

OVER 11.4M COTTON BALES REACH GINNERIES

Business Recorder, 19 February 2018

MULTAN: The seed cotton (Phutti) equivalent to 11.4 million bales have reached ginneries across the country till Feb 15, 2018, registering an increase by 7.49 per cent compared

to corresponding period of last year.

According to a fortnightly report of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) released here on Sunday, out of total arrivals, 11,457,111 bales have undergone the ginning process.

The arrivals in Punjab were recorded over 7.2 million bales recording a percentage increase of 4.84 per cent.

The arrivals in Sindh were recorded at 4,252,414 bales, 12.32 per cent higher as compared to corresponding period of last year.

A total sold out bales were recorded at 10,656,256 bales including 10,439,641 bales bought by textile mills and 216,216 bales purchased by exporters.

Over 0.8 million (829,485) bales were still lying at the ginneries as unsold stock.—APP

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/19/15-page/700737-news.html

FAO, HAJI SONS INTRODUCE MODERN VEGETABLE SEEDLING PRODUCTION

The Express Tribune, February 19th, 2018.

A five days' training, including practical exercises in the field and excursions, was organized by FAO in close collaboration with Haji Sons (Royal Seeds and Seedlings, Lahore) and the Agriculture Research Institute (ARI, Government of Balochistan) in Quetta, last week.

Twenty entrepreneurial female and 10 male farmers from districts Quetta, Nushki and Chagai, including some GoB extension and research staff, participated.

This training was organized within the framework of the Australia Balochistan Agri Business Programme (AusABBA), financed by The Australian Government and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in collaboration with the Government of Balochistan.

Access to high quality vegetables seeds and seedlings were identified as essential inputs to advance the horticulture sector in Balochistan. In particular vegetable seedling production in trays, under controlled conditions has multiple advances and is instrumental to achieving higher and better quality production.

Training topics among others were: seed treatment, plant raining, substrate preparation and mixing and transplanting of seedlings in the field. Seedling production, being a relatively new activity in Balochistan, could become a typical female agri business activity to generate their own income.

Women could also plant vigorous vegetable seedlings in their integrated homestead gardens and / or sell or barter trade the seedlings with their neighbors or at nearby markets.

Some of the promising results of this training were that male and female participants wanted to establish their own vegetable seedling nurseries in the districts with the help of AusABBA and Haji sons in 2018. Another participant (Zia Garden from Quetta), who already produces seedlings, wanted to become a dealer of Haji Sons for seeds, plastic trays and peat moss in Balochistan as well as to produce more seedlings for nearby farmers.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1638521/1-fao-haji-sons-introduce-modern-vegetable-seedling-production/

COME WHAT MAY, RELOCATED SHARIF SUGAR MILLS WILL NOT OPEN: CJP
The Express Tribune, 19 February 2018

The Supreme Court (SC) has observed that three banned sugar mills in south Punjab will not be reopened.

During the hearing of petitions filed by growers for the reopening of three relocated mills – Chaudhry Sugar Mills to Rahim Yar Khan, Haseeb Waqas Sugar Mills to Muzaffargarh and Ittefaq Sugar Mills to Bahawalpur – Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar said that the banned mills will not be reopened, but they may be asked to compensate the farmers.

The chief justice said that possibility cannot be ruled out that banned sugar mills are creating hurdles for the farmers, adding that these banned mills should compensate farmers who had cultivated sugarcane in the areas and now faced financial losses.

The bench has also questioned the nexus between the Punjab government and the banned mills and expressed annoyance over the local administration's failure to resolve the issue. "Either you are incompetent or partisan," Justice Nisar told the Rahim Yar Khan district coordination officer. "You are flaring up the situation and creating problems for farmers." Justice Nisar said the court's priority was to not let poor farmers suffer.

Farmers through lawyer Ahsan Bhoon and others approached the apex court to allow crushing of sugarcane for the current season after the LHC had declared the relocations illegal and ordered that the owners of the mills return them to their previous locations within three months, having observed that the mills had illegally relocated. The order came in a case filed by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Jahangir Tareen, where he challenged the relocation.

In their petition, the farmers said that the season's crop will be wasted if the mills are not allowed to operate. However, the top court had turned down their request and directed owners of five other sugar mills to buy the crop instead.

The five sugar mills owners, including Jahangir Tareen, had given undertaking that they would lift all the sugarcane from three districts at the price of Rs180 per 40kg. However, dissatisfied with the arrangement, the growers again approached the SC, pointing out that the mills do not have the capacity to crush the amount of sugarcane in the area.

The bench was told that sugarcane worth Rs200 billion was sold last year. However, 50 percent of sugarcane has yet to be purchased by the mill owners. During the hearing, Tareen's counsel Aitzaz Ahsan stated that they are complying with the undertaking, adding that the role of the Punjab government is dubious in this matter.

Tareen also appeared before the bench and stated that the Punjab government should be directed to ensure the sale of sugarcane at the price of Rs180 per 40kg in the whole province, adding that price of sugar is low as compared to the price of sugarcane. Tareen, however, expected that the mills will purchase whole sugarcane till mid-March.

However, the three-member bench directed representatives of the five sugar mills namely JWD, ARY, Hamza, Ashraf, and Indus – to formulate a proposal for the buying and selling of sugarcane and present it to the top court. The SC will supervise buying and selling of the crop by a judicial officer.

The chief justice, however, refused to nominate a high court judge to monitor the crushing, adding that superior judiciary will not be giving the services of judges to act as a judicial commission. He also said that it is not the job of courts to formulate the policies but it can examine if these policies are against the basic principles. The court adjourned hearing until February 21 (Wednesday).

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1638903/1-come-may-relocated-sharif-sugar-mills-will-not-open-cjp/

FARMLAND PRICES SKYROCKET IN SINDH
Dawn,The Business and Finance Weekly, February 19th, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

THE value of agriculture land has appreciated significantly in Sindh over the past decade. The increase, however, is not uniform across the province. The price of per-acre land located on the left bank of the Indus river is higher than in upper Sindh on the right bank.

People watching the price movement in rural Sindh attribute the hike to multiple factors, including better returns on farm investment, commercialisation of land for housing schemes in the periphery of major towns and rupee’s devaluation, in addition to the quality of land and access to water sources.

The left-bank area of the Indus river is fed by two perennial major canals of the Sukkur barrage — ie Rohri and Nara — while land in upper Sindh by non-perennial canals including Dadu and Rice.

In Shikarpur district (upper Sindh), an acre of B-class land is priced at Rs700,000 to Rs800,000 today. It was selling at Rs200,000 per acre 10 years ago, according to Haji Ameer Bux Pahore, a grower.

B-class land is either waterlogged or suffers salinity whereas A-class land is rich in fertility, Mr Pahore says. “Therefore, A-class rural plots are expensive and cost up to Rs2 million an acre.”

Right-bank districts in upper Sindh produce coarse and other varieties of rice in summer and wheat crop is grown during the Rabi season. If a grower gets around 40 maunds of paddy of fine variety, they returns are impressive (around Rs90,000 per acre). Therefore, the sellers of land demand higher prices.

According to multiple sources approached, large landowners don’t sell their land. Smaller landholders are typically more inclined to purchase land as their families work in fields. The crop area of the landed class is managed by peasants on a sharecropping basis.

In the past, agriculture land officially declared as sikni was permitted to change the status to commercial property. Today, the said law exists only on paper, which encourages growers to sell even their cultivable land for non-farm purposes

Until a decade back, Mr Pahore recalls, the B-class land was sold for Rs200,000 per acre. Small pieces of land were mostly bought to expand the holding or to buy out tracks causing obstruction in the flow of irrigation water to landowners’ larger fields, he says.

Rice fields in Larkana fetch lower prices than lands located close to urban settlements. A 10km radius around Larkana has witnessed growth in the construction sector, says paddy grower Gada Hussain Mahesar. Land has been sold for commercial schemes by even some parliamentarians, he adds.

“Land that is now sold for Rs500,000 to Rs600,000 could have been bought in thousands of rupees 10 years ago. I remember my relatives purchasing land for much lower prices,” Mr Mahesar insists. He said that the increasing cost of farm inputs and the unavailability of water have forced agriculturists to sell their productive land.

He says that previously only agriculture land declared as sikni by the Board of Revenue was permitted to change the status to commercial property. But today the law only exists on paper. It encouraged growers to sell even their cultivable land for non-farm purposes.

Water, however, remains one of the main determinants for determining the value of farmland. In Tando Allahyar, agriculture land has been purchased by Pakistan's top politicians recently. Tando Allahyar district is located on the left bank of the Indus river and is famous for sugar cane and cotton cultivation.

"The land close to urban areas fetches higher price. If water supply is an issue, owners have an option to sell plots for residential purposes," says Abdul Aziz Memon, a local grower from the area.

Although Indus's left bank area serves as the breadbasket of Sindh, parts of it like Badin (at the tail-end of the Rohri canal system) face water shortages at intervals. "Perhaps that's the reason why land price has not increased much," an expert says. "The land that was sold for Rs40,000 an acre in Khairpur Gamboh subdivision's tail-end reaches. At head regulators of canals like Jarkas, Khoski and Sangi of the same sub-division, the cost is Rs150,000 acre."

Only a decade back the same pieces of land were being sold for Rs20,000 in tail-end areas of the irrigation system and Rs75,000 at head reaches.

Agriculture land in Benazirabad (a left-bank district) can be bought for Rs5m per acre, provided it is located in the zone that gets irrigation water from Rohri canal's command system, says Mukhtiar Naz Dharejoe, a landowner. She says people mostly use land for cultivating banana, sugar cane and mango orchard that ensure good returns if done diligently.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1390296/farmland-prices-skyrocket-in-sindh

RICE EXPORTS GROW, BUT BASMATI LACKS LUSTRE
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, February 19th, 2018

RICE exports seem to be on course to hit the four-million-tonne annual target during this fiscal year, fetching $2 billion in foreign exchange.

The fact that the commodity's exports have rebounded despite a slower pace of shipments to China shows that exporters know what to do when orders don't come in from the big buyer. Nevertheless, the slowdown has prompted our policymakers to seek tariff concessions from China to help exporters sell more to that country.

During this fiscal year, Pakistan has managed to export more rice to traditional markets like Afghanistan, Kenya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Tanzania, Britain and the United States, according to senior officials of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) and trade data based on banking transactions during the first half of this fiscal year.

Despite a commendable performance during this fiscal year, one area of concern in rice exports is our inability to boost basmati shipments

Exporters have also penetrated deeper into various less-explored markets like Benin, Bangladesh, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Russia, Senegal, Somalia, South Korea, Togo, Uganda and Ukraine, the officials say.

Rice exports to China plunged to $105m in the previous fiscal year from a peak of $277m in the 2015-16 fiscal year, mainly because of slow demand and in the face of stiff competition with Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines. These rice exporting countries enjoy relaxed tariffs from China as they are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

“We are lobbying Chinese authorities for some tariff relaxations to help our exporters regain the lost ground in the Chinese rice market,” says an official of the Ministry of Commerce.

He added that during the ninth round of negations on Pakistan-China free trade agreement (FTA) held earlier this month, the Pakistani side made out a strong case for tariff relaxation on key export items, including rice. “We hope that when we sign the amended FTA in March, we’ll gain easier access not only for rice but for many other items.”

Official data for rice exports during July-January has not yet out, but REAP’s senior vice chairman Rafique Suleman says Pakistan exported 2.28m tonnes of rice during the seven-month period, fetching $1.06bn. According to official data, exports during the same period of the preceding fiscal year were 2.08m tonnes ($877m).

He says the pace of shipments suggests the country can meet the full-year targets of 4m tonnes of exports volume and $2bn of earnings.

In the previous fiscal year, the country sold 3.5m tonnes of rice in foreign markets, fetching $1.6bn in revenue. Half-yearly stats for the current fiscal year put rice exports volume at 1.8m tonnes and earnings at $843m.

Rice markets rely heavily on REAP’s report on rice exports released ahead of official data.

Despite a commendable performance during this fiscal year, one area of concern in rice exports is our inability to boost basmati shipments. In July-December, basmati exports stood at 183,000 tonnes, about 4pc less than 190,000 tonnes a year ago. Earnings from basmati exports, however, inched up 4.5pc to $185m owing to a higher per-unit price that some leading exporters managed to earn on their brands, exporters say.

Many exporters continue to export large quantities of unpackaged basmati rice to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where buyers connected with Indian trade houses package them and re-export elsewhere under Indian brands. Exporters complain the government is doing little to address this issue.

This and similar issues of branding and seeking recognition of some varieties of rice as basmati grade need proper government-to-government level handling. At the same time, our exporters also need to shift basmati exports from loose to packaged cargoes in 10-20kg rice bags or smaller retail packing and reach out to big chains of retail stores across the world, officials of the Ministry of Commerce say. Some big rice export houses that do this earn higher export returns.

As of 2016, Pakistan’s rice sector comprised 22 large processing mills (employing 100 to 500 employees each), nine mid-sized mills (with 50 to 100 employees each) and 76 small mills (each having fewer than 50 employees).

To promote basmati brands of high exports standards, we need more mid-sized and big mills where achieving economies of scale is possible. But this cannot happen without investment. The private sector and the government must ensure additional investment in rice milling for promoting rice exports, particularly those of basmati.

Exports of non-basmati rice continue to do well, as large paddy outputs in recent years have enabled exporters to build and maintain their exportable inventories at relative low cost. Besides, our exporters are now more capable of exploiting requirement gaps in importing countries as and when they appear — thanks largely to better access to market intelligence in this digital era and real-time interactions with their buyers made possible owing to growing digital communication.

In the first half of this fiscal year, exports of non-basmati varieties soared to 1.63m tonnes from about 1.47m tonnes a year ago, resulting in higher earnings of $658.3m against $535.7m, according to official data.

Exporters optimistic of achieving the 4m tonnes target of rice volume this fiscal year say that rice shipments to Kenya are in full swing. In July-January, Pakistan has exported 284,000 tonnes of the commodity to the African country.

They say that exports to some major buyers like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Afghanistan as well as to European and African markets continue to see a decent rise. An occasional boost in exports to Spain and Bangladesh and some regaining of the lost ground in Chinese markets will also be helpful.

Encouraged by increased export earnings, a leading rice company last week got listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange and announced plans for producing more value-added products like rice glucose and rice protein.

"We're confident that our focus on high-margin products will give us better returns compared to our traditional rice exports," Matco Foods director finance, Faizan Ali Ghori, told the media after the maiden trading of the company's share on the bourse.

He said his company planned to triple its rice glucose and rice protein outputs of 10,000 tonnes and 1,000 tonnes per year with the help of money raised through the initial public offering.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1390293

7.49PC INCREASE IN COTTON PRODUCTION
Dawn, February 20, 2018

Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana

KARACHI: The country managed to produce 7.49 per cent more cotton this season (2017-18) over the corresponding period last year. In total 11.485 million bales were produced up to Feb 15 as against 10.685m bales in last season.

The nominal increase in cotton production is a strong indication that the crop continues to face multiple issues —including less cultivation area and lack of research and development — for the last three consecutive seasons.

“It is encouraging that some improvement in cotton production has been made this season but it cannot be called an achievement because nominal gains and losses in a cash crop like cotton are of no consequence,” said cotton analyst Naseem Usman.

“For three consecutive seasons, the country has been witnessing a failed cotton crop form around 15 million bales in 2014-15 to around 10-11m bales but still no measures were taken to reverse the situation,” he added.

Mr Yasin Siddik, former chairman All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma), said that there was an urgent need for framing new agriculture policy wherein cotton crop should be given preference over other crops.

“The cotton crop has suffered badly because growers are attracted by other crops particularly sugarcane and wheat. This has reduced cotton crop cultivation area. The crop has been neglected at every level for the last so many years,” he added.

He stressed that was an urgent need to increase cotton cultivation area by banning sugarcane and wheat cultivation.

Research work should be carried out to create new cotton seeds with high yield and pest resistance qualities so that the textile industry’s demand of around 14-15m bales could be met, Mr Siddik said.

“These steps are needed as they will help produce exportable surplus and also slash the ever rising import bill of cotton and ease the balance of trade of the country. Above all, through value-addition maximum foreign exchange could be earned,” agreed Shabir Ahmed chairman Pakistan Bedwear Exporters Association (PBEA).

It is encouraging that Sindh recorded double digit growth of 12.32 per cent in cotton production at 4.252m bales compared to 3.785m bales produced in the same period last year. This means that around 466,472 more bales were produced this season.

Against this Punjab recorded 4.84pc growth at 7.233m bales compared to 6.899m bales produced in the corresponding period last season. This resulted in nominal rise in production of 334,015 bales.

There is a drastic fall in phutti (seed cotton) arrival during the last fortnight (Feb 1-15) as only 52,867 bales reached ginneries as against 50,627 bales in the same period last year. Overall only 2,240 more bales were produced during period under review.

According to other details, the textile industry has so far purchased 10.439m bales compared to 9.732m bales lifted by the industry in the corresponding period last season.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1390483

EFFORTS AFOOT FOR ORGANIC COTTON CERTIFICATION

Dawn, February 21st, 2018

Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana

KARACHI: Organic cotton being cultivated in the country will get certification from world agencies next year, a meeting organised by the World Wildlife Fund-Pakistan (WWF-P) and the Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) was informed on Tuesday.

The transformation will take place under the supervision of WWF-P and a certified verifying body, which will inspect the crop's quality.

The meeting was held to discuss the efforts being made to produce certified organic cotton, which is currently being cultivated in Balochistan.

Issues related to seed, production, demand, developing supply chain and linkages between growers and the textile industry were also discussed during the meeting.

WWF-P and Control Union Sri Lanka audited and inspected 500 cotton growers in Lasbela district in 2015, and a three-year organic cotton project was launched in 2016 in Lasbela, Sibi and Barkhan districts. The project aims to improve the income and yield of organic cotton farmers through capacity building.

Organic cotton is grown without chemical fertilisers or pesticides. In fact, the piece of land is also detoxified from residues of chemical fertilisers and pesticides over a period of at least three years. Moreover, the seeds used to grow organic cotton are not genetically modified and are kept clean from chemical impurities.

If the crop adheres to organic cotton farming standards for three years, the yield is certified as organic cotton. The type is gaining popularity among health-conscious consumers and world's leading brands. Besides, value-added textile products made by organic cotton fetch higher prices.

Pakistan initially expects to produce around 50,000 bales of organic cotton, mostly from Balochistan. In due course, it would be spread to other areas of the country. The country currently imports around 400,000 bales of organic cotton, mostly from India.

But there is an urgent need to produce this cotton at home, as most of the world's leading brands plan to stop buying products made from conventional cotton by 2025.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1390649/efforts-afoot-for-organic-cotton-certification

FARMERS DEMAND OFFICIAL PRICE FOR SUGAR CANE
Dawn, February 21st, 2018

KARACHI: Sugar cane farmers criticising the lethargic attitude of the Sindh government have demanded that the official rate of Rs182 per 40 kilograms for sugar cane be paid to them.

Speaking at a press conference at the Karachi Press Club on Tuesday, the farmers' representatives Ali Palh and Javed Junejo said that between 100 and 150 farmers belonging to various farmers' organisations had sat on hunger strike for three days — from Sunday to Tuesday — at the KPC to press for the acceptance of their demands, but these were not accepted.

They said the Supreme Court had ordered that Rs182 be paid for 40kg of sugar cane and the Sindh government had also notified that official rate, but a majority of sugar mills were not paying the official rate.

They said that as most of the sugar mills were owned/controlled/managed by a group having connections with a highly influential top political family of the province, the government was not taking any action against the mills which were not paying the official price.

They said that many of the mills were exploiting the poor farmers and purchasing the sugar cane through their agents/middlemen at a price as low as Rs100 per 40kg. They said that another major issue being faced by the farmers having lands at the tail ends of the irrigation system was the direct watercourse connections from the canals which the Supreme Court had ordered to be closed down, as they caused water shortages in canals and as a result water did not reach the tail end of the system and lands there were affected.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1390637/farmers-demand-official-price-for-sugar-cane

THREE RIVAL SUGAR MILLS UNSEALED IN SOUTH PUNJAB
Dawn, February 22nd, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday unsealed three rival sugar mills in south Punjab when the five existing and operational mills failed to reach an agreement on finding a via media for lifting the available sugarcane crop from the farmers at the government price of Rs180 per maund.

“Primarily the best interest of the farmers is a predominant factor,” Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar observed while ordering to unfreeze the three mills while hearing a plea raised by the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad before a three-judge bench.

The sugar mills which will commence operation instantly are Haseeb Waqas Sugar Mills Ltd, Chaudhry Sugar Mills Ltd and Ittefaq Sugar Mills.

At the last hearing on Feb 19, the apex court had ordered the owners of JDW Sugar Mills, Hamza Sugar Mills, Rahim Yar Khan Sugar Mills, Indus Sugar Mills and Ashraf Sugar Mills, Cane Commissioner Sanaullah and District Commissioner Rahim Yar Khan Suqrat Aman Rana to sit with the growers and come out with a workable solution to end the prevalent crisis and unrest among the farmers.

A meeting was held at the office of senior counsel Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, the legal counsel representing JDW Sugar Mills of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader Jahangir Khan Tareen.

Earlier, these sugar mills had given an undertaking to the Supreme Court to lift sugarcane at Rs180 per maund.

Aitzaz Ahsan explained before the court that the sugar mills had held out the assurance to the farmers during the meeting that they would lift the entire crop within the crushing season.

The chief justice made it clear that the court would not pass any order on the directions of Jahangir Tareen.

Advocate Syed Javed Anwar Shah, representing the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, argued before the court that the farmers were so dejected that they intended not to grow sugarcane in future. He urged the court to allow the rest of the three sugar mills to function and allow them to buy the sugarcane at the rate of Rs160 per maund.

In response, the chief justice ordered unsealing of the mills with a direction that they would maintain specific record of all the transactions and the court would take up the matter every month and whenever it felt appropriate would seal the mills again.

The court also relieved the other five mill-owners from the earlier commitment to lift the sugarcane at Rs180 per maund.

The court said that when confronted what would be the loss if the mills were unsealed, no cogent reasons were advanced except citing the Lahore High Court judgement which had sealed the three mills.

In its order of Sept 11, 2017, the high court had ordered the three mills to dismantle and relocate their establishment from Bahawalpur and postponed further proceedings till April when the sugar crushing season would have ended. That judgement had been suspended by the Supreme Court on Jan 11, 2018.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1390944

BANKS DISBURSE RS500BN AGRI LOANS IN 7 MONTHS
Business Recorder, 22 February 2018

Rizwan Bhatti

KARACHI: With a 42 percent hefty growth, banks disbursed some Rs 500 billion on account of agricultural credit during the first seven months (July-Jan) of this fiscal year (FY18).

According to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), commercial banks, specialized banks, Islamic banks, domestic private banks, microfinance banks and microfinance institutions have cumulatively disbursed some Rs 499.645 billion during July-Jan of this fiscal year compared to Rs 351.358 billion in the same period of last fiscal year (FY17), depicting an increase of Rs 148.287 billion.

The agri credit disbursement statistics are very encouraging, as the State Bank has set all-time high target of Rs one trillion of credit disbursement for FY18 compared to Rs 700 billion for FY17. The set target is some 43 percent higher than previous year.

In addition, with this disbursement, banks have achieved some 50 percent of the overall annual target of Rs 1 trillion. With fresh disbursement, the outstanding portfolio (principal) of agri loan also increased to Rs 444.465 billion by the end of January 2018 compared to Rs 367.547 billion at the end of January 2017.

Bankers said affordable bank credit along with better availability of basic inputs such as fertilizer, seeds, pesticides and government support prices would provide the needed support to agricultural sector particularly Rabi crop.

They said that SBP has already adopted a long-term strategy to disburse maximum amount under the agri credit to facilitate farmers, while banks are also making all-out efforts for their targets following the SBP's guidelines.

The SBP is closing monitoring the banks' performance, besides follow-up of indicative targets with the top management of banks and their agricultural heads to achieve Rs 1 trillion target this year.

The detailed analysis shows that encouragingly, in addition to traditional formal channels, disbursements through microfinance banks and institutions are also picking up pace.

Five large banks collectively disbursed agri loans of Rs 255.209 billion or 49 percent of their annual target in July-Jan of FY18. The disbursed amount is some 44 percent higher than Rs 177.711 billion disbursement made during the corresponding period last year.

Under specialized banks, ZTBL disbursed Rs 42.569 billion (34 percent of its annual target) and PPCBL achieved 37 percent of its target by disbursing Rs 5.616 billion during the period under review.

Fourteen domestic private banks as a group achieved 50 percent of the target and disbursed some Rs 100.27 billion in first seven months of this fiscal year. Five Islamic banks as a group disbursed agri loans of Rs 8.745 billion or 43.73 percent of their annual target of Rs 20 billion during the period under review.

Some 11 microfinance banks disbursed Rs 71.08 billion and achieved 71 percent of annual target of Rs 100 billion. Microfinance Institutions achieved 64 percent of the target with Rs 16 billion agri credit disbursement.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/22/22-page/701351-news.html

PRODUCTION OF CORN SEEDS: PAKISTAN TO ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY
Business Recorder, 24 February 2018

LAHORE: In a major boost to food security of the country, Pakistan is poised to become self-sufficient in production of corn hybrid seeds.

The local seed companies have developed high yielding corn varieties while the local scientists of national companies associated with Seed Association of Pakistan (SAP) have emerged victorious by topping the National Uniform Yield Trials (NUYT) conducted by National Agriculture Research Council (NARC) for the last two years, claimed Shafiq Ur Rehman of Seed Association of Pakistan here on Friday.

Briefing Journalists at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shafiq claimed that these trials are conducted in an impartial manner on ten different sites including lands of public sector research institutions, private local and multinational seed companies. Some of these multinational seed companies are world leaders in maize seed research and development.

Giving details of national seed competition, he said, three corn hybrids namely SB-9663, SB-9617 & SB-9618 of a national seed company Kissan Seed Corporation got top three positions in competition of Yellow Maize Hybrids in spring 2017.

The highest production recorded by these locally produced seeds was as high as 10.265 tons per hectare, he added. This record production is more than double of the present average corn production in the country.

Similarly, he maintained, another hybrid seed variety namely CS-240 from a national company Petal Seed Company of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) produced top yield and got first position in NUYT competition of Yellow and White Maize Hybrids in spring 2016, producing average production of 9.905 tons per hectare. SAP spokesman was of the view that these promising results show that local competitive genetic material (germplasm) is sufficiently available in the country to produce high-quality hybrid corn seeds for the spring season. Presently, we are importing these hybrid corn seeds from various countries, spending billions of rupees foreign exchange, he explained.

Shafiq, who is CEO of KSC, elaborated that locally produced hybrid seed was already acclimatized to local conditions as well as have vigor to resist against pest and disease attacks. Especially, unlike foreign competing seed varieties, locally produced corn hybrids are capable of tolerating high temperatures, he said and adding such characteristics of local hybrid seeds have brighten the prospects of multiplying the maize production in the country.

This seed is available to the farmers at affordable prices, he maintained. He proudly said that out of about 200 members, many SAP companies are conducting basic seed research for developing genetic material. We have been blessed with huge genetic material for breeding of hybrid seed in addition to running processing units and a network of state of the art seed testing labs.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/24/19-page/701703-news.html

‘AGRICULTURE IS BACKBONE OF PAKISTAN’S ECONOMY’
Business Recorder, 25 February 2018

KARACHI: The Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan’s economy and is an inevitable and integral part to ensure food issue and economic up rise of the country. About 68% of the population engaged in farming directly or indirectly through production, processing and distribution of major agriculture commodities. No body can deny the importance of agriculture in national economy, as it contributes about 21pc of our GDP.

Sindh is the second largest province of Pakistan on the basis of its contribution to agriculture production of the country. It produces wheat, cotton, rice, sugarcane, fruits and vegetables. Along with those Chilies, Onion, Dates and Rice are the key crops of Sindh and for the development of these crops Sindh Agricultural Growth Project (SAGP) project is working with the assistance of World Bank in fifteen districts of Sindh. It is mentioned by Hidayatullah Chhajro Project Director SAGP.

He further mentioned that SAGP would contribute to more inclusive growth by prioritizing support to small and medium sized producers who are trying to compete in horticulture (chili, onion and dates) and rice markets. The project would reach to approximately 112,000 farmers covering over 66,000 ha. Chhajro described that the activities of the project Capacity building of the farmers through trainings and exposure visits and supply of agricultural equipment on subsidy to the farmers. SAGP is providing equipment up to 70 percent subsidy to the farmers.—PR

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/25/17-page/701933-news.html

CORN HYBRID SEEDS: PAKISTAN SET TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT
The Express Tribune, February 24th, 2018.

In what would be a major boost to food security of the country, Pakistan is poised to become self-sufficient in production of corn hybrid seeds.

Local seed companies have outperformed foreign competitors in research and development, producing highest-yielding corn varieties, claimed a Pakistan official.

Local scientists of national companies associated with the Seed Association of Pakistan (SAP) have emerged victorious by topping the National Uniform Yield Trials (NUYT) conducted by National Agriculture Research Council (NARC) for the last two years, claimed SAP member Shafiqur Rehman on Friday.

Briefing members of Agriculture Journalists Association (AJA) at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shafiq said that these trials were conducted in an impartial manner on 10 different sites. Some of these multinational seed companies are world leaders in maize seed research and development. The results were announced this month.

Giving details, he said three corn hybrids namely SB-9663, SB-9617 & SB-9618 of a national seed company, Kisan Seed Corporation, earned the top three positions in a competition of yellow maize hybrids in spring 2017. The highest production recorded by these locally produced seeds was as high as 10.3 tons per hectare, he added.

Similarly, he maintained, another hybrid seed variety namely CS-240 from a national petal seed company of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) produced the top yield and got first position in the competition of yellow and white maize hybrids in spring 2016, producing average production of 9.9 tons per hectare.

The SAP spokesman said that these promising results show that locally competitive genetic material (germ plasm) is sufficiently available in the country to produce high-quality hybrid corn seeds for the spring season. Presently, we are importing these hybrid corn seeds from various countries, spending billions of rupees, he added.

“Out of about 200 members, many SAP companies are conducting basic seed research for developing genetic material,” he said.

“We have been blessed with huge genetic material for breeding of hybrid seeds in addition to running processing units and a network of state of the art seed testing labs.”

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1643107/2-corn-hybrid-seeds-pakistan-set-become-self-sufficient/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 12TH TO FEBRUARY 18TH 2018

TUNNEL FARMING GAINS POPULARITY IN SIALKOT

Business Recorder, 12 February 2018

SIALKOT: Tunnel farming technology for vegetable production is being popular among the small growers and farmers in Sialkot district.

Sources in Agriculture department told Business Recorder on Sunday that over 1500 small farmers have adopted tunnel farm technology on their expanse in Sialkot, Daska, Pasrur and Sambrial tehsils of the district. More farmers are considering to opting this technology keeping in view the economic benefits in the district and contacting with Agriculture department for obtaining information and guidance for starting tunnel farming technology. Keeping in view the popularity, the Punjab government has decided to provide 50 percent subsidy to the growers for installation of tunnel farming technology in the Province.

The experts of Agriculture department are extending full cooperation and assistance to the interested farmers in this regard. Some progressive farmers have successfully installed walk-in and low tunnels in Sialkot, Daska, Sambrial and Pasrur tehsils of the district and cultivating off-season vegetables like cucumber, tomato, green chilly, paprika, pumpkin, bitter gourd, watermelon and melons etc.

The tunnel technology had paved the way for bringing revolutionary changes in agriculture sector not only enabling the growers to produce off-season vegetables but also for improving their economic condition. When contacted Maqsood Jutt and Aslam Akhtar Choudary the progressive farmers said that we are successfully attaining the yield of off-season vegetables and gaining better return of crops adding that farmers community had installed “walk in and low tunnels” without the finical support of the Provincial government. The per acre yield of vegetables cultivated under tunnel farming technology is much higher as compared to traditional farming and growers community had focus attention on adopting this technology for getting better return of the crops they said.

They foresees that tunnel farming technology would not only help in improving the economic conditions of the grower community but also supportive in bringing revolutionary changes in agriculture sector while people would be able to get off season vegetables round the year. It may be mentioned that under tunnel farming technology the crops are cultivate in a set temperature for attaining maximum output of the vegetables and fruit as a result the farmers could get maximum profit by selling the vegetables and fruit before season.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/12/5-page/699362-news.html

SUGAR MILLERS NOT COMPLYING WITH COURT ORDER ON CANE PRICE: SCA

Dawn, February 12th, 2018

HYDERABD: The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has expressed concern over the fact that sugar mills do not pay the price of Rs160/40kg for sugar cane as was fixed by the Sindh High Court (SHC).

A SCA meeting chaired by Syed Shah Nawaz Shah, chamber's senior vice president, observed that sugar mills were procuring sugar cane at the rate of Rs130/40kg. It urged the judiciary to take notice of the violation of this order. It said farmers were facing a difficult situation during the ongoing sugar cane crushing season.

The meeting observed that farmers were suffering huge losses as their crop was being purchased at a very low price, adding that sugar millers were exploiting sugar cane growers. The meeting was informed that due to belated harvesting of sugar cane in Sindh, the sowing of wheat crop was badly affected.

Given the situation, the meeting feared that productivity of the wheat crop would also be affected. It said the sugar mill mafia was not ready to obey the court orders as well as government's directives. After repeatedly challenging the writ of government, sugar mills were not complying with court's orders. It urged judiciary to ensure implementation of its orders for payment of Rs160/40kg sugar cane.

The meeting asked the Sindh government to finalise a plan for procurement of wheat and distribution of gunny bags among growers so that corruption in distribution of bags could be stopped.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1632416/1-sca-accuses-sugar-mills-association-violating-shc-orders/

POTATO FARMERS OPTIMISTIC
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, February 12th, 2018

Ahmad Faraz Khan

WITH the potato harvest and its exports gaining momentum, both farmers and exporters are counting the pluses and minuses of the season that lies ahead.

While most of them hope positive factors will outweigh the negative ones in the end, the next two weeks are crucial for domestic prices and export volumes.

So far, the situation seems promising, in terms of both yields and rates. According to official figures, the area under potato cultivation in Punjab increased by around five per cent to 421,000 acres this year.

This gain came owing to better rates last year which helped farmers make some money after two years of big losses.

The province expects the yield to go up to 3.8 million tonnes this season from 3.6m tonnes last year on the back of larger acreage.

The farmers, however, put both figures higher, at 450,000 acres and 4m tonnes.

"Only Okara district has sown potatoes on 157,000 acres this year," says Chaudhry Maqsood Ahmad, president of the Potato Growers Association.

All adjoining districts (Kasur, Sahiwal, Pakpattan and Vehari) now form the core potato belt, and the crop is spreading even to peripheral districts like Faisalabad. The Okara market receives well over 30,000 bags a day for the last two weeks, even as the skin of potato is not fully mature, he says.

As for prices, the current rate of a 100-kilogram bag in central Punjab markets ranges between Rs1,200 and Rs1,500, depending on the variety, quality and packing. This is a favourable price in the beginning of the season when prices are usually low.

Two years ago, the rates at this point of time were Rs700 per bag. But prices doubled last year, a trend which has continued this season as well.

At the same time, however, farmers fear a glut in the next two weeks when harvest picks up pace.

They also worry that a surplus crop of around 1.4m tonnes — given the average domestic consumption of 2.5m tonnes and exports of 80,000 to 120,000 tonnes — could take prices down if not disposed of to foreign markets.

One consolation for farmers has always been informal trade with Afghanistan and Iran, which absorb an undefined but massive quantity and help sustains the price, exporters say. However, this informal trade faces two risks this year.

First, Afghanistan, which has of late built new national highways with the help of the United States, has now reportedly restricted the weight of trawlers carrying potatoes to 30 tonnes per truck from 40 to 45 tonnes normally transported from Pakistan.

This has increased freight charges by almost 30 per cent as transporters charge money per trawler, not per tonne.

Second, Afghanistan has started sowing potatoes as well after it has developed local water resources in certain parts of the country. Iran also has had a good crop this year.

How much these two factors will affect Pakistan’s potato crop will become clear in the next few weeks. But prospects on the formal side of the trade are brightening up, in terms of both infrastructure and new markets.

In the last two years, many kinno exporters who know the supply and export chain have started setting up their processing units in potato-growing areas.

The number of these processing units has increased to 40 — most of them being built in the last one year. Cold storages have also been set up in central Punjab, some having a capacity of up to half a million bags. These huge infrastructural developments provide massive platform for potato exports this year.

The process is further facilitated by the Potato Growers’ Society when it started hosting officials of the federal Plant Protection Department for three months at Okara.

The officials issue phytosanitary certifications required for exports — skipping lengthy and costly inspections, and then unloading and loading at the Karachi port. Practically, this means linking fields directly to the world markets.

The real fears of farmers, however, do not come from market factors but from the government's three-pronged potato policy, which farmers say works against them.

Whenever prices start going up, the government either bans exports or allows duty-free imports from a neighbouring country or unleashes the district administration at the retail sector to keep rates down.

Farmers say they can deal with market realities, but the government should reconsider its policy that ends up throwing a spanner in the works.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1388635/potato-farmers-optimistic

FARM LOANS RISE, BUT PUNJAB TAKES THE LION'S SHARE
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, February 12th, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

IN the last fiscal year, Punjab claimed the lion's share — about 88 per cent — of agricultural loans while the three smaller provinces and two federating units got just 12pc in aggregate.

In the current fiscal year, Sindh's share in these loans is set to increase substantially, but Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan may not be as lucky.

Banks made more loans to the agriculture sector during the first half of this fiscal year, but it is difficult to say whether they can meet the ambitious full-year lending target of Rs1 trillion.

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Tariq Bajwa, however, thinks meeting this target is possible. He shared his optimism at a recent meeting of the Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) on the basis of the half-yearly performance of banks, which lent Rs432 billion to the agriculture sector during the period compared to Rs302bn a year earlier.

Since agricultural credit remains higher in the second half of a fiscal year, the SBP chief's optimism makes sense. But regardless of whether banks can meet the first-ever Rs1tr lending target, geographical discrepancies in the disbursement of agricultural loans remain.

Provincial breakdown of half-yearly lending data is not yet out, but bankers boast that they have accelerated agricultural lending in Sindh and other smaller provinces during this fiscal year.

Figures for the first quarter (July to September) show that fresh flows of of such loans in Sindh swelled to Rs19.4bn from Rs10.9bn in the same quarter of last year. However, as a percentage of total quarterly agricultural lending, the province's share has improved only modestly to 12.4pc from 10.5pc.

According to Sindh-based growers, larger loans to ginneries on the back of a bumper cotton crop expanded agricultural lending to the province in the quarter. Since ginning loans are expected to remain high during the second quarter as well and general demand for farm loans is growing, agricultural credit flows in the province should remain thicker in the current fiscal year than in the previous year, they add.

But growers' lobby groups say, and bankers involved in farm lending agree, that the province's share in the country's total agricultural credit would not see any dramatic increase over the last year's share of 10.1pc.

During the ACAC meeting, the SBP chief noted an increase in agricultural lending in Sindh, but kept emphasising the need for replicating it in other smaller provinces as well, sources privy to the meeting say.

"In case of Sindh, improvement in lending should remain strong throughout this fiscal year," says the head of agricultural credit of a large local bank. "But no big change is in sight in case of Balochistan, KP, AJK or Gilgit-Baltistan, not at least during the current year."

Banks can raise lending volumes this year, he says, but adds that such an increase would look greater only in terms of percentage due to low-base effect.

A participant of the ACAC meeting laments that agriculturists in Sindh have long been getting a smaller share (ranging between 9pc and 12pc) in agricultural loans, far less than the province's contribution (of no less than 20pc) in Pakistan's overall agriculture.

He speculates that Sindh's share in total agricultural lending might increase to 13-15pc in this fiscal year, but even than it would fall short of farmers' requirements and the province's expectation on the basis of its contribution to national agriculture.

Bankers cite a few reasons that have led to an unusually high concentration of agricultural lending in Punjab. These include the province's ability to help farmers become more creditworthy.

"No financial institution lends on the basis of prejudices. It's all about credit history (of borrowers) and their creditworthiness," says the head of a local bank, dismissing the notion that banks deliberately ignore smaller provinces and federating units.

He and some other bankers say that land-title issues are more complex and agriculture-based businesses are less developed in Sindh and Balochistan than in Punjab. Besides, in Sindh and KP traditional money lenders and big landlords have an old relationship history with poor farmers who cannot break away from this relationship for fear of societal and cultural repercussions.

Executive of commercial banks say these factors make it difficult for them to offer farm loans freely and generously in Sindh and KP. Microfinance banks, however, have no such qualms, and their agricultural lending is growing fast not only in Punjab but also in Sindh, KP and elsewhere, their officials claim.

In the case of KP and Balochistan, the past years of militancy and terrorism also continue to take a heavy toll on all economic activities including banking, bankers say. But growers insist this is only partially true as banks have been ignoring these provinces even before the rise of militancy and terrorism. Historical data also substantiate their complaint.

In Balochistan, the small banking footprint is also because of the sparse population of the province which makes it unfeasible for banks to set up branches. The rise of digital banking is addressing this issue and bankers hope that branchless banking will make up for the low number of bank branches in a particular district or province.

As for Punjab, officials of the agriculture department say that farmer-friendly policies introduced in the recent past keep agricultural lending high in the province.

They say the recent surge in the number of agricultural loan takers in Punjab shows that small growers and small-scale dairy farmers of the province have become more proactive.

In July-September, the number of agricultural loan takers in Punjab shot up to about 579,000 from 316,000 in the year-ago period.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1388637

AMENDMENTS PROPOSED TO AGRI-LOAN ACT
Dawn, February 14th, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Amendments to the 'Loans for Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Purposes Act of 1973' were proposed by the inter-ministerial committee (IMC) on Tuesday.

The committee meeting was chaired by Privatisation Minister Daniyal Aziz.

The amendments to the said act were initiated by the Ministry of Finance in a cabinet meeting held on Jan 29.

Mr Aziz emphasised the need to revamp the entire policy regarding loans. This will help in opening the doors to allied sectors for sustainable growth of national economy, he said.

He suggested that the requirement for provision of produce index unit (PIU) for agricultural loans should be removed in order to simplify the procedure. At the same time, an agricultural advisory committee must be formulated in order to streamline the matters relating to agricultural loans, the committee proposed.

The minister directed the heads of financial institutions to pay attention to provide financial services to other sectors of national economy for rapid and balanced economic growth in the country.

He called upon the financial institutions to enhance their outreach in rural areas of the country.

He also stressed the need for channelising remittances and utilising them for productive measures.

The minister said that all banks and microfinance institutions would be taken on board to prepare a comprehensive report which would be submitted in cabinet meeting for approval. The meeting was held to deliberate on the future course of action regarding proposed amendments in the act.

The IMC was formulated by the cabinet after the submission of summary by Finance Division related to the announcement made by the then finance minister Ishaq Dar which proposed enhancing the rate of PIU from Rs4,000 to Rs 5,000.

The initiative was meant to facilitate farmers in terms of credit incurred from banks. The proposal could be materialised only after an amendment in Section (5) 1 of the Loans for Agriculture Purposes Rules, 1973.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1389248/amendments-proposed-to-agri-loan-act

CABINET REFUSES TO SCRAP SUGARCANE PURCHASE RECEIPT SYSTEM
The Express Tribune, February 14th, 2018.

The cabinet has turned down a request to revoke the previous Pakistan Peoples Party government's step for timely payments to sugarcane growers and avoiding manipulation by the influential millers.

The request had been made by the Ministry of Industries and Production in a summary which was taken up for review in the cabinet's meeting on January 31.

Cabinet members opposed the summary, insisting that the existing cane purchase receipt mechanism, which converts the receipt into bank cheque, would support documentation of the agriculture sector and safeguard the interest of growers. They suggested that the sponsoring division should carefully re-examine the proposal in relation to the role of federal government in the matter.

The summary came as a surprise for the cabinet members who noted that almost all key stakeholders including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Federal Board of Revenue and State Bank of Pakistan had supported the mechanism that called for printing the sugarcane purchase price and quantity on the cash receipt.

Apart from these stakeholders, cane commissioners of Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, Kisan Board – a representative body of farmers – and provincial governments had also endorsed the system.

During discussions, it was pointed out that the Ministry of Industries and Production had consulted all stakeholders, but the Law and Justice Division and the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association had serious reservations about the mechanism.

Consequently, the conversion of cane purchase receipts into cheques could not be agreed upon and implemented as per decision of the cabinet.

In February 2012, the cabinet had decided that the cane purchase receipts issued by the sugar millers would be converted into bank cheques. It was also agreed that the sugarcane purchase price and quantity would be printed on the receipts.

However, in November 2013, the sugar barons attempted to get the decision withdrawn following opposition from the Law Division.

The Cabinet Division resisted the move as in terms of Rule 24 of the Rules of Business 1973 the cabinet's decisions should be implemented in letter and spirit.

But the PML-N government did not implement the system, instead it doled out billions of rupees to the sugar millers on account of export subsidy.

The Economic Coordination Committee of the cabinet, in its meeting held in December last year, approved a minimum additional benefit of Rs15 billion for the millers through purchase of 300,000 tons from their surplus stock.

Total hit to the public exchequer, both federal and provincial, would be at least Rs20.4 billion due to the cost of subsidy on sugar exports. This was in addition to the benefit of Rs30 billion that the millers would get by claiming Rs20 per kg in subsidy on the export of 1.5 million tons.

Farmers have been left at the mercy of the millers who earlier refused to buy sugarcane during the current season. Even the apex court had to intervene to resolve the matter.

Now, according to the farmers, the millers are paying for less than the actual weight of sugarcane as well as lower-than-set prices. Farmers say many of them are getting Rs140 per 40 kg of sugarcane, far lower than the support price of Rs180 per 40 kg.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1634206/2-cabinet-refuses-scrap-sugarcane-purchase-receipt-system/

PAKISTAN, CANADA TO SETTLE AGRO-EXPORTS FUMIGATION ISSUE
Dawn, February 15th, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Canada have agreed to find a solution to the long-standing fumigation issue of agro-based exports to Pakistan which amount to C$600 million.

During a meeting between Commerce Minister Pervaiz Malik and Canadian Minister for Agriculture and Agri-food, Lawrence MacAulay, in Ottawa on Tuesday, it was decided that instead of relying on ad-hoc arrangements, a permanent science-based solution should be worked out for the issue.

Mr MacAulay appreciated the economic progress Pakistan has made during the last five years and agreed to provide fresh impetus to cooperation in the agriculture field, and offered technical support to Pakistan in all areas of agro-based industry as well as a robust interaction for exchange of high level delegations in order to remove the constraints and irritants related to the fumigation issue.

While appreciating Canada's cooperation for construction of dams and irrigation system since the 1960s, Mr Malik said that it is time for Canada to extend its support in forestry, fishing, heavy agricultural machinery and other areas of agricultural cooperation.

He said that Pakistan is an emerging economy with over 5 per cent growth rate, and offers a promising market for Canadian investments in agriculture sector.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1389420

INDONESIA LIFTS QUOTA RESTRICTIONS ON PAKISTANI KINNOW
The Express Tribune, February 15th, 2018.

Iran's Bank Milli and National Bank of Pakistan will open their branches in each other's country, but so far no significant progress has been made.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a landmark development, had signed an agreement with the Central Bank of Iran to formally execute bilateral trade transactions. However, despite the agreement, no private bank in Pakistan is willing to open letters of credit for trade with Iran which faces US sanctions due to its alleged nuclear programme, which Tehran vehemently denies.

The two countries have also established Pak-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce recently, which is working on the possibility of using local currencies in bilateral trade.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1634897/2-curbs-iranian-fruit-import-pakistan-exporters-fear-retaliation/

SUGARCANE GROWERS: CABINET DECIDES TO RESOLVE ISSUES AT CCI LEVEL
Business Recorder, 15 February 2018

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet has decided to resolve issues of sugarcane growers at the level of Council of Common Interests (CCI) which is also represented by provincial Chief Ministers, well informed sources told Business Recorder.

This issue came under discussion at the federal cabinet held on February 6, 2018 presided over by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi who personally has received complaints from the growers and from his cabinet colleagues from Sindh.

The source said, the cabinet was informed that sugarcane growers were facing a crisis-like situation, as the sugar mills were not paying them the fixed support price announced by the provincial governments. And some sugar mills were withholding all payments to the farmers.

The cabinet was apprised that the production of sugar was surplus in the country. Furthermore, sugarcane was a water-intensive crop, which put serve stress on the resources of an increasingly water scarce country like Pakistan. Due to distorted incentives provided by the government, sugar is now being increasingly grown in the cotton-growing areas.

The cabinet was further informed that the role of federal government in relieving the difficulties faced by the sugarcane growers also came up under discussion.

It was highlighted during the cabinet meeting that this was primarily a provincial subject and if the federal government would like to resolve it, the issue should be raised at the level of Council of Common Interests (CCI).

After detailed discussions, the cabinet directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to prepare a summary for the CCI and place it before the CCI for consideration and joint decision by the federal government and the provinces.

The Cabinet also urged the Provincial Governments to ensure timely payment of support price fixed by them to the sugarcane growers to redress their grievances.

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) has already formulated National Food Security Policy envisaging measures to introduce changes in the country's cropping system and reducing area under rice and sugarcane crops for cultivation of high value crops, such as oilseeds, pulses, soybean, horticulture crops and fodder.

The policy is with the Cabinet Division and on the agenda of the federal cabinet but was not considered probably due to paucity of time.

According to sources, the CCI in its last meeting decided that since agriculture is devolved to the provinces, the federal government does not have any role in sugarcane issues including fixation of sugarcane price from next year. The provincial governments were directed to deal with the subject individually. However, since the growers are not being paid the announced price of sugarcane, this issue is being taken up at different federal and provincial levels.

Textile Division has also proposed that provinces should stop granting permission for setting up new sugar mills in the cotton growing areas that accounts for a decline in cotton plantation. The sources said increase in number of sugar mills with enhancement in crushing capacity of existing mills in major cotton growing areas has resulted in 22 percent reduction in cotton areas over the last 10 years.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/15/1-page/699891-news.html

LCCI HOLDS SEMINAR ON 'HIGH VALUE AGRICULTURE': NEED STRESSED FOR REFORMS IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR
Business Recorder, 15 February 2018

Muhammad Saleem

LAHORE: Speakers at a seminar called for introducing reforms in the agriculture sector to bring much-needed surge in per acre yield of different crops.

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) organised a seminar on "High Value Agriculture" here at the Chamber on Wednesday. The LCCI President Malik Tahir Javaid, CEO Yuksel Seeds, Aqub Yuksel, Convener LCCI Standing Committee on Mechanized and High Value Agriculture Mian Shafqat Ali, ex-vice Chancellor Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi Dr. Rai Niaz Ahmed, Dr. Khawaja Asif, Mian Shaukat Ali, Faisal Iqbal Sheikh and Naeem Hanif also spoke on the occasion.

The speakers maintained that there is a dire need for reforms in agriculture sector and addition in cropped area as we cannot afford to stay where we are today in terms of cropped areas and per hectare yield because we are already running well short of per capita food availability.

They said that yield gap in the four major crops of Pakistan is three-time from the best producers in the world such as China and Egypt. Low yield has contributed to the poverty in rural areas besides forcing country to import agriculture produces to feed its population, they added.

Speaking on the occasion, the LCCI President Malik Tahir Javaid said that the agriculture sector of Pakistan continues to be the single largest and dominant driving force for growth which contributes almost 19.5 percent in GDP. This sector is the main source of livelihood for 42.3 percent of total labour force despite this fact that agriculture mechanization in Pakistan is very limited, he said, adding: "Area under cultivation for important crops account for 23.85 percent of the value-added in overall agriculture. Wheat accounts for 9.6 percent of the total value-added in agriculture and cotton production was 10.67 million bales." For the sake of increasing the share of agriculture sector in GDP, the present area of cultivation has to be increased on war-footing basis, he insisted.

Malik Tahir Javaid said that due to lack of technology usage in agriculture sector, we face the problem of crops yields gaps. The average yields production in the agriculture sector of Pakistan is far below the level of those countries that use the technology in their agriculture sector, he said.

According to him, the level of yields of different crops is 50 percent to 83 percent lower than the average of other countries of the world. Prospects of Pakistan's economic prosperity heavily depend on the performance of agriculture sector.

He said the government is giving subsidy to farmers at various stages for purchasing fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and selling their output at support prices, but still this sector has not succeeded in enhancing the level of productivity, which must be evaluated.

Mian Shaukat Ali said on the occasion that all chambers of Pakistan should pay attention to agriculture so that they can contribute in development of this sector.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/15/13-page/700018-news.html

PAD'S PROJECT TO PROMOTE VARIETIES OF SEEDLESS KINNOW BEGINS
Business Recorder, 15 February 2018

LAHORE: Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) has started a project for five years worth Rs 780 million to promote high yield varieties of seedless Kinnow in Punjab.

PAD will provide free of cost high yield varieties of Kinnow to the farmers belonging to district Sargodha, Toba Tek Singh, Mandibahaud Din, Sahiwal, Vehari and Layyah can apply for this subsidy scheme.

Interested farmers can get application forms free of cost from office of Deputy Director Agriculture (Ext) of their districts or can download it from official website of PAD (www.agripunjab.gov.pk).

It has been directed to interested people for this subsidy scheme has to abide by all the conditions written on application form in this regard. For getting date plants, farmers will have to submit their application forms either by hand or through courier to the office of Director, Horticultural Research Station, Bahawalpur and for seedless Kinnow plants, farmers must submit their application form to office of Director, Citrus Research Institute, Sargodha till February 20, 2018. Interested people in date plants may contact with Agriculture Helpline (0800-15000 or 0800-29000) or Phone Number 062-9255432whereas for seedless Kinnow interested persons can contact on 048-3701312 in this regard.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/15/13-page/700019-news.html

GOVT LOOKS THE OTHER WAY AS SUGAR CANE CRISIS DEEPENS
Dawn, February 17th, 2018

MIRPURKHAS: The Sindh government preferred to look the other way as sugar cane crisis caused by mills' refusal to pay fair price to growers deepened with each passing day, said leader of a growers' organisation here on Friday.

Farmer Organisations Council Sindh chairman Javed Ahmed Junejo said after chairing a joint meeting of FOC, Sindh Agriculture Research Council (SARC), Tail Abadgar Association, Sindh Abadgar Hari Ittehad and Sindh Abadgar Forum at his residence that the five organisations had decided to observe hunger strike outside the Karachi Press Club on Feb 18 to protest against the government's failure to meet their demands.

He warned if their demands remained unmet even after the hunger strike they would be compelled to stage a sit-in outside the Chief Minister House.

Mr Junejo said that Sindh government had failed to force mills to buy cane at the price fixed by Sindh High Court. As a

He said that under a conspiracy against farm sector and growers, the Sindh government had completely ignored the deepening crisis of sugar cane.

The government had done nothing to ensure supply of water up till tail-end areas of canals and stop unscrupulous officials from selling water to influential landlords, he said.

He said that authorities concerned had not de-silted any canal and misappropriated the entire budget for de-silting. In addition, funds for lining of minors and distributaries had also been embezzled, he alleged.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1389823

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 5TH TO FEBRUARY 11TH 2018
FUNDS PROMISED FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CONSTITUENCIES HELD BACK: MINISTERS
Syed Irfan Raza

Dawn, February 07, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Basic civic issues will continue to persist in many parts of the country as Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday turned down the demand of federal ministers for release of development funds for their constituencies.

The ministers attending a federal cabinet meeting, which was presided over by the prime minister, demanded that the promised funds be released for development activities in their constituencies so that they could go again to the people before general elections, a senior federal minister told Dawn.

"As development funds promised for their constituencies had not been released, some cabinet members complained that people have been suffering from basic issues such as water shortage, dilapidated sewerage system and broken roads," he said.

The minister said it had already been decided by the top leadership of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) that no development funds would be given to the individuals (MNAs) as funds would be spent on mega development projects. "Prime Minister Abbasi followed this policy and refused to give development fund to the legislators," he added.

However, it was learnt that some blue-eyed MNAs of the ruling party, including retired Capt Mohammad Safdar, son-in-law of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, had received billions of rupees for development in his constituency. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had taken notice of alleged irregularities in uplift schemes being executed in the constituency of Mr Safdar.

In the past, the Pakistan Peoples Party government used to give funds to lawmakers for development schemes in their respective constituencies.

Taking up the issues being faced by sugar cane growers, the cabinet directed the provincial governments to ensure that sugar mills make prompt payment to farmers as per official rate of sugar cane.

The meeting also approved a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of information between Pakistan and Tajikistan. It also approved the signing of an MoU for cooperation in the field of labour and training between Pakistan and the Sultanate of Oman.

The cabinet approved the signing of arrangements for mutual cooperation in the field of justice administration between Pakistan and Tunisia. It also accorded approval to enforcement of the Costs of Litigation Act, 2017, with effect from March 1.

The meeting also gave approval to the appointment of district and sessions judge Khawaja Wajihuddin as judge of the Banking Court-I, Peshawar, as recommended by the Peshawar High Court chief justice. A proposal regarding appointment of district and sessions judge Syed Kausar Abbas Zaidi as judge of the Special Court (Anti-Terrorism-I), Islamabad, was approved.

A proposal for notifying maximum retail price of various drugs as well as reduction in prices of drugs in line with the Drug Pricing Policy was also approved.

The cabinet directed the Ministry of National Health Services to expedite the process of appointment of regular CEO of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan after appointing Dr Sheikh Akhtar Hussain on the post for a period of three months.

The meeting approved the appointment of members of the board of birectors of Pakistan State Oil and Pakistan Petroleum Limited. The cabinet also accorded approval to the legislation in respect of establishment of Institute of Science and Technology, Bahawalpur.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1387823/funds-promised-for-development-in-constituencies-held-back-ministers

ADP TO PROMOTE HIGH VALUE VARIETIES OF DATES, SEEDLESS KINNOW
Business Recorder, 7 February 2018

LAHORE: Agriculture Department Punjab under special directives of Chief Minister has started a project for five years worth Rs.780 million to promote high value varieties of dates and seedless kinnow in Punjab.

According to implementation status of this program, Agriculture Department will provide free of cost high value varieties of Date plants (Ajwa, Barhee, Amber, Khulas and Midjaul) to the farmers belonging to 9 districts of South Punjab i.e., Bahawalpur, Multan, Jhang, Rahim Yar Khan, DG Khan, Layyah, Muzaffargarh, Bhakkar, and Rajanpur whereas seedless Kinnow plants will be provided in farmers belonging to district Sargodha, Toba Tek Singh, Mandi Bahauddin, Sahiwal, Vehari and Layyah on subsidized rates.

Farmers can apply for this subsidy scheme. Interested farmers can get application forms free of cost from office of Deputy Director Agriculture (Ext) of their districts or can download it from official website of Agriculture Department (www.agripunjab.gov.pk).

Spokesman of the department disclosed that interested people for this subsidy scheme has to abide by all the conditions written on application form in this regard.

For getting date plants, farmers will have to submit their application forms either by hand or through courier to the office of Director, Horticultural Research Station, Bahawalpur and for seedless Kinnow plants farmers must submit their application form to office of Director, Citrus Research Institute, Sargodha till 20th February, 2018.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/07/21-page/698522-news.html

SRI TOI DAM TO IMPROVE FARM PRODUCTIVITY
Dawn, February 5th, 2018

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: A new earth-filled dam for irrigation will emerge on the map of Balochistan aimed at improving the agricultural productivity of the rain-fed area on the tributary of Zhob River.

The proposed Sri Toi Water Storage Dam and irrigation project will be located in Mir Ali Khel Union Council, about 62km northeast of Zhob on Sri Toi River.

The project has been submitted to the Asian Development Bank which is evaluating it for financing. The Balochistan Irrigation and Power Department (BIPD) will execute the project.

It is expected that the construction will cover the command area up to 4,027 hectares, besides ensuring sustained water supply to the present command area, being cultivated on a seasonal basis by growing vegetables and grains.

The proposed reservoir would recharge the subsurface flow of karez, shallow wells and tube-wells, protect the agriculture land and human settlements from devastation of floods during flood seasons and develop grazing zones for livestock. The stored water will support drinking, agriculture purpose and other domestic uses.

The annual average availability of water is nearly 57 million cubic metres with a catchment area of 971 square kilometres. According to the project document, the earth-filled dam will have clay core and will be 66 meters in height on Sri Toi River. A spillway in a length of 135m from the left abutment of the dam will be constructed.

The main objective of the project is supply of irrigation water to the project area. Most of the area can be considered poor, subsistence farming is the economic mainstay, so the project will have a major impact on the welfare of local people.

Agriculture and livestock are main sources of income of local people. The community of the sub-project area is composed mainly of Mando-Khel tribe of Pashtoons. However, the sub-project will have a significant impact on a relatively remote community with a very low level of income. There are significant markets within reach and the area has potential for wheat and vegetables which are able to offer good rates in the market.

Four sites were considered for the proposed dam, however, Sri Toi Water Storage Dam was found to be the best suitable site. The proposed and existing command areas in the selected sub-projects come out to be 4,027 hectares for Sri Toi Dam project. The command areas for Ahmedzai Perennial and Floodwater Irrigation (859 hectares), Sabakzai Dam Irrigation Project (3,350 hectares) and Killi Sardar Akhter — Perennial and Floodwater Irrigation (252 hectares) are again much lower than the selected scheme.

In case the proposed project is not implemented, the socio-economic conditions will not change as such. With the increasing population and scarcity of resources, residents are forced to abandon their homes in search of livelihood and grazing grounds for their cattle stock.

From the environmental perspective, the project site comprising of dam pondage area as well as irrigation channel and proposed land for irrigation are arid in nature having little or no rain and too dry to support vegetation. Water availability is scarce in area hence the proposed project will contribute positively to the project area.

The proposed project aims to elongate time frame and in due course the water storage dam would support ecology in longer time span. The construction of the dam will change land use of the project site. Presently the project site is barren land with low to no vegetation, shrubs or non-migratory ecology species.

It has been estimated that the dead storage capacity that will deplete in the early 10 years is computed as 6.49 million cubic meter. The annual sediment load has been computed as 0.901 million short tons. The life of the dam has been estimated at approximately 80 years.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1387421

CANE GROWERS SUSPEND PROTEST FOR THREE DAYS
Dawn, February 5th, 2018

BAHAWALPUR: The Kissan Ittehad on Saturday night suspended their protest against a sugar mills for three days.

An announcement to the effect was made by the protesters following dialogue with the district administration and police officials.

The Kissan Ittehad activists had staged a sit-in on Saturday against the Ashraf sugar mills to press for the acceptance of their demand to purchase their produce at the government's fixed Rs180 per 40 kilo rate and early payments.

A district administration's team led by SP Rab Nawaz on Saturday night talked to the growers and sought three-day time for fulfillment of their demands.

The Kissan Ittehad office-bearers decided to suspended their protest for three days and threatened that if their demands were not accepted within three days, they would resume their sit-in and block national highway from Bahawalpur to Ahmedpur East.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1387402

SUGAR MILLS IN BADIN CONTINUE TO FLOUT SHC RULING ON CANE PRICE
Hanif Samoon

Dawn, February 05, 2018

BADIN: All operational sugar mills in the district continue to flout with complete impunity Sindh High Court's ruling to pay Rs160 per 40 kilogramme sugar cane to growers and pay only Rs130 per 40kg for current season's cane crop.

Khalil Ahmed Bhurgari, prominent grower from Khoski, told this reporter that on the one hand the mills were buying their crop at only Rs130 per 40kg while on the other they were not making any commitment as to when they would make the payment.

He said that mills were also deducting up to 30 per cent from the total weight of cane on a vehicle on different pretexts. Only the Army Welfare Sugar Mills was promising to clear all outstanding dues of growers "after a few weeks", he said.

Mr Bhurgari accused the leaders of various farmers' organisations of being partial to the ruling party and working as agents of sugar mills. It was great injustice with farmers and Chief Justice of Pakistan should its notice, he said.

Allah Bachayo Rahukro, leader of Laar Abadgar Forum, said that sugar mafia in connivance with PPP government had destroyed small farmers and growers, who were left with no other option but to clear their land of the cane crop and ready it for next crop, forcing them sell off their produce to mills at a throwaway price.

Ghulam Rasool Katiar, a grower from Tando Bago, said that he had supplied some trucks of cane to Talhar sugar mills and since then he was running from pillar to post to get his dues.

Mohammad Hashim, Mustafa Ayaz, Rab Dino and many other farmers from different areas of the district had similar stories to share about mills' excesses.

They said in unison that if the apex court did not come to their rescue they saw no hope and no light at the end of the tunnel in the current situation.

Qamaruddin Shaikh in Mirpurkhas adds: A joint meeting of Farmer Organisation Council (FOC), Sindh Agriculture Research Council (SARC) and Tail Abadgar Association announced on Sunday that five organisations, including them and Sindh Hari and Sindh Abadgar Organisation would hold demonstrations outside press clubs throughout Sindh on Feb 6 over excesses against growers.

The meeting presided over by FOC chairman Javed Ahmed Junejo and attended by grower leaders Zahid Noon, Mukhtiar Narejo, Mohammad Khan Marri, Paras Narejo, Murtaza Otho, Hameed Baloch, Imamuddin Maher and Mir Mohammad Marri slammed Sindh government's failure to enforce a fair sugar cane rate, called for an increase in the number of wheat procurement centers in Mirpurkhas and judicious distribution of gunny sacks among growers.

Mr Junejo said that irrigation authorities had failed to desilt canals, distributaries and minors in Nara Canal command area, despite having required funds at their disposal.

He said that officials were preparing fake bills to misappropriate the funds and said that irrigation authorities had not yet released water into Mithrao Canal but they were supplying water only to the farms of influential persons and political personalities.

He said that large-scale corruption continued unabated in the lining of canals and distributaries despite the fact that Sindh High Court had taken its notice and NAB's inquiry was under way.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1387316/sugar-mills-in-badin-continue-to-flout-shc-ruling-on-cane-price

ABBASI DIRECTS PROVINCES TO SORT CANE GROWERS ISSUES
Dawn, February 9th, 2018

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The centre on Thursday directed provinces to resolve problems confronting farmers – especially sugarcane growers who have not been paid their dues by provincial authorities and mill owners.

In a meeting with Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Minister for National Food Security Syed Ayaz Ali Shah Sherazi apprised the premier that authorities and millers in Sindh were not paying the notified rate fixed by the government to cane growers.

The prime minister said that although the issue of sugarcane growers fell in purview of the provincial government, the federal government and the federal cabinet have taken serious notice of the issue.

"Provinces should fulfil their responsibilities and ensure timely purchase of crops and payment to the growers according to the notified rates," Mr Abbasi said.

Sugarcane was once considered Pakistan's most important cash crop but with the passage of time there has been a great shift in the relationship between farmers and mill owners. The interests of farmers are largely neglected by millers.

There are a host of problems for sugarcane growers at all stages, including environmental damage by mills dumping toxic and untreated pollutants into rivers or the Arabian Sea.

During 2014-15, Sindh's Agriculture Supply and Price Department prescribed the minimum price of sugarcane at Rs182 per 40 kg, vide notification dated April 7, 2014. This annoyed millers who compelled the Sindh government to issue another notification, fixing the minimum price of sugarcane at Rs155 per 40kg.

Interestingly, a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday discussed the issues of cane growers.

The federal cabinet, while showing its concern, directed the provincial governments to fulfil their responsibility towards ensuring prompt payments at notified rates to the farmers by the millers immediately.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1388205/abbasi-directs-provinces-to-sort-cane-growers-issues

PAKISTAN'S WHEAT FARMERS SAVED BY TIMELY WEATHER FORECAST
The Express Tribune, 8 February 2018

In early November last year, Muhammad Islam was surprised by news from the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

The 40-year-old farmer learned that good rains were forecast for the crucial wheat growing months of November and December.

That was important information, as farmers in the northeastern districts of Pakistan's Potohar region had turned away from wheat – a favored and high-earning crop – as unpredictable rains over the last decade led to repeated crop failures.

This year, however, they expect their income to increase as they return to wheat production, after years spent planting some of their land with less lucrative vegetables and tending poultry.

Well-timed seasonal rain forecasts from Pakistan's weather service – something new in the country – are making that possible.

"I would have been, for sure, at a loss and missed the timely wheat plantation, had I ignored the rain forecast … on a local news TV channel," said Islam, who farms 4 acres (1.6 hectares) of land in Bhata, a village about 50 km (30 miles) from Pakistan's capital.

Winter rains that traditionally fell in mid-November came as late as the end of December in 2016, part of a trend of erratic rains that has confounded farmers who are entirely reliant on rainfall because they lack irrigation systems.

But last November the meteorological department correctly forecast rain for early November, giving Islam and farmers like him the opportunity to plough their land and be ready to sow.

Islam planted wheat on half his land in the third week of November, leaving the rest for vegetables. By January 17, he says, the wheat plants had grown to a height of 70 cm, whereas in the past eight years they never grew to more than 10 cm over the same period.

As a result, he and other farmers in the area expect to get at least 1,200 kg of wheat from each acre this year – 30 per cent more than in previous years. Islam reckons this will increase his own income by around 23,000 Pakistani rupees ($210).

Wheat is grown on 22 million acres (9 million hectares) of land in Pakistan – nearly the size of Jordan – 30 per cent of which is rain-fed. Each year, the country produces 25 million tonnes of the crop.

About 3 million tonnes of this is grown on the Potohar plateau, comprising Islamabad and the surrounding districts of Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Jhelum and Attock. The area is characterised by subsistence and smallholding farming.

Farmers usually finish sowing wheat by mid-November, and under normal circumstances two rainy spells in November and December drench the fields, allowing the seeds to germinate.

After two or three more spells of rain in January and February, the harvest begins in April.

But the erratic rainfall of the last decade has pushed farmers to shift to other crops in the Potohar region.

Wheat acreage there has declined by around 30 per cent compared to 10 to 12 years ago, when rains were abundant and predictable and farmers could reliably harvest at least 1,000 kg of wheat per acre, according to the Barani Agriculture Research Institute, a state-run body in Chakwal district.

Many farmers say they struggle to build rainwater harvesting ponds, use groundwater or adopt the latest efficient irrigation technologies.

"Lack of resources and access to technical know-how are major hurdles in our way to our adapting to the rapidly shifting weather patterns," said 65-year-old smallholder wheat farmer Safeer Ahmed, from Gujar Khan.

In response, some have turned to other sources of income like vegetables which require less water and can be irrigated with water fetched from ponds.

"Many traditional wheat growers are gradually … switching over to vegetable, cattle and poultry farming," said Hameed Bhatti, a statistician at the Punjab Agriculture Department in Rawalpindi.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1629249/1-pakistans-wheat-farmers-saved-timely-weather-forecast/

CROP BIOMASS CELL SET UP AT AGRI DEPT
Business Recorder, 9 February 2018

SIALKOT: Under the directives of Punjab Chief Minister a "Crop Biomass" cell has been established in Punjab Agriculture department for assessing the production of crops and estimating biomass for generating electricity from alternative resources in the Punjab.

Sources in Agriculture department told Business Recorder on Thursday that the basic concept of setting up this centre was to evaluate biomass from crops waste and to gather information of waste of important and small crops across the Punjab.

The centre will also coordinate with firms interested in generating electricity from biomass besides centre will also focus attention on research for developing close coordination with national and international institutions having the skill of generating electricity from biomass.

The cell will also find out the ways and means for minimizing the wastage of crops as well as it will made viable recommendations for the protection and transportation of crops waste.

Punjab was producing over 50 million tones of agriculture waste every year out of which 6.44 million tones is sugarcane sediment which was being used by Sugar industry for power generation sources added. Special attention will be accorded on formulating biomass management system and setting up crop waste processing plants in the Punjab sources disclosed.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/09/18-page/698887-news.html

PAD PREPARES STRATEGY FOR GUAVA CULTIVATION
Business Recorder, 9 February 2018

SIALKOT: Punjab Agriculture department (PAD) has prepared a strategy for the promotion of guava cultivation in selected districts of the province. The concept of this programme was to expand the cultivation of guava on large scale in the Punjab and after success of the programme the same will be replicated in other districts of the province. Guava is being consumed by a large number of people in every nook and corner of the country.

Official sources told Business Recorder on Thursday that under the programme demonstration block of guava spreading over 10 acres of land were being developed at tehsil level for making it profitable and to enhance productivity.

The demonstration blocks of guava were being developed in Sialkot, Lahore, Narowal, Gujranwala and Hafizabad districts of the Punjab for the guidance of the growers.

Sialkot, Lahore, Narowal, Gujranwala and Hafizabad districts of the Punjab are potential districts for guava cultivation. The PAD is providing necessary information and guidance to the interested growers of Guava in Sialkot district.

Guava is fourth important fruit of Pakistan while third important fruit of Punjab and under the programme the PAD will extend full cooperation and necessary assistance to the guava growers for the protection of guava farms from pest attack in these districts.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/02/09/18-page/698883-news.html

March 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 26TH TO MARCH 31ST 2018

NO RAY OF HOPE FOR SUNFLOWER

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 26th, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

THE cultivation of sunflower, one of the best alternatives to wheat crop during winter (October to February), has been in decline in Sindh of late, mainly because of lower yields and higher seed prices.

Sunflower production in Sindh, whose coastal belt is considered best for the crop, peaked to nearly 350,000 tonnes in the 2010-11 fiscal year. It dropped to a mere 69,305 tonnes in the previous fiscal year.

Similarly, the area under sunflower cultivation has shrunk to nearly 166,000 acres from around 660,000 acres during the seven-year period.

Punjab has also seen its sunflower production decline over the years. This year, the provincial government has linked the cultivation of oilseed crops of canola and sunflower with subsidy and support price.

The province has launched a two-prong programme this season for farmers under the slogan of gandum khanay kay liye aur oilseed munfay kay liye (wheat for consumption and oilseed for income) to attract them towards oilseed crops. It promised a subsidy of Rs5,000 per acre for sunflower cultivation and a price of Rs2,500 per 40kg in case market prices fall below this benchmark.

Sunflower production in Sindh has dropped from a peak of nearly 350,000 tonnes in 2010-11 to a mere 69,305 tonnes in the previous fiscal year

But policymakers in Sindh have yet to take notice of a persistent decline in the province’s sunflower production. Initial reports from coastal areas indicate that acreage in Thatta has dropped during this season as well.

Sunflower is an exhaustive crop and gets massive nutrients from soil, thus requiring considerable investment in inputs, says a researcher from Islamabad.

Such investment has to obviously increase farmers’ cost of production. This is where the government has to step in and support farmers with an incentives-based programme. For this to happen, the government could curtail its oil import bill to ensure indigenous oilseed production, he says.

Meanwhile, the country’s solvent industry is thriving by importing edible oil, chiefly palm oil, worth more than $2.5 billion a year.

The downfall of sunflower cultivation started after super floods in 2010, in which one-fourth of the country was devastated by floods. In Sindh, two back-to-back massive breaches were reported in

August 2010 — one at the Tori dyke downstream Guddu barrage and the other at Kot Almo embankment downstream Kotri barrage in Thatta.

Besides, the crop has lost its charm for growers amid low productivity and higher input prices.

“Sunflower is not giving required per-acre productivity these days,” says Nadeem Shah, who has been cultivating the crop for the last 15 years. “Moreover, market prices remain lower to make matters worse for us.” Mr Shah has now reduced the area under sunflower cultivation to 40 acres from 200 a few years ago.

Sindh Abadgar Board Vice President Mahmood Nawaz Shah believes that the provincial government should look at ways to increase sunflower cultivation, as it will help it reduce the costs of keeping wheat stocks.

Moreover, researchers should try to find out why the per-acre yield has now plummeted to nearly 400kg from of up to 1,000kg, he says. “Hybrid-seed suppliers tell us there are no issues with seed’s quality. But why we continue to get complaints of lower yields?”

The Sindh Agriculture Research department has recently provided a local variety of sunflower open pollinated (OP) seed to some growers, including Nadeem Shah. His crop is at the flowering stage at present and he anticipates higher yields this time around.

He has sown this seed on 13 acres in Sujawal on a trial basis, and hopes that the OP seed will suit local climatic conditions as compared to the imported hybrid seed which he believes is expensive.

Growers cultivate sunflower on residual moisture in land after paddy is harvested. To compare, land that didn’t get water for any reason after sunflower is sown produces 320kg an acre as compared to 640kg per acre from a land which got one cycle of water.

According to Nadeem Shah’s assessment, a market price of Rs2,500 per 40kg and a yield of 600kg per acre can help growers and peasants earn Rs10,000 per acre.

Mohammad Ibrahim Mughal, chief of Punjab-based Pakistan Agri Forum, believes that Pakistan must focus on oilseed production, especially to overcome a staggering Rs300bn edible oil import bill. He says the government must double import duty on edible oil to force the solvent industry to encourage growers to cultivate oilseed crops with some incentives.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1397458/no-ray-of-hope-for-sunflower

USE OF NATURAL SEEDS FOR AGRICULTURE URGED
The Express Tribune, March 27, 2018

The use of natural seeds for cultivation was stressed at a lecture at the Khanabadosh Writers’ Café in Hyderabad on Sunday.

“The multinationals have introduced hybrid and genetically modified seeds in the global market in the name of green revolution,” said Aga Khan University Assistant Prof Dr Nosheen Ali. According to her, due to the prevailing trend of buying seeds from multinational companies, farmers had abandoned the centuries-old practice of storing natural seeds for sowing in the next season.

Dr Ali cited various research to explain the adverse health effects of the consumption of vegetables and fruits grown from hybrid or genetically modified (GM) seeds. Women suffered more due to such food in comparison to men, she said.

Fifteen countries in Europe have banned both hybrid and GM seeds, the academic said. "But in contrast, poor countries like ours are allowing the free and unchecked sale of these seeds," she added. According to Dr Ali, for multinational companies, the business of hybrid and GM seeds was more profitable than the arms sale of global defence industries.

She argued that the mainstream media and even universities appeared reluctant to highlight the adverse effects of hybrid seeds allegedly due to corporate influence. She said 90% of the cotton being grown in Pakistan and India was allegedly harmful BT cotton. She lamented that no research was being conducted to assess the health effects of such type of cotton.

Dr Ali suggested that seed banks for natural seeds be created to preserve the indigenous crops. She pointed out that natural seeds were still being stored in the arid zones and less developed agricultural areas.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1669862/1-use-natural-seeds-agriculture-urged/

KBP TO STAGE PROTEST DEMO TODAY
Business Recorder, 27 March 2018

LAHORE: The Kisan Board Pakistan (KBP) has announced to stage a protest demonstration on Tuesday, in front of the Punjab Assembly for getting a suitable support price for coming wheat crop.

KBP Central President Ch Nisar Ahmad announced this while talking to media here on Monday.

He alleged that the growers of rice, sugarcane and potato remained at the lowest ebb of the history while input prices had registered upward increase.

He said the government had yet not announced subsidized rates for electricity for agricultural tube wells despite repeated promises. He said the KBP and Jamaat-e-Islami Punjab Chief Mian Maqsood Ahmad will lead the protest.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/27/3-page/707084-news.html

CULTIVATION AREA OF HIGH-YIELD HYBRID RICE LIKELY TO INCREASE
Business Recorder, 27 March 2018

ZAHID BAIG

LAHORE: High yielding hybrid rice area is going to cross 50 percent in three years from present 25 to 30 percent paddy coverage, said Shahzad Ali Malik, Chief Executive Officer of Guard Rice Research & Services Pvt Ltd at a function here the other day.

"All efforts of introducing hybrid rice seed in Pakistan are being commanded by national seed companies mainly in collaboration of Chinese leader in research & development with 'Guard Agri' having the lion's share. Several multinational seed companies tried to introduce hybrid rice seed but failed to outperform national seed companies. Their varieties were less rewarding for farmers due to lack of jump in production while seed cost was also high if compared with what local seed companies were offering", Shahzad Ali Malik divulged to members of Agriculture Journalists Association (AJA).

Malik, who is founding President of Seed Association of Pakistan (SAP) and ex-president of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) and also former chief of Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI), said that with untiring efforts of local scientists, the role of private sector in seed research and development is increasing day by day.

In total rice hybridization, around 90 percent area of long-grain paddy is in Sindh province while 10 percent in South Punjab. As aromatic basmati rice if first choice for farmers in Punjab, coarse varieties area is still low. However, with production of hybrid rice seed in central Punjab, paddy area in Punjab is likely to increase significantly in coming years, he observed.

The major factor behind success of national seed companies in large-scale acceptance of rice hybrid seed has been development of heat-resistance and drought-tolerant varieties; he said and added that multinational seed companies had varieties that could not perform well in harsh summer weather of Sindh and Southern Punjab.

Hence, Malik said, the long-grain hybrid rice that substituted IRRI-6 in coastal belt and central Sindh is a major success as its export market is rapidly evolving in the favour of farmers and exporters.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/27/19-page/707201-news.html

JI CHIEF SLAMS GOVERNMENT'S APATHY TOWARDS FARMERS
The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2018.

Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Senator Sirajul Haq has called upon the Chief Justice of Pakistan to take suo moto notice of the numerous problems being faced by the farmers in order to save agriculture from destruction.

He expressed these views while talking to the media persons after visiting a camp of the growers at the Sharah-e-Quaid-i-Azam, who staged a protest demonstration against what they called "apathy of the rulers" towards their plight.

Sirajul Haq said the farmers produced crops such as sugarcane, rice, cotton and wheat, but the prices of these items were determined by the capitalists who failed to protect growers' interests.

He said the High Court order for payment of Rs180 per 40 kilogrammes of sugarcane had been thrown into the dustbin by the rulers and the provincial administration. The JI chief demanded farmers' representation on the committee which decided procurement prices of different crops. "Besides," he said, "the government should procure the farm products directly from the growers instead of the middleman."

He also demanded of the government to grant subsidy on the oil and electricity being used by the agriculturists. He also called for constructing of roads linking farms to the market and setting up of Kisan help centres.

The JI chief said water, seeds, and farm machinery were the essential items for agriculture but the farmers in the country were deprived of all the three. "Our rivers and dams are dry as India has constructed dams on these rivers to deprive our country of its due share of water," he remarked. He also criticised the rulers for keeping mum over the water issue.

The Punjab chief of JI Mian Maqsood Ahmed said so far the growers had fought for their rights within the law. He said the Lahore High Court had accepted the growers' demand regarding sugarcane price at Rs180 per 40 kilogrammes, but the "sugar mafia" was not complying with that.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1670681/1-ji-chief-slams-governments-apathy-towards-farmers/

UREA, DAP: FERTILISER SALES SURGE AS DEALERS BUILD UP INVENTORY
The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2018.

The sale of fertiliser, primarily, urea and DAP, has surged significantly in February as many dealers are believed to be building their inventory ahead of the budget presentation in the National Assembly next month, according to a brokerage house on Tuesday.

As per the latest data released by the National Fertilizer Development Corporation (NFDC), sale of urea surged 44% to 370,000 tons in February compared to 257,000 tons in the same month last year, according to BIPL Securities.

"Surge in urea demand can be attributed to the buildup of inventory by dealers amid recovering prices and concern of subsidy cut post budget," BIPL Securities' analyst Jawad Ameer Ali said in a commentary. Cumulatively, in the first two months of the year, urea sales rose 37% to 909,000 tons compared to 663,000 tons in the corresponding period of last year.

DAP usage for the month rose to 122,000 tons, depicting an increase of 25% (year-on-year basis). On cumulative basis, DAP sales posted a robust growth of 35% on yearly basis in the first two months of calendar year 2018. The sale of CAN enhanced 6% to 70,000 tons in February. However, the usage of NP dropped 11% to 37,000 ton in the single month on year-on-year basis.

Fauji Fertilizer Company remained the industry leader by selling 157,000 tons of urea in February, which was 45% higher than 109,000 tons in February 2017.

Fatima Fertilizer, however, exhibited the strongest growth of 217% in its sales to 38,000 tons in the single month compared to 12,000 tons in the same month last year. Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim (FFBL) and Engro Fertilizer appeared as the two marketers of DAP. FFBL, which is the only manufacturer of the fertiliser in the country, sold 41,000 tons of DAP which was 18% higher than 35,000 tons in the same month last year.

Engro Fertilizer sold 18,000 tons of DAP which was 51% higher than 12,000 tons sold in February 2017.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1670847/2-urea-dap-fertiliser-sales-surge-dealers-build-inventory/

LOW QUALITY SEED ATTRIBUTED TO COTTON CORP'S LOW YIELD
Business Recorder, 28 March 2018
LAHORE: Secretary Agriculture Muhammad Mahmood warned here on Tuesday that low quality seed are the biggest source of low yield in cotton crop. He also disclosed that target of cotton sowing during the next season has been fixed at 6 million acres of land.

He was chairing a consultative meeting held at the Agriculture House to decide the future implementation about cotton crop. Additional Secretary (Planning) Dr Ghazanfer Ali, Special Secretary for Marketing Silwat Saeed, Director General Agriculture (Research) Dr Abid Mahmood, Director General Agriculture (Ext & AR) Syed Zafaryaab Haider, Director Cotton Research Institute Multan Dr Muhammad Sageer, and cotton experts attended.

Muhammad Mahmood was briefed by agricultural experts about cotton plan 2018-19. They said govt has managed to ensure the availability of required quantity of certified cotton seed in the market for commercial cultivation during the forthcoming season. There is no deficiency of quality seed at all. So, during this season it is obligatory for all extension wing directors to check the sale of disapproved and low quality yield of cotton seed in the market.

Mahmood expressed his views and said such low quality seed are biggest source of low yield in cotton crop and added approved seed can produce desirable production. He warned that if he found sale of such seed in the market, Director (Ext) of area concerned will be held responsible and will be in hot waters. So, during whole cotton season, he advised them to remain active.

Secretary Agriculture Punjab was of the view that cotton serves as a saving account for farming community and our country's future also depend on its high production. Our cotton industry has a lot of potential; the need of time is just to explore new avenues. He also directed to provide training for Cotton Inspectors so they could perform better way in field during this season. Mahmood said last year Punjab produced 2 lakh extra bales of cotton than expected target and hopefully to follow the same practice this year too. He directed to implement cotton control act immediately.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/28/56-page/707427-news.html

'CRUSHING' DEFEAT
Dawn, March 29th, 2018

TRAVEL by road between Sindh and Punjab this month and for the most part one feels as if one is travelling through a tunnel. Not the type Elon Musk is digging across the US for his hyperloop, supersonic train journeys. Ours is made up of trolleys laden with sugar cane, stretching across entire districts, nay provinces. Wasn't the support price for sugar cane announced last October? Why then are tons of sugar cane lining the national highways in March 2018?

The sugar mills pay the farmers if and when they please. The farmers cannot wait indefinitely because they must sow crops for the next season. The later the crushing begins, the more desperate the farmer gets. This increases the likelihood of selling to middlemen much below the official price.

Most agriculturists in Pakistan fall in the ‘small farmers’ category. Leaving aside the large landholders in Sindh and southern Punjab, the average land ownership ranges anywhere between five to 10 acres in Punjab and 12 to 25 acres in Sindh. Depending upon land quality, water availability, and the financial resources for inputs such as seed, fertiliser and pesticides, most farmers are not able to fully utilise even the small parcels of land they own.

In Sindh, if one owns the land being tilled, approximately Rs50,000 investment is required for sowing an acre of sugar cane the first time. If the land is leased, throw in another Rs20,000 to Rs35,000 for yearly rent. Except for Tando Allahyar, Hala, and Ghotki, where yields could surpass 1,000 maunds (40 kilogrammes equal one maund) per acre, Sindh’s average yield swings between 600 to 800 maunds. In Punjab, per acre investment for sowing is around the same as in Sindh, but if the land is to be leased then throw in another Rs40,000 to 60,000 of rent per acre. The yields range from 700 to 800 maunds per acre.

Sugar mills pay the farmers if and when they please.

The support price of Rs182 per maund of sugar cane was almost half the price offered three years ago. The collusion between sugar millers, their brethren in government and their agents led to a very late beginning of crushing in December. All this while, the standing crop of sugar cane was losing weight as the cane continued to dry. This hurts only the farmer; the miller is a net gainer as the sugar content of the cane increases as it dries. Because of our national aversion to science and logic, let’s call it another form of collusion, between the millers and nature, perhaps.

Things would have not been rosy even if the farmers were able to get the official price of Rs182. No such luck. Since the millers are notorious for late payment to farmers, they turn to middlemen whose best offer averaged Rs120 per maund. Do not assume that the farmer will pocket this royal sum in its entirety. Sugar cane needs to be dropped at the mills. Depending upon the distance to the mill, and the going rate for the tractor, trolley and driver, and the number of days or weeks they’ll be parked in queues stretching as far as the eye can see, the farmer most likely ends up with only Rs95 per maund.

The math is straightforward. Take the lease investment example in Sindh, where the land is owned. If the average yield is 700 maunds, after all the machinations of the millers and agents, the farmer and his sharecroppers will be lucky to equally divide Rs10,000 profit per acre for toil ranging between a year to 18 months. Play with the variables discussed above all you like, owing to myriad other intangibles, practically every sugar cane farmer will go into the red.

Since there is no reduction in sugar price for the end consumer through all of this, some people may advise the farmers to move away from sugar cane altogether, just to stick it to the millers. Well, easier said than done. Though no one is going to slit their wrists over the sugar mills that will close, the millers will find some other racket to mint money. The labourers will find new exploiters. You and I will satisfy our sweet tooth cravings through imported sugar. However, the real winners will be those who export to us because they had better agri and market policies, and much higher yields than us.

At the current rate, all that will be feasible for us will be high-value crops, ie vegetables and fruit. You see, under the globalised economy we are supposed to meet all our needs of wheat and sugar and pulses and what not through imports from countries that have a comparative advantage producing all of this. But who will buy our surplus high-value produces because we are not on talking terms with some of our neighbours? The far-off markets have this thing called freight and logistic costs, standards and quality controls. And then there is this grey list thing threatening to morph into a black list thing, no shades of grey I am afraid. Sorry for the lack of sugarcoating though.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1398244/crushing-defeat

UREA PRICES MAY INCREASE BY RS100/BAG AS SUBSIDY REFUSED
Business Recorder, 30 March 2018

ISLAMABAD: The domestic fertilizer industry is likely to increase urea prices by Rs 100 per bag as Finance Ministry has refused to allocate supplementary grant for subsidy of Rs 5 billion citing financial constraints.

Well informed sources in Finance Division told Business Recorder that Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MFNR), Fazal Abbas Maken has written a letter to his counterpart in Ministry of Finance, Arif Ahmad Khan on this situation which has embarrassed the government.

Finance Division, in its letter of February 26, 2018, had advised MNFR that funds for fertilizer subsidy scheme for 2017-18 may be requested as a supplementary grant. Request to this effect was accordingly moved, through the Deputy Financial Advisor (DFA) of the Ministry of Finance for grant of Rs 4.7072 billion (Rs 4.699 billion as subsidy from July, 2017 to December 2017 and Rs 8.25 million as fee for qualifying firm of third party validation). However, the proposal was rejected by the Finance Division on March 21, 2018 on the ground that due to funds constraints the federal government is unable to release the amount at this point of time.

According to MNFR, in the Finance Bill 2017-18, federal government announced a subsidy of Rs 100 per bag of urea with equal contribution of federal and provincial governments, on the basis of respective provincial off-take. In this context, a meeting was held in the Prime Minister Office on July 24, 2017, wherein decisions were taken regarding various outstanding issues pertaining to fertilizer subsidy schemes.

In the light of decisions taken at the meeting, Finance Division issued a notification on August 7, 2017. The scheme envisaged equal contribution by the federal and provincial governments. The meeting also decided that 80 percent of the subsidy amount will be disbursed through State Bank of Pakistan immediately.

The sources said that the meeting also clearly decided that “for financial year 2017-18, subsidy payment will be made on same method as decided for FY 2016-17. Fertilizer subsidy will remain a federal government initiative for ensuring uniformity in domestic pricing and ensuring similar benefits for the farmers across the country. Finance Division will issue required notifications within this week”. MFNR argues that any further delay in subsidy payments would not only disturb the cash flow of fertilizer manufacturing but would also disturb the equilibrium of demand and supply in the forthcoming Kharif season. Thus, besides, the aspect of the government defaulting on a clear commitment made by it, this is also likely to adversely affect the forthcoming crop.

After explaining the entire background, MNFR requested that funds of Rs 4.7072 billion (Rs 4.699 billion as subsidy from July, 2017 to December 2017 and Rs 8.25 million as fee for the qualifying firm of third party validation), be allocated and released, immediately so as to ensure the smooth supply of fertilizer in the local market.

“This is highly alarming situation that the government is unable to fulfill its commitments. Lagta hay Khazana Khali ho gya hay. Industry would be right to increase price if payment was not received,” said one of the private sector stakeholders.—MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/30/1-page/707673-news.html

STATE-OF-THE-ART: SCIENTISTS INTRODUCE LATEST MACHINE FOR WHEAT SOWING
The Express Tribune, March 30th, 2018.

The Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (Parc) has introduced a new machine that will allow farmers to easily cultivate wheat in rice fields.

The machine, named Pak Seeder, helps in wheat sowing without having the need to remove rice residue and prepare land for plantation.

Handling rice residue has been a major challenge for farmers in the rice and wheat cropping system. The residue is either removed or spread over the field manually.

Mostly, the farmers prefer to burn it as an easy and cost-effective way of disposal. However, this process not only causes loss of precious crop nutrients, but also poses a threat to the environment, human health and economy. It also contributes to smog during winter which has become a major public health and environmental issue, particularly in Punjab, in recent years.

According to Parc, the new technology will address these crucial issues.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Parc officials said it took almost a decade to design the new machine and make experiments, adding the machine was launched and exhibited for the farmers near Muridke on Saturday last week.

Different approaches were made and experiments conducted over the past 12 years that led to the development of Pak Seeder. “It is a unique technology that helps sow wheat without disturbing the soil condition or removing the rice residue,” said a statement issued by Parc.

“Rice and wheat growers can conserve their resources, time and money by adopting this technology. It not only improves soil’s biological and physical health, but also increases wheat and rice yields.”

Parc Chairperson Dr Yusuf Zafar appreciated efforts of Parc engineers and scientists for developing the state-of-the-art machine for wheat sowing in the presence of heavy rice residue for the first time in Pakistan.

“It will help in increasing earnings of rice farmers and wheat growing areas. Burning of rice residue has been a big problem for Pakistan as well as South Asian countries and Pak Seeder is a breakthrough, which will not only save time and resources, but will also enhance crop production,” said Zafar said while speaking at the launch ceremony.

Highlighting the role of scientists, manufacturers, service providers and farmers in introducing the technology, he emphasised that Parc engineers were playing a vital role in developing resource conservation technologies like Pak Seeder. International Centre for Agriculture Research in Dry Areas (Icarda) Country Head Dr Abdul Majid outlined his organisation's role and activities in Pakistan, saying research was not a one-day process, rather it took years to resolve a problem. He underlined the importance of farmers' role and cooperation with machinery manufacturers and researchers in further developing Pak Seeder.

After its successful launch, Parc will sign a memorandum of understanding with the manufacturers for promoting the technology on commercial lines.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1672747/2-state-art-scientists-introduce-latest-machine-wheat-sowing/

POOR GROWTH: PUNJAB FREEZES PLAN TO TAX AGRICULTURE SECTOR
The Express Tribune, March 31st, 2018.

The government of Punjab has decided to drop the plan of bringing agriculture into the tax net as policymakers believe the sector and its stakeholders are going through a critical time.

"Annual agricultural growth in recent years has been poor at only 2% in the province, contributing one-fifth to the national economy," said Punjab Finance Minister Dr Ayesha Ghaus Pasha while speaking to members of the Lahore Economic Journalists Association on Friday.

She said focus from now onwards would be more on boosting agriculture and small and medium enterprises.

"Our neighbouring country is giving subsidies to its farmers of a much bigger magnitude than Pakistan while we are talking about taxing the agriculture sector," she said.

"The provincial government has managed to reduce the cost of input for farmers by asking the federal government to slash duties on pesticides and fertilisers."

Pasha said the province was also eliminating sales tax on electric tube wells to reduce the cost for farmers. More than 350,000 farmers had been provided credit at concessionary rates as mark-up would be picked by the provincial government, she said.

Talking about tax collection, Pasha pointed out that Punjab's tax collection had gone up 30% in the past four years with the broadening of tax base and without increasing the tax rate.

"Revenue growth in Punjab from our own resources is 10% higher than the revenue growth at the federal level and in other three provinces," she claimed, adding "this increase in revenue was achieved despite reducing the tax on 22 services."

She said the Punjab Revenue Authority inherited only 12 services that were in the tax net, adding the number had now increased to 62 by taking assistance from technology in an effort to bring numerous tax-evading sectors into the tax net.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1673616/2-poor-growth-punjab-freezes-plan-tax-agriculture-sector/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 19TH TO MARCH 25TH 2018
WHEAT CROP PROMISING, BUT OBSTACLES REMAIN
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 19th, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

AS the harvesting of wheat begins next month, Pakistan looks set to come closer to this year's output target of about 26.5 million tonnes despite water shortages and a slight decrease in the area under cultivation.

Growers and officials hope that a generally favourable weather and a modest gain in national average per-hectare yield can offset any productivity loss owing to the above-listed factors.

Some officials and growers' lobby groups are sceptical about meeting the target amid insufficient supply of irrigation water. During this wheat-growing season, irrigation water supplies have so far remained insufficient, not only in Sindh but also in Punjab.

So, there are chances that the wheat target may be missed, more so because sowing took place on a little less-than-targeted area of land, say office-bearers of the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, including its general secretary Zahid Hussain Bhurgari. Some officials of Sindh and Punjab agriculture departments also share their concerns about meeting the provincial wheat production targets.

All eyes are set on Punjab where any slippage in the output target could upset the country's overall production

But officials of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research think otherwise. "First, there is no significant reduction in the targeted area under cultivation of wheat. Second, wheat crop is maturing under a generally favourable weather," said a senior official when asked about the crop's prospects.

Another official said, "Field reports suggest that proper usage of fertiliser and other inputs plus the use of high-yield seeds would improve our national average yield this year."

The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) set the wheat output target at 26.464m tonnes for the crop year 2017-18, projecting sowing of the crop over an area of 8.945m hectares (around 22m acres) and targeting an average yield of 2958.6kg per hectare.

Sources in the food ministry say that prospects are good for surpassing the yield target, adding that the actual per-hectare yield could touch 3,000kg. They insist that this is enough to make up for any productivity loss even if wheat sowing has taken place on 1-2pc less than the targeted area. The final official report on the actual size of wheat sowing has yet to come out.

They point out that better spells of winter rains across wheat-producing areas have helped in the sowing and germination of wheat plants. Besides, big agricultural lending by banks has enabled farmers to use high-yielding quality seeds and fertilisers.

Progressive farmers (or those who have to their credit established records of achieving farm productivity) are increasingly using mechanised wheat reaper that cut post-harvest losses. These two factors should also help in getting higher per-hectare yields and, thus, enable growers in getting closer to or meeting this year's wheat output target.

Officials of the Punjab irrigation department say water supply shortages that were initially estimated at around 36pc rose beyond that level towards the end of February and lasted till March 10. That, they fear, can adversely affect the standing wheat crops both in central and southern Punjab.

Prospects of wheat output remains bright despite the fact that the support price has remained intact at the previous year level of Rs1,300 per 40kg. This is partly due to the fact that domestic demand for wheat has been growing steadily over the years, officials say, adding that wheat growers also know that unlike in case of sugar, decisions on wheat exports are taken on time.

At the time of target setting in mid-October last year, the FCA deliberately decided to keep the sowing area target for wheat below the usual 9m hectares to create more room for growing oilseeds and pulses crops.

But some leading progressive farmers in Punjab anticipating higher gains in growing pulses and oilseed crops went one step ahead and carved out additional cultivation patches for these crops compromising on wheat crop. This also happened in Sindh, though on a limited scale. It is premature to say if these two factors would affect total wheat output, and if so, to what extent.

Growers say that this and some other factors like the shortage of water, particularly in Sindh, can actually reduce total wheat output. Around 90pc growers in Pakistan depend on water from the irrigation system to nurture wheat crop, and water shortage in Sindh during this crop year may take a toll on the crop size.

This has not been the case with Punjab though. But there, particularly in the Potohar region where farmers depend on rain-feeding of the crop, winter rains fell in later than expected.

That should have kept farmers from sowing wheat in the first place, but many growers managed to sow a little late. What emboldened them to do so was their trust on rains prediction of our metrological department, which has won credibility in recent years, officials of the Met Office say.

According to the provincial breakdown of the wheat crop target for the current year, Punjab is to produce 20m tonnes; Sindh 4.2m tonnes, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1.36m tonnes and Balochistan 900,000 tonnes. Officials say all provinces except Sindh are expected to produce wheat closer to the targets.

In Sindh, growers had to wait longer than usual to sow wheat because a standoff between millers and sugar cane growers had delayed cane harvesting. Growers there also say that many of them could not get high-quality, original seeds for sowing and that, they fear, can lead to lower than targeted wheat output.

So, Sindh's output of wheat this year could reach 4m tonnes at best, missing the target of 4.2m tonnes, provincial officials fear, but deny allegations that spurious seeds were supplied to wheat growers.

Some progressive growers say the anticipated shortfall may partly be offset by higher yields of the crop in some parts of the province. But they, too, are not much optimistic about achieving the 4.2m tonnes target.

Heavy rains by the end of February that broke a long jspell of dry weather in Balochistan can boost crop maturity and hitting the wheat output target there seems a possibility. According to media reports, KP officials are also confident that the province can meet wheat output target, supported by weather and farmers' increased access to certified seeds.

All eyes are, however, set on Punjab where any slippage in the output target could upset the country's overall production.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1396088

ENGRO FOODS SIGNS MOU WITH GREENLAND ZONE
Business Recorder, 20 March 2018

KARACHI: Engro Foods Limited – a leading enterprise in packaged milk and dairy products has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Greenland Zone – a progressive provider of farm machinery and financial assistance for the agricultural sector. The objective of this collaboration is to enhance the productivity of dairy farms, by facilitating the acquisition of modern farm machinery and equipment, while imparting valuable training to the farmers for capacity-building.

Deployment of modern technology promises to be a game changer for Pakistan's traditional farming sector. This will ensure the production and distribution of quality milk for the masses, while increasing the profitability and prosperity of the agricultural sector too.

This alliance enables Engro Foods and Greenland Zone to empower the local farmers, by guiding them towards farm-mechanization which will in turn lead to an increase in quality and quantity of diary production. Thus, the two organizations have pledged to nurture a healthy and prosperous society.

Engro will provide consultancy and deeper insights after evaluating the farmers' technological needs. They will then recommend the right machinery needed for higher profitability for the farmers. Greenland Zone will then facilitate the acquisition, installation, training and maintenance of the recommended equipment.

On this occasion Syed Saud Pasha – Director Agri Business at Engro Foods said; "This initiative will revolutionize the performance of Pakistan's dairy livestock sector. It will provide a resourceful forum to inspire the farmers to adopt modern technology and reach greater prosperity…"

This alliance is in line with the international initiative called 'Global Dairy Development' which is also being launched in Pakistan this year. The global initiative will give momentum to sustainable development of progressive dairy farming in the country.—PR

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/20/8-page/705869-news.html

NEW 'NATIONAL FERTILIZER POLICY' ON THE ANVIL

Business Recorder, 21 March 2018

Muhammad Saleem

LAHORE: The Ministry of Industries and Production has started the process of consultation with stakeholders for the finalization of new ‘National Fertilizer Policy’ which is set to be unfolded within this year.

National Fertilizer Corporation (NFC) CEO /Managing Director Engineer Omar Saeed Malik told Business Recorder here on Tuesday that the proposed ‘National Fertilizer Policy’ would be balanced one and would safeguard the interests of both the farmers as well as manufacturers. “The draft of the policy is under review and the Ministry of Industries and Production is actively engaged with all the stakeholders for evolving a balanced policy which will be beneficial for the stakeholders.”

He further said that there would be focus on the benefit of the farmers in the proposed policy while private sector would also get due share. He added that safeguarding the rights of farmers is prime focus of the government policies.

To another question, Omar Saaed Malik said that there is a need to establish ‘Fertilizer Regulatory Authority’ at the federal government level. The proposed authority may be tasked to monitor imports, investments, demand and supply situation, quality and price, he said, adding: “The Authority may administratively work under the control of Ministry of Industries and Production.”

The NFC CEO/MD also suggested that there must be strategic reserves of Urea of 200,000 tones to meet any unexpected situation. However, he added that at present the current supply and demand situation is stable. To a query, he said fertilizer review committee meets regularly to review supply and demand situation of Urea. He added that the decision regarding import of Urea is taken by the committee after due consideration.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/21/2-page/706021-news.html

GOVT DECIDES TO SCRAP SUGARCANE SUPPORT PRICE
The Express Tribune, March 22nd, 2018.

The federal government has decided to do away with the support price mechanism for sugarcane crop and come up with a new pricing system that is linked with the wholesale price of sugar, which is a byproduct of sugarcane.

It arrived at the decision in a cabinet meeting in a bid to appease the protesting farmers, who have been exploited by the influential sugar barons of the country. Even the apex court took notice of the matter as sugar millers were dilly-dallying on the purchase of sugarcane from the growers.

The cabinet meeting was held on March 6 in the wake of recommendations of a committee constituted to address the challenges facing the farmers.

The committee recommended that ‘excessive incentives’ for sugarcane farmers may be rationalised by replacing the current pricing mechanism with a new system that would connect sugarcane price with the wholesale price of sugar in an attempt to ensure a level playing field for all commodities. Sugarcane comprises 80% of the wholesale price of sugar.

Talking to The Express Tribune, a senior government official said the committee also recommended that sugar millers should pay 75% of the sugarcane price in advance and 5% after a year keeping in view the average wholesale price of sugar.

In 2012, the previous government of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had approved a Cane Purchase Receipt mechanism that would be converted into bank cheques in a bid to save the farmers from exploitation. However, the present Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz administration failed to implement it.

Even the Ministry of Industries and Production sent a summary in that regard to the cabinet, but it was not approved.

The Cane Purchase Receipt, if converted into bank cheques, would have supported documentation of the agriculture sector and safeguarded interests of the growers.

Cabinet members decided that the sponsoring division should carefully re-examine the proposal in relation to the role of the federal government.

It was surprising for the cabinet members that all key stakeholders including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), State Bank of Pakistan, cane commissioners of Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh as well as Kisan Board had backed the system of printing the sugarcane quantity purchased and its price on the receipt. Provinces also endorsed the mechanism.

Instead of approving the receipt mechanism, the PML-N government doled out billions of rupees in export subsidy to the sugar barons.

Total hit to the public exchequer, both federal and provincial, will be at least Rs20.4 billion due to the cost of export subsidy. This is in addition to the benefit of Rs30 billion that the millers will get by claiming a subsidy of Rs20 per kg on the export of 1.5 million tons.

The millers are reportedly paying low prices to the farmers who are receiving Rs140 per 40 kg against the support price of Rs180.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1666050/2-govt-decides-scrap-sugarcane-support-price/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 12TH TO MARCH 18TH 2018
EXPLORING THE GROWER-HARI RELATIONSHIP
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 12th, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

An elderly landless peasant, Mahar Mallah, is satisfied with an 800 maund per-acre yield of sugar cane from two acres of land he tilled this season. His worries are that sugar cane factory owners haven't paid the just sugar cane rate to the landowner on whose land he is working as a share cropper.

Despite impressive per-acre yields from the two acres, Mallah says he couldn't get a good price on his share which remained at Rs100-Rs130 per 40kg against the notified price of Rs182/40kg. He feels he is at a disadvantage in terms of average income to be earned from this crop. He managed the crop for close to 18 months in anticipation of an adequate price in Tando Mohammad Khan district.

The price factor alone doesn't trouble Mallah and his like. Additional problems expose them to vulnerabilities due to which they struggle to survive.

Landowners have their own axe to grind when it comes to managing and owning lands. A landowner like Nabi Bux Sathio has to ensure timely provision of input to haris, from availability of irrigation water to seed, fertiliser and pesticide for cultivating a major crop.

No written agreement exists between landowners and peasants for a piece of land the latter tills in this relationship. Growers with a sizeable landholding make a considerable income compared to the hari working there, even after sharing expenses

Share croppers like Mahar Mallah are supposed to share expenses of crop input. Expenditures initially are borne by growers by way of credit obtained through formal and informal lenders. Loan is to be adjusted once the crop is harvested and sold in the market. Accounts are, however, maintained and settled by the two sides on their own.

No written agreement exists between landowners and peasants for a piece of land the latter tills in this relationship. The size of such land usually varies between two and five acres. A hari's entire family including the womenfolk and children work from dawn to dusk. They heavily bank on the grower for their day to day financial needs.

"We share expenses on input for which finances are made available by the landowner. In case of extreme weather like rains and floods we end-up earning nothing as the entire crop is washed out", says Ghulam Mohammad Mallah, another landless peasant.

According to him, his allocated four acres of land produced 320/40kg of paddy last year but after clearing expenses he got ended up with a paltry amount.

A 50-50 cost is shared by a peasant and grower for the procurement of input like fertiliser, pesticides and seed. In addition, the peasant has to bear the full cost of sowing, thrashing and land preparation.

Historically peasants plough a grower's land using their own bulls and then thrash the crop with the cattle, "tractors have now replaced cattle for land preparation and thrashers are used for crops to save time, therefore the tractor's fuel expenses are to be fully borne by the hari. I don't claim a per day rent for the tractor that I own", says Sathio.

He concedes that growers with a sizeable landholding make a considerable income as compared to the hari working there, even after sharing expenses. Given the large landholdings a grower has the capacity to offset the impact of losses in a crop unless they are colossal, he concludes.

Besides sharing the cost of input, haris borrow money from growers on occasions like weddings, funerals and for medication. These miscellaneous expenses are to be deducted from the hari's share of income.

Mahar Mallah says that only an adequate price for his crop increases his share in earnings for him to be able to repay the grower, although peasant families who rear livestock can somewhat supplement their income through a small scale milk business.

Landless peasantry, generally, has been surviving amidst this relationship across Sindh. Growers and hari's have to trust each other. Nabi Bux Sathio opines that a hari doesn't share the land's rent and tax even though technically, being 50-50 share cropper, he has to share it.

Orchards are located in lower Sindh where peasants can work as wage labourers in mango and banana seasons to supplement income.

Cotton picking is another option for them. Hari's are engaged for picking at Rs300 to Rs400 per 40kg. Peasants working on lands fed by non-perennial canals by and large have lesser income prospects, for they depend on a single kharif crop which is mostly paddy.

Sindh Tenancy Act (STA) 1950 is supposed to govern peasant-landowner relationship. STA describes haris as a 'tenant'. Lack of enforcement of this law and an overall weak regulatory mechanism subjects haris to exploitation. Resultantly, cases of bonded labour are occasionally reported.

Veteran labour rights activist Karamat Ali believes that the STA 1950 needs to be suitably amended to protect haris' rights to ensure setting up of hari courts, their registration and their right to form associations.

In the present condition, he says, 50pc of a hari's share is denied to them. This verbal arrangement should be substituted with a formal agreement to be registered with the board of revenue. It would ensure that the hari wouldn't be evicted at will and in such he would find recourse in the court of law, Ali says.

STA 1950 was the outcome of the famous hari movement in Sindh launched by Hyder Bux Jatoi. Jatoi had staged a sit-in outside Sindh Assembly, forcing legislators at that time to pass this pro-hari law.

Pakistan's leading economist Dr Kaiser Bengali conducted a study on Land Tenure System in Pakistan in 2014 for the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER). His report shows that "over three-quarters (76pc) of rural families in survey areas are tenants/sharecroppers, working on land belonging to large landowners. A vast number of tenants (98pc) cultivate small holdings of less than 16 acres, with 43pc cultivating less than five acres each, it says.

Dr Bengali observes that tenancy should be abolished and wage labour should be hired. "Tenants lack a bargaining position as they serve as captive of landowners and the existing law doesn't support them", he remarks.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1394617/exploring-the-grower-hari-relationship

FARMERS SEE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CROP LOAN INSURANCE SCHEME
The Express Tribune, March 12th, 2018.

In Pakistan, agriculture production challenges primarily stem from environmental and climate-induced disasters.

Pakistan's economy faced 133 natural disasters since 1995 to 2015, which caused losses of $38.23 billion to the national economy.

About 36 districts of the country are highly vulnerable to risks posed by natural disasters, 68 have medium vulnerability and 52 have low vulnerability against floods and droughts combined.

Along with the threat and disasters caused by climate change, farmers are facing issues of salinity, water scarcity and decreasing groundwater levels which slash their income from crop harvests. Such issues have made it more difficult for them to repay their debt.

With the growing challenges, the demand for agriculture credit from the farmers has gone up in an attempt to improve their harvests. Provision of credit to the agriculture sector reached Rs704.5 billion in fiscal year 2016-17, up 17.8% compared to the previous year.

However, some loopholes have been found in the credit policy, especially in the Crop Loan Insurance Scheme (CLIS).

Sargodha district, which is well known for the production of kinnow, sugarcane and bamboo, is facing the threat of climate change and flooding. Hundreds of villages in the district had been hurt by flooding in Chenab and Jhelum Rivers in 2014.

According to the annual flood report, Sargodha also faced damages from the flood protection structures in 2016. Among credit policies, the CLIS is a unique scheme launched in 2008. It provides credit for five major crops, namely, wheat, rice, sugarcane, cotton and maize. This is accompanied with insurance against natural disasters like flood, drought, hailstorm, pest attack and fire damage.

With support of the government, the insurance premium is subsidised for subsistence farmers, defined as those having up to 25 acres of land for cultivation. However, inefficiencies in the scheme were highlighted by the farmers during a survey conducted in the flood-prone tehsils of Sargodha.

Majority of the farmers have avoided taking formal credit because of their own savings and easy access to loans from informal sources. Some farmers are interested in insurance policy alone, but CLIS offers crop insurance to only those that borrow from banks.

Finally, some of them do not consider insurance policy to be in line with Islamic principles.

Farmers say borrowing from informal sources like individual lenders in their areas is easy and quick. They do not even face any difficulty in paying back the loans as these are mostly interest-free.

Highlighting the inefficiencies in the formal insurance policy, they point to the late declaration of calamity by the government as a major issue. After that, the bank or insurance company concerned sends their representative or an independent consultant to assess the loss. This causes a delay of around six months.

Owing to the delay, the assessment of field losses is not accurate. The assessors, most of the time, rely on prediction rather than actual data. After the assessment, slow disbursement of insurance claims takes at least another month.

These drawbacks force the farmers to borrow from informal sources for planting their next crop.

The money paid in insurance claims is also meagre that neither covers the loss nor the input cost. Moreover, political influence is another hidden factor found during consultation with the farmers as such influences play a role in whether or not a village should be declared calamity-stricken. Apart from these, absence of political support leads to negligence of villages that are severely affected by disasters but are never declared calamity-hit.

Farmers also complain about lower resilience against natural disasters and climate change, which is the outcome of a lack of proper guidance by agriculture extension officers and ineffective early warning system.

Though the benefits of CLIS cannot be denied, there is always room for improvement. Suggestions given by the farmers can provide useful input for the policymakers and economists and help the growers to cope with multiple challenges. In order to bring improvement, the farmers recommend effective assessment of individual loss, quick settlement of insurance claims, increase in the amount of claims and giving cover to horticulture as well, especially oranges orchards and vegetable crops.

While Sargodha produces 90% of oranges in the country and generates millions of dollars from exports, the government should also consider including excessive or erratic rains, hailstorms and pest attacks along with floods in CLIS.

One of the key suggestions is to provide crop insurance without linking it with formal credit at least in major growing areas. The current CLIS mechanism depends on damage-based insurance, but it can be improved by developing a weather or yield-based index.

Such agriculture credit policies are successfully functioning in neighbouring countries such as India. They will help speed up the process of effective and individual loss assessment to clear the way for releasing claims before the start of plantations in the next season.

Such changes will bolster farmers and help them achieve sustainable agriculture growth including citrus production in Sargodha.

The writer is a research assistant at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1657400/2-farmers-see-room-improvement-crop-loan-insurance-scheme/

GROWERS VOW TO MOVE SC OVER CANE PRICE ISSUE
Dawn, March 13th, 2018

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) on Monday condemned denial of the sugar cane prices to growers as ordered by the Sindh High Court.

Speaking at a press conference here on Monday, SAI president Nawab Zubair Talpur and other office-bearers said that sugar mills owners were not abiding by the high court's order in this respect. They vowed to move Supreme Court to seek remedy.

Mr Talpur observed that the Sindh government also did not take the issue seriously with the result that cane growers suffered colossal losses.

He recalled that the provincial government had notified Rs182/40kg rate for sugar cane procurement in the 2017-18 season but failed to ensure implementation of the notification. He said that mills owners had challenged the notification in the high court, which eventually fixed the rate at Rs160/40kg but mill owners did not honour the court's order as well.

A similar controversy had cropped up in the 2014-15 season when millers had refused to pay Rs160/40kg rate to growers forcing the provincial government to pitch in a subsidy of Rs12/40kg for millers out of taxpayers' money so that growers could get Rs172/40kg against the notified rate of Rs182/40kg. He pointed out that the Rs12 subsidy was actually given to millers, and not growers, who were supposed to get Rs182/40kg.

Again this year, the high court fixed the rate at Rs160/40kg for the 2017-18 crop but millers were not ready to accept it. He said that SAI had resolved to move the apex court to claim a cumulative payment of differential amount of Rs32 (Rs10 of 2014-15 season and Rs22 for 2017-18 season) from millers by becoming the intervener in the matter.

He said that currently growers were being paid Rs130/40kg while millers are exposing themselves to contempt of court by defying the SHC order.

Mr Talpur said that non-payment of the differential amount was causing losses to the tune of billions of rupees to growers.

He said that growers, perforce, were selling their produce through middlemen for Rs100-80 per 40kg for timely payment. He claimed that sugar mills were mostly not mentioning weight of procured cane on receipts and subjecting consignments to heavy deduction in overall weight unfairly. The seller usually did not know what quantity would finally be mentioned for payment against his consignment, he added.

Growers were fleeced Rs30/40kg in view of the court's order to pay Rs160/40kg, he observed. He noted that since millers had started crushing late, ie in January, growers were not able to go for sowing the wheat crop this season while the delay also affected sowing of chilli crop in a huge area. He held the Sindh government responsible for the situation arguing that it failed to establish its writ in the matter of cane price.

The SAI leader also noted with concern that wheat harvesting had started but procurement centres were not set up as yet. He said that gunny bags were also not made available to growers, who were forced to dispose of their produce for Rs1,100/40kg against the support price of Rs1,320/40kg.

He said that Sindh was currently bearing 60pc water shortage while Punjab was still drawing water through the Chashma-Jhelum link canal. He accused Punjab of robbing Sindh of its share, arguing that the link canal could be operated only when there was surplus water.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1394818/growers-vow-to-move-sc-over-cane-price-issue

PROCUREMENT, EXPORT OF SUGAR PLAN SCRAPPED ON MILLS' REFUSAL
Business Recorder, 13 March 2018

Mushtaq Ghumman

ISLAMABAD: The Federal government has reportedly scrapped 0.3 million tons of sugar procurement and export plan after sugar mills refused to sell sugar at Rs 48 per kg on the plea that this will be a blatant violation of PPRA rules, well-informed sources told Business Recorder.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on December 22,2017 had decided that Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) will procure 0.3 million tons of sugar from the surplus stock of the mills, through tendering process, so as to enable them to procure sugar cane from the growers at the prescribed rate and also clear their outstanding dues.

The ECC had also prescribed the following conditions for procurement plan: (i) sugar mills who had defaulted in earlier deals with TCP will not be eligible to participate in the bidding process; (ii) only those sugar mills will be allowed to participate in bidding process, which have started and will be continuing crushing at full capacity. The cane Commissioner of the respective province will certify to this effect; (iii) procurement shall be made on the basis of competitive bidding with an upper limit of 10,000 tons per sugar mill ; (iv) maximum procurement price shall be Rs.48/kg ; (v) payment by the TCP to the sugar mills will be linked to clearance of outstanding dues of the sugarcane growers.

40% payment will be made to mills at the time of procurement (taking over the physical possession of the stocks by the TCP Muqadam) and an additional 40% payment will be made subject to the confirmation by the respective Provincial Cane Commissioner that the dues of the sugarcane growers have been cleared and remaining 20% payment will be made on lifting of sugar from the mill premises for export of the same; (vi) the stocks will be stored in a covered/dedicated warehousing space to be provided by the mill owners within the mill premises that should be secure against any hazards of weather, environment and pilferages;

(vii) the mill will replace the procured stocks with the fresh one from time to time; (viii) TCP will export the procured sugar through international tendering process; (ix) Finance Division will facilitate TCP in arrangement of required financing through banks/financial institutions. The total financial cost of the procuring 0.3 MMT of sugar was calculated and approved by ECC as Rs.15.33 billion @ Rs.51.12/kg (Rs.48/kg TCP purchase price+Rs.3.12/kg financing cost); (x) any differential cost/ loss in the procurement and disposal will be borne by the respective provincial government; and (xi) the TCP shall be eligible to receive freight support from the State Bank of Pakistan on export of 0.3 MMT @ Rs.10.70/kg.

According to sources, TCP, in its letter of January 26, 2018, revealed that a tender was floated to procure 0.3 million tons of sugar on January 5, 2018 which was subsequently opened on January 25, 2018 after addressing the apprehensions/reservations expressed by the participants of a pre-bidding meeting held on January 18, 2018. TCP further stated that none of the sugar mills participated in the bidding process on 25.1.2018, rendering the procurement process inconclusive.

On the other hand, Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA), in its letter of January 30, 2018 addressed to Minister for Commerce Division, conveyed that (a) reference price of Rs.48/kg which was set as a maximum procurement price by the ECC, is against Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules and (b) payment mechanism of 40%, 40% & 20%, as approved by the ECC, runs counter to the spirit of the whole exercise which was primarily meant to facilitate growers for their payments. PSMA requested that payment mechanism should be 100% advance.

When contacted, a senior officer of Commerce Division told Business Recorder that no further action is being taken as exports by sugar mills are going smoothly and there seems to be no need for procurement and export by TCP.

Asked whether the government has put sugar procurement plan on ice after not receiving any bid from sugar mills, the official replied: "not on ice". The program basically was to help sugar mills offload the surplus sugar stocks during new crushing season. But since sugar mills are now exporting large quantities of sugar themselves, this intervention seems to be no more required".

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/13/1-page/704518-news.html

PUNJAB STRIVING TO PROVIDE MODERN TECHNOLOGY TO GROWERS: AYESHA
Business Recorder, 14 March 2018

Zahid Baig

LAHORE: The Punjab Finance Minister Dr Ayesha Ghous Pasha said here on Monday that the provincial government is striving to ensure access of the growers to latest technology so as they can increase their per acre yield.

She was speaking at the launch of 'Connected Agriculture Programme for Punjab' (CAPP) which was also attended by the provincial agriculture minister Naeem Akhtar Bhabha, Secretary Agriculture Punjab Muhammad Mahmood and large number of farmers.

The program aims to resolve the longstanding challenges faced by the Pakistani farmers through a suite of digital solutions that improve their access to information, financial resources, and market besides enhancing supply chain efficiency.

Under CAPP's mAgri ecosystem, a suite of Android apps including on boarding, mobile wallet, weather, crop calendar, video on demand, expert opinion, marketplace, supply chain tracking, and agriculture subsidy will be designed by Telenor Pakistan and Inbox Business Technologies. In the first, 110,000 mobile phones with said apps preinstalled as well as Telenor GSM and data SIMs with special packages, will be disbursed. Landless and tenants are being provided these smart phones at Rs500 per phone only while land owners will have these phones at Rs1000/- per phone.

Since a majority of the farmers also need education on the use of the mechanism, around 500 on-ground training sessions will be conducted in 72 facilitation centers to train 25,000 farmers across 144 Tehsils of Punjab. CAPP also comes with an incentive program for the 'most connected' farmers whose engagement will be gauged on most mobile notification views, most time spent on apps, most tutorials/videos viewed, most transactions made through Marketplace, and most number of queries generated for experts.

"We at Telenor Pakistan, being one of the largest cellular operators and mobile financial services providers in the rural areas of the Punjab, believe that we are the natural partners for the Government of Punjab in their efforts to uplift the status of the Pakistani farmers," said Irfan Wahab Khan, CEO Telenor Pakistan. "Given that we already have a dedicated business unit focusing on mobile agriculture and enabling digital solutions for the agriculture value chain, we hope to support further development of this sector for the empowerment and inclusion of the Pakistani farmers through CAPP and our extended mAgri services," he added.

The Punjab Agriculture Minister Naeem Akhtar Bhabha claimed that the government was taking all out steps to make Pakistan self-reliant in food on permanent basis. Secretary Agriculture Punjab termed launch of CAPP as start of a new journey which would see our growers entering into the latest era. He said these smart phones are equipped with all those applications which are needed to get farmers updated of latest agricultural research and information.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/14/7-page/704755-news.html

NESTLE PAKISTAN DEVELOPS SMART SOIL MOISTURE SENSOR
Business Recorder, 18 March 2018

Zahid Baig

LAHORE: Nestle Pakistan team has developed smart soil moisture sensor that can read the moisture/water level of the soil and send regular data updates to a cloud from where farmers receive information about where and which area of his field need irrigation.

The software has been developed with the help of 'Waziup' (an Italian organisation) that enables farmers and researchers to see the soil moisture level remotely on their computer screen. The soil moisture sensor is successfully delivering at Dar-us-Salaam farm situated on Mureedke, Sheikhupura Road as it has reduced the labour of irrigating field, reduced water consumption and fertilizer application and also labour expenses, said Mustafa Yousaf, Managing Director of the farm while talking to Business Recorder here the other day.

Mustafa, a banker and a progressive farmer, said the new technology in collaboration with drip and sprinkler system is giving him 50 to 70 percent saving in water as through this method water is provided in accurate quantity to the roots where it is required. Similarly, he said fertilizers are also applied through the same pipes by dissolving in water, thus saving 50 percent against the old method of broadcast in which fertilizer also falls in areas where it is not required. The old method not only consumes higher quantity of fertilizer but also support weeds which damage the yield. In drip irrigation, weeds could not receive water or fertilizer.

He said the use of smart soil moisture sensors coupled with drip irrigation helps saving water and increase productivity by reducing the chance of under or over-irrigation. Regarding yield, he said this technology is helping the farm to get 30-40 percent more yield as well.

Mustafa has also installed a 10 KVA solar system at his farm with the Punjab govt subsidy which according to him, has made him free of the hardships being faced in case of scheduled and unscheduled power outages and bring his cost down.

Mehboob Elahi, Sustainable Agriculture Manager at Nestle Pakistan, who made his organisation agreed to invest in manufacturing and installation of these smart soil sensors said the sensors have been installed at three pilot farms in Renala, Habibabad and Mariamabad.

“We are also partnering with Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) to work on developing and scaling up technologies that can help save water in agriculture…,” he added.

The world over, about 70 percent of water is used in agriculture. In Pakistan, that percentage stands at 90 percent, with 50 percent wastage due to poor irrigation methods, Mehboob said.

“We have partnered with the Punjab Agriculture Department to encourage local farmers taking up drip irrigation. Nestlé covers 40 percent of the farmer’s cost of putting up equipment for drip irrigation while the Punjab government covers 60 percent of the cost through the World Bank SAMRT Programme,” he maintained.

Mehboob said area under drip irrigation, supported by Nestle, has reached 93 acres of land in Sheikhupura district. Doing so will help farmers saving up to 140 million litres of water. The drip has been installed in multiple acres of land at Manawala, Sharaqpur, Mariamabad, Shiekhpura, Murdke Road, Habibabad and Daokey near Allabad. The land has at least two expected harvest in a row annually. By the end of 2019, we hope to achieve water savings of 400 million litres by promoting drip irrigation on 185 acres of land. We are also exploring other high-efficiency irrigation methods like different types of furrow irrigation and sprinklers based on the farmers’ needs.

Nestlé Pakistan is also working with Pakistan Agriculture and Research Council (PARC) on drip irrigation and environment sustainability through installation of solar pumps.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/18/5-page/705519-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 4TH TO MARCH 11TH 2018
COTTON SEED BAGS: PUNJAB GOVT TO PROVIDE SUBSIDY ON APPROVED VARIETIES
Business Recorder, 4 March 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab government has planned to extend subsidy of millions of rupees on approved varieties of cotton seed bags under the banner of Khadim-e-Punjab Kissan Package.

The subsidy has been planned on the special directives of Chief Minister Punjab Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif. A spokesman of the Agriculture Department disclosed that under this subsidy scheme registered farmers of kissan package belonging to district Multan, Khanewal, Lodhran, Vehari, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, DG Khan, Layyah, Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur will get bags of approved varieties of cotton and after unsealing the bag they will get subsidy voucher of Rs 700 per cotton bag.

The spokesman further disclosed that this subsidy will be provided on approved varieties of cotton i.e IUB-2013, FH-142, FH- Lalazar and MNH-886. To be a part of this subsidy scheme, registered farmers will have to send SMS on 8070 by writing in the message CS0319CNIC Number. Farmers belonging to districts mentioned above will get a reply that they are eligible for this subsidy scheme. In this regard, registered farmers will have to send SMS till 15th March, 2018.

This subsidy voucher bag will be provided in the month of April 2018 which is recommended sowing season of cotton crop. The spokesman further said that farmers, who are yet not registered under Khadim-E-Punjab Kissan Package, are advised to contact Agriculture Helpline on 0800-15000 & 0800-29000 to get themselves registered. He said this initiative will prove a blessing in core area of cotton

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/04/17-page/703146-news.html

SINDH FARM OUTPUT RISING, BUT ISSUES PERSIST
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 5th, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

SINDH'S farm productivity has been on the rise after the devolution of agriculture as a full provincial subject from the beginning of fiscal year 2010-11. But the pace of growth is slower than one could have expected owing to many reasons, particularly the absence of a comprehensive agriculture policy.

Provincial officials, however, say they have at last finalised an agriculture policy and it will come out soon.

In addition to cotton, Sindh also produces a significant amount of three key food crops, ie wheat, rice and sugar cane. Farmers also grow maize in limited quantity in some parts of the province.

Government officials attribute higher productivity of the crop sector to several factors, including the devolution of agriculture to provinces

The province also contributes to the national output of vegetables and some minor crops like gram, barley, soya bean, Brassica plants, linseed, safflower and sunflower.

Since the devolution of agriculture, Sindh has seen a rising trend in the output of most major and minor crops. Per-hectare yields have also gone up in some cases.

Increased production of high-yield non-basmati rice and sugar cane varieties rich in sucrose content has lent additional strength to rice and sugar milling sectors. Similarly, higher output of wheat has minimised the province's net buying of wheat from Punjab besides limiting imports, officials of the Sindh agriculture department say.

Incremental output of cotton has emboldened rural entrepreneurs to set up new ginning mills on their own and also in collaboration with urban investors.

A rising trend in outputs of minor crops has enhanced the role their growers play in supply-chain of food industries in the province and elsewhere in Pakistan.

“Sindh’s share in the national food exports has also increased on the back of higher agricultural output, but we can’t easily quantify it in the absence of a provincial breakdown of exports data,” says a senior provincial official.

When it comes to making foreign sales, all export houses including those belonging to Sindh make purchases from across Pakistan. And supply-chain dynamics are such that in most cases, exporters rely on multiple interprovincial sources for supplies. “So, it’s really difficult to quantify the impact of better agriculture output of any province on our national exports,” the official said.

Sindh government officials attribute higher productivity of the crop sector to several factors: the devolution of agriculture that gave the province freedom to do things on its own with nominal or no intervention from the federation; increased research on crops both within the province and at federal institutions; continual increase in annual agricultural budget; and some volumetric rise in agricultural credit disbursement to crop growers in the province.

They, however, lament that Sindh gets a smaller share in total farm credit distribution than its contribution. Many believe that crops can do even better in Sindh if farm lending rises.

In the 2016-17 fiscal year, the province got a 10.1pc share in banks’ farm credit. But its share is expected to increase to 13pc to 15pc as banks are offering larger farm loans to smaller provinces.

Sindh’s annual agricultural budget, which was below Rs5bn in 2009-10, crossed Rs14bn this fiscal year, and that too despite deficiencies in effective disbursement. This has helped improve not only in crops production but other areas of agriculture as well.

Some features of the first-ever agriculture policy in Sindh aim at ensuring sustainable growth of all major and minor crops. That should ideally consolidate the gains already made in this area, officials say.

“The policy will incentivise growers by offering them larger and timely loans and subsidised inputs in such a way that they keep glued to crops of their choice,” says an official of the agriculture department. “That will help in checking imprudent and often abrupt crop switching that makes growth pattern of crops erratic.”

The finalised agriculture policy, yet to be announced, also envisages developing new rural enterprises and setting up grain storage and trading centres across Sindh. This will lead to immediate selling of crops at better rates, emboldening farmers to grow more.

Under this policy, the provincial government also intends to remove price caps and support prices, promote competition, enhance transparency and facilitate electronic trading of crops and direct sales to private markets. Besides, some features of the policy will improve legislation, regulation, labelling and quality oversight in markets for seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, animal feed and medicines.

A senior provincial government official says that on recommendations of Sindh Abadgar Board, policymakers have also added new features in the agriculture policy to make it more comprehensive. These features deal with devising a price control mechanism for various crops, rationalising use of irrigation water and addressing the issue of wetlands.

The recently granted extension in the completion period of World Bank-sponsored Sindh Agriculture Growth Project should also help the province revamp its agriculture sector, including crops' segment. The deadline for the $88.7m project has been extended by 18 months to December 2020.

The project, approved by the World Bank in July 2014, has already helped the crops sector in Sindh via research and training programmes for growers and investment in value-chains of crop-based industries like rice milling and red-chilli processing, officials say.

Under the current phase of this project, authorities are focusing on further improving working capacity of rice and dates growers by providing them grants and encouraging them to establish links with processing industries, they add.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1393157

FARMERS WARY OF STRINGS ATTACHED TO $300M WB LOAN
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 5th, 2018

THE Punjab government has recently acquired a $300 million loan facility from the World Bank to reform the agriculture sector in the provinces.

Some of the 13 disbursement linked indicators (DLIs) set for obtaining the funds meant for the Strengthening Markets for Agriculture and Rural Transformation project are bound to hit the rural economy, and have therefore sent a wave of concern among the farming community and consumers as well.

These DLIs included withdrawing the role of the public sector in wheat procurement from Rabi season of 2019 and de-regulating the prices of milk and meat.

The withdrawal of around Rs150bn public sector credit from the wheat procurement process will disturb the commodity market and terribly affect the rural economy

An official of the federal finance ministry says they have opposed the loan agreement — the first tranche of which amounting to $50m has already been received by the Punjab government — fearing that withdrawal of around Rs150 billion public sector credit from the wheat procurement process will disturb the commodity market and terribly affect the rural economy.

The official says that the provincial government is not making public the loan terms as it can ill-afford the reaction it is likely to create particularly during the election year.

Punjab produces around 25m tonnes of wheat. The growers retain about 70 per cent of the produce and offer the rest for procurement by public and private sectors.

Of it, the major shareholder is the Punjab government which procures at least four million tonnes, of which the federal government's entity PASCO, Sindh and the flour-milling sector each pick around 1.5m tonnes.

Pakistan Kisan Ittehad president Khalid Mahmood Khokhar laments that by committing to withdraw its role in stabilising the wheat market the government is going to avert its constitutional obligation of guaranteeing food security to its subjects, whose major staple food is wheat.

He says that in neighbouring India the number of crops enjoying official support prices has been increased from 26 to 31, and authorities ensure picking up of the produce in case prices drop in the open market.

In Pakistan, he adds, wheat is the only crop with official support price and now this, too, is going to be withdrawn. He fears that the new wheat policy will create uncertain conditions in the market, discouraging the growers from sowing wheat and resulting in shortage of the grain, forcing the government to import the commodity.

Kisan Board Pakistan's former president Sardar Zafar Hussain believes that impact of the wheat procurement policy change will not remain confined to growers only; it will engulf urban consumers, too.

"For fear of open market uncertainties and high cost of production, the growers will stop sowing wheat and the resultant shortage will push up prices to the disadvantage of consumers' interests," he cautions, and advises the government to do thorough research before making any such move for a petty foreign loan.

Governments across the world keep certain kitchen items subsidised in one way or the other to ensure meeting basic food requirements of the people and not leave them up to the mercy of the market economy, he adds.

Some experts do not believe that the government's decision (taken due to pressure from world lenders) to deregulate the milk and meat sector will help the rural economy. They call it a double-edged sword which should be used wisely as currently the majority of rural households is not engaged in livestock-rearing, but is rather a consumer of livestock products.

Mr Hussain also supports this view arguing that hardly 10pc of rural households are rearing animals. "Although some farmers are engaged in livestock business, their number, for example, in a village of 200 households ranges between 12 and 20 families. The other overwhelming majority also purchases milk and meat from the market and thus will be among the list of classes likely to be hit by the deregulation decision."

A former agriculture secretary doubts that the government will be able to follow the DLIs in letter and spirit; in the past such reforms could neither be introduced in agriculture nor in any other sector that could affect the electorate of political governments.

"The past governments have been accepting such conditions while taking various credit lines only to express one excuse or the other to the lending agency for their failures to implement the promised reforms," he says, requesting not to be named.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1393156

SUBSIDY A BAD ECONOMIC POLICY MOST OF THE TIME

The Express Tribune, March 5th, 2018.

Jazib Nelson

Not many concepts of economics are popular with the people of Pakistan. However, subsidies will be on the list of almost every Pakistani that tells how the government can promote economic welfare.

Consumers want the government to give subsidies on a wide range of products and services. Any move to remove or reduce subsidy is viciously overplayed in the mainstream media.

People's fascination with subsidies is based on the welfare concept of state which is endorsed by many economists of Pakistan. According to this viewpoint, the state can reduce poverty and inequality by granting subsidies.

Along with tax rebates, subsidies have become a potent political tool by which government tries to woo voters. In some cases, benefits of the subsidy are exclusively given to economic agents belonging to a particular political constituency.

Earlier this year, the government was criticised by the opposition for giving fertiliser subsidy only to farmers within its own political constituencies.

Despite its popular appeal, people's economic understanding of subsidies is limited at best.

Subsidy is a bad economic policy most of the time. Its negative long-term impact far outstrips any temporary benefits associated with it. The purpose of this article is to dispel common myths about the subsidies both from the consumer and producer's viewpoint.

It is believed that subsidies should be given on essential commodities. These commodities include wheat, electricity and fuel among others.

Currently, the government is subsidising these products through different schemes. For example, we have state-run utility stores. The electricity and gas units that we consume are also subsidised.

In the past, the government has run programmes like Sasti Roti. The Metro Bus service in major cities of Punjab is another example of a subsidised programme.

Such types of subsidies are called untargeted subsidies. These directly contribute to increase in inequality. Even an individual who can easily afford market prices is also enjoying the benefits of cheap rates.

Under the Sasti Roti programme of the Punjab government in 2008, the price of bread was restricted to Rs2 per piece. All individuals were paying the same price whether those living below the poverty line or those having earnings well above that threshold.

Why should an individual with an income of Rs20,000 per month purchase bread at Rs2 when he could easily afford the market rate of Rs4 in 2008?

Similarly, why should big consumers of electricity have to pay for their high consumption at low rates? These schemes are like a tax rebate for the high and middle-income individuals.

There are a lot of such individuals in Pakistan who actually belong to these income classes. Since they spend more on subsidised products and services, their absolute advantages are far more than those who deserve lower rates. Resultantly, subsidised schemes tend to increase absolute inequality in the economy.

Subsidised projects fall prey to financial difficulties quite often which place a serious burden on public expenditure. The Punjab government is still paying millions to cover the cost of loans acquired for financing these schemes.

In order to make room for loan repayments, the government has to compromise spending on areas that can reduce inequality in the long run like education and health.

In Pakistan, subsidies are not limited to individual consumers alone. Different industries are also enjoying subsidies. It is believed that subsidised industrial inputs will encourage domestic industries to produce more and hence increase economic growth.

Unfortunately, even after decades and trillions of rupees in subsidies for major industries of Pakistan, these industries have failed to record sustained growth.

Subsidised industrial inputs distort the price mechanism. This promotes perverse economic decision-making on the part of economic agents which cannot be sustained in the long run.

Take the case of flour industry. Wheat is currently available at a subsidised rate in Pakistan. This encourages would-be millers to set up plants in order to book profits even if production capacity of the existing plants is sufficient to meet domestic demand.

As these new millers don't have much knowledge of the business, they are competed out of the industry. The resources which are wasted due to wrong market signals provided by the subsidies could have been employed in some other business that has room for investment and addition to the capacity.

The government also gives subsidies to exporters with the aim of increasing exports. But the protection accorded by the subsidies to export industries has rendered them uncompetitive in comparison to other countries.

Whenever subsidies are removed, export industries crumble in the face of international competition. However, there are also other factors behind the low competitiveness of Pakistani export industries.

The practice of not disbursing the due subsidy by the government further aggravates the situation. The burden of clearing these subsidies is so much that the government finds it difficult to clear them on a regular basis.

As a way forward, it is recommended that the government should shun the practice of untargeted subsidies. Apart from a few countries, the practice has mostly been stopped in the world.

As a general rule, a thorough study must be conducted before subsidy is provided for any industry.

The writer is a researcher and works in the development sector of Gilgit

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1651211/2-subsidy-bad-economic-policy-time/

SENATE BODY IRKED BY NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT PRICE
The Express Tribune, March 8th, 2018.

The Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research expressed its concern and disappointment over the non-implementation of minimum support prices of sugarcane crop, which was notified by the respective provincial governments for growers during the current season.

The committee, which was chaired by Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, also noted that the minimum support price of Rs160 per 40kg laid down by the Sindh High Court was also not implemented by the provincial government of Sindh. The meeting observed that although it was a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment the federal government should play its role to protect the farmers' rights and agriculture development in the country.

The committee anticipated that in view of the prevailing situation the cultivation of sugarcane would be badly affected and growers would shift to other crops, which would create a serious sugar crisis in the country.

The committee recommended the federal and provincial governments for evolving a proper mechanism in order to provide fair price to the farmers for their produce and protect their rights. The meeting also asked the provincial governments to ensure a minimum support price of sugarcane crop through their sugarcane commissioners.

The committee asked for formulating a proper crop policy in order to avoid such a situation as well as making the agriculture sector more profitable and producing resource-efficient crops to fulfil domestic requirements.

Meanwhile, Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan informed the committee that the matter was also taken up in the meeting of the Council of Common Interests, where the provincial governments were directed to ensure implementation of the minimum support price of sugarcane crops during the crushing season.

The minister apprised the meeting that the federal cabinet has approved to give administrative control of the Pakistan Central Committee to Ministry of National Food Security and Research, which could help enhance the cotton crop output in the country.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1654009/2-senate-body-irked-non-implementation-support-price/

RAJWANA FOR SPECIAL BODY TO HELP RESOLVE RICE EXPORTERS' ISSUES
Business Recorder, 8 March 2018

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Rafiq Rajwana recommended forming a special committee to resolve the difficulties being faced by the rice exporters in carrying out their businesses and enhancing exports.

"A special advisory committee comprising representatives of the federal, provincial and local governments should be formed to resolve issues like taxes, fees and others," he assured Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) members at a reception here the other day.

He also said the government should accept the demand of rice exporters to declare it as an Industry as it is fetching over $2.5 billion and potential is to do more. It is also contributing Rs 16 billion in terms of direct and indirect taxes. He assured that he would also play his role in this regard. The governor said the government functionaries would be asked to devise revenue policies in consultation with the stakeholders.

REAP chairman Samiullah Naeem informed the governor that after 18th amendment their problems have been multiplied as now they need to coordinate with provincial and federal governments both. He pointed out that in rice producing districts, Sheikhupura and Gujranwala, local government authorities have also started harassing them by recovering fees from their offices imposed on industries while the rice sector doesn't enjoy the industry status.

Samiullah said that agriculture after 18th amendment is a provincial subject while exports are federal. He regretted that there is a big disconnect between the two causing serious harm to rice exports. He suggested for formation of a joint platform having all the stakeholders and claimed that best step in this regard would be declaring this sector as an Industry.

"It will bring all the farmers, millers and exporters under the Federal Ministry of Industries where these stakeholders could come up with some solid proposal to resolve the issues faced by the rice exports," he added.

SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's vice president Iftikhar Malik in his address lamented on the quality of research and development in the government sector in agriculture sector. He was of the view that the research activities should be expedited to produce high yielding rice varieties to increase production to enable more exports from the country. He said that the focus should also be given to produce new varieties having resistance against different diseases and can meet the challenges of climate change. Appreciating REAP efforts to enhance rice exports, he said that the Association was going in right direction and the government should patronize it at every level.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/08/17-page/703753-news.html

April 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 23 RD TO APRIL 29TH 2018

FARMERS PIN THEIR HOPES ON NEW BUDGET

Dawn,The Business and Finance Weekly, April 23rd, 2018

THE planned presentation of the next fiscal budget on April 27, two months before the end of this fiscal year, seems a certainty now.

But for the agriculture sector a longer than usual time lapse between the budget presentation and its implementation could create more problems than in other sectors. The reason behind this is that commodity markets are quicker in factoring in future trends, particularly if they can be predicted with certainty.

Most budgetary steps such as changes in tax and duty structure, and offers or withdrawal of subsidies and incentives to agriculture, provide a solid basis for predictable trends and behaviours in supply, demand and pricing.

“One can hardly expect to hear big news in the next federal budget”, says a senior official of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, regarding digitisation in agriculture and making agriculture climate-smart, adding that provincial governments may have something in store.

Sindh has only recently announced a much overdue agriculture policy, and making agriculture climate-smart is one of the cornerstones of this policy. “Let’s hope we hear more about it in the provincial budget.

“Let’s see how much resources are allocated for this purpose and what mechanism is introduced for its implementation,” said an official of the Sindh agriculture department, refusing to give the specifics.

The federal government is likely to set a growth target of 3.8 per cent for agriculture in the next fiscal year, up from 3.5pc for this year

The federal government would likely set a growth target of 3.8 per cent for agriculture in the next fiscal year, up from 3.5pc for this year. And it would likely announce a comprehensive package for the farming community to help meet the desired growth in agriculture.

Sales tax exemption on imports of agriculture machinery, unified rate of sales tax on all types of fertilisers, and concessional tariff on tube wells used for agricultural purposes are part of the proposed package, according to a Dawn report.

In the budget, the government is expected to allocate Rs37 billion for the Diamer-Bhasha dam to increase the national water storage capacity in 38 to 45 days. The completion of the dam would take several years. But mere initiation of civil works alone would likely cheer up the whole nation, particularly water-starved farmers.

For several years, federal and provincial authorities have been promising support for projects aimed at water conservation but no major development has so far taken place.

Farmer lobby groups including Sindh Abadgar Board hope that in the next budget a couple of such projects would also be announced to win rural support in upcoming elections.

Officials of the Sindh Abadgar Board, Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, Pakistan Muttahida Kissan Mahaz and Agri Forum Pakistan say that the farming community is expecting from the federal budget schemes that can help in making barren land cultivable.

Without these, producing more food and non-food crops sufficient for domestic consumption, while creating enough export surpluses at the same time is not possible.

The best way forward according to them is to expand arable land and boost agricultural research and innovation alongside boosting the per-hectare yields of the crops. Failure to do so would ensure that commodity shortages keep hitting occasionally and the country will remain a net importer of food items.

Despite farmers' demands and protests, a pro-industry bias remains visible. Take for example, the case of setting up Balochistan Bank, announced at the beginning of this fiscal year, for ensuring greater access of Balochistan-based farmers to formal finance.

"This fiscal year is going to close after two months and we don't know why the promised bank has not been set up," says an official of Balochistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry who has been tracking progress in this matter on behalf of the chamber.

Agriculture in Pakistan is divided into four key sub-sectors: crops, livestock and poultry, fisheries and forestry. Budgetary measures specific to any of these sectors or to a combination of them have a direct impact on agricultural growth.

But unlike the crops and livestock and poultry sub-sectors, in which politically-influential people have business stakes, fisheries and forestry get little or no attention. This has to change for both harmonised growth of each sub-sector as well as for growth of services sector and building export base.

Officials of the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association and Pakistan Flour Mills Association say they need financial and technical support to carry out balancing, modernising and replacement (BMR) projects.

They say that a large number of ginneries and flour mills are using decades old plants, and without BMR neither their outputs can be optimised nor productivity improved.

After experiencing immense hardships in disposing off their crop and suffering losses due to sugar millers' refusal to lift sugarcane at the support prices fixed by the Sindh and Punjab governments, cane growers say they don't have high hopes from the upcoming federal budget.

As sugarcane growers see it, protecting the interests of sugar millers at the cost of cane growers seems to have become an agenda for our politicians. For them, the best thing the federal budget can offer is a transparent system of resolving issues between growers and millers over lifting of cane crop and clearance of dues.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1403361/farmers-pin-their-hopes-on-new-budget

THE MYRIAD PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE SECTOR
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 23rd, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

AS the federal government is set to announce the next year's budget, agriculturists and growers are concerned about the water issue, rising costs of inputs, lower price of commodities, and subsidies.

Agriculture experts and farmers' leaders want the federal government to ensure an enabling environment that can help growers get desired per-acre productivity. The delay in transfer of powers to provinces in the wake of the 18th constitutional amendment has also affected the performance of the sector, which recently recorded negative growth, they argue.

Water and unending power outages has taken a heavy toll on growers across Pakistan, prompting them to ask the federal government to focus on the provision of solar-powered tubewells.

"Agriculture has yet to be fully devolved to provinces, even nine years after the 18th amendment," Mohammad Ibrahim Mughal, chairman of Agri Forum Pakistan, tells Dawn from Lahore. Practically speaking, some important sub-sectors of agriculture are still with the federal government, he says.

He urges the federal government to take policy decisions in the upcoming budget, so that the farm sector is completely transferred to provinces.

Agriculture sector growth has fallen drastically in the recent past, mainly because of a widening gap between the cost of inputs and commodity prices, stakeholders say

Mr Mughal observes that agricultural growth is directly linked with strict regulation of seed, fertiliser, farm equipment, agriculture credit, pesticides and price control mechanism. However, provinces still look towards the centre if they have to take any decision regarding the import or export of fertiliser, pesticides and seeds, or if they need to import machinery and require tax waivers, he says.

He says the agriculture sector contributes 22 per cent to the country's GDP and should therefore get at least half of its contribution, if not proportionate funds.

"Historically, growth in the farm sector has varied between 4pc and 5pc. But it has fallen drastically in the recent past, mainly because of a widening gap between the cost of inputs and commodity prices," he says.

Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa witnessed unprecedented crisis this year over sugar cane prices, as sugar millers refused to follow government-notified rates.

Hyderabad-based progressive grower Mahmood Nawaz Shah, the vice president of Sindh Abadgar Board, believes that the farm sector lacks an enabling environment — ie services, infrastructure and farm credit.

"The federal government must ensure just disbursement of farm credit to save growers from exploitation in rural areas, where they turn to informal lenders to run their economy," he says. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, 88pc of farm credit was absorbed by Punjab last year.

Reduced water flows coupled with increasing on-farm water losses also pose a serious challenge to the agriculture sector across the country. Energy crisis aggravates the issue even further, as growers cannot run tubewells for most of the day. The provision of solar-powered tubewells is still a far cry.

Mr Shah says the federal government needs to ensure continuity in its agriculture policy. Small and midsized farmers are quite concerned about farm credit, the non-availability of certified seeds and higher costs of inputs.

He expects the federal government to link the agriculture sector with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as China, despite being a large producer of agriculture commodities, still imports a sizeable quantity of commodities from other countries. Horticulture produces are one such option in this regard, he says.

In KP, officials of Kissan Board point out that the federal government has not focussed on regulating the cash crop of tobacco, which is under the domain of the federal commerce ministry.

“Tobacco crop contributes Rs110bn annual excise duty to the centre, but growers continue to be exploited owing to monopoly of some companies,” contends Rizwanullah of Kissan Board from Peshawar. The federal government should ensure that the Pakistan Tobacco Board should play its due role in this regard, he says.

Quetta-based Naseer Shahwani, secretary general of the Zamidnar Action Committee, complains that Balochistan is not usually featured in federal government’s policymaking relating to the agriculture sector.

“Kachhi Canal that started from Punjab can irrigate 600,000 acres, but it has been stopped at Dera Bugti. It needs to be extended to Bolan district for irrigated agriculture,” he says.

He says the province has 30,000 tubewells, which should be converted to solar power. Besides, more solar-powered tubewells should be installed to bring more area under cultivation.

“Balochistan has a huge potential for horticulture produces like dates, which are exported to Iran and then again lands in Pakistan under Iranian brand names,” he claims.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1403355/the-myriad-problems-of-agriculture-sector

SC SUMMONS SUGAR MILLS OWNERS OVER NON-PAYMENT TO FARMERS
Dawn, April 25th, 2018

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: As the issue of non-payment of sugarcane price to farmers is pending, the Supreme Court has directed the owners of all sugar mills to appear in person before it on Thursday.

According to a statement, a three-judge SC bench headed by Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar on Tuesday heard a suo motu case regarding non-payment of sugarcane price to farmers/growers by sugar mills as well as delay in payment.

The bench, after hearing the counsel as well as the growers, observed that in order to effectively resolve the issue of non-payment to sugarcane growers, the court found it expedient that the owners (not CEOs/directors, etc) of all sugar mills must personally appear before it in Islamabad on April 26 at 4.30pm to explain their position.

Moreover, as per the court order, the statement would be deemed to be a public notice to the owners of all sugar mills in the country for their personal appearance before the court.

Meanwhile, the CJP has taken notice of the Lahore High Court's decision of not selecting a blind advocate, Yousaf Saleem, as civil judge.

Mr Saleem — who is a gold medallist from the University of Punjab in LLB (Honors) Programme in 2014 and topped the written examination for civil judges conducted by the LHC in 2017 amongst 6,500 candidates — was rejected in the interview on the grounds that he had a different ability i.e. "blindness".

Taking cognizance of the matter, the CJP has observed that a person can hold the post of a judge even if he is blind, provided he meets all other qualifications.

According to a statement, it appeared that in the case of Mr Saleem fundamental rights under Articles 9, 14 and 25 of the Constitution, the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Pakistan in year 2011, the 3pc quota under the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation), etc, were not considered by the LHC.

The CJP has referred the matter to the LHC chief justice and the relevant committee of the high court for reconsideration of the name of the candidate and to give a speaking opinion.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1403744

SHC ORDERS MAGISTRATES TO OVERSEE DISTRIBUTION OF GUNNY BAGS
Dawn, 26 April 2018

HYDERABAD: The Hyderabad circuit bench of the Sindh High Court on Tuesday ordered sessions judges of 12 districts in lower Sindh region to appoint one judicial magistrate each in talukas to monitor the process of distribution of gunny bags by food inspectors and other officers concerned.

The division bench comprising Justices Azizur Rehman and Fahim Ahmed Siddiqui passed the order and thereby disposed of 18 identical petitions filed by growers from several areas.

The petitioners said that the officials concerned, who were made respondents in their petitions, were not supplying gunny bags to them as per policy and according to their demands.

The gunny bags' issue arose every year during this season in April when wheat crop was ready for procurement by government, they said.

They said that procurement process was carried out by food department through respective district food inspectors and every year growers filed several petitions against food department with almost similar complaints.

The court referred to an order passed by the Sukkur bench of the SHC on April 26 last year whereby it had disposed of eight identical petitions on a similar issue, ordering sessions judge to nominate civil judge and judicial magistrate in each taluka of the district to monitor distribution of gunny bags to petitioners.

On Tuesday, the court directed sessions' judges of Hyderabad, Dadu, Jamshoro, Matiari, Tando Allahyar, Tando Mohammad Khan, Mirpurkhas, Tharparkar, Badin, Sanghar, Nawabshah and Umerkot to nominate one judicial magistrate for each taluka to monitor the process of distribution of wheat bags.

The court also ordered deputy commissioners and superintendents of police to cooperate with judicial officers and issue necessary directives to their staff in this regard.

The district food inspectors were directed to liaise with district judges concerned and nominated judicial magistrates and follow their instructions.

According to the order, the district and sessions judges were directed to keep an eye on the entire process of distribution of wheat bags and ensure the process was transparent and complaints in this regard were addressed promptly after due process.

The judges were fully authorised to take any appropriate action against delinquent officials in accordance with law, it said.

The court also ordered that practice of appointment of judicial magistrate by district and sessions judges subject to prevailing policy would continue each year during wheat harvesting season.

The order said that district and sessions judges as well as nominated judicial magistrates might use any coercive measure for the enforcement of their directives for distribution of wheat bags as per prescribed policy, rules and procedures in an adequate and transparent manner.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1403837/shc-orders-magistrates-to-oversee-distribution-of-gunny-bags

SC ORDERS SUGAR MILLS TO CLEAR FARMERS' PAYMENT IN FIVE DAYS
Dawn, April 27th, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered sugar mill owners to release all payments to farmers within five weeks.

A three-judge SC bench, headed by Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, had summoned the owners of several sugar mills after receiving complaints of payment problems by sugarcane farmers.

High-profile sugar magnates, including Jahangir Tareen of the JDW Sugar Mills, Salman Shahbaz of the Ramzan Sugar Mills and Mian Amir Mehmood of the Gulf Sugar Mills, appeared before the court on Thursday.

One by one all the owners of the sugar mills came to the rostrum and were instructed by the apex court to make all payments within five weeks.

The court also took notice of complaints made by several farmers that the sugar mills were not lifting sugarcane stock from the farmers despite earlier undertakings of doing so at the government rate of Rs180 per maund. The court warned the sugar mill owners that those who were attempting to mislead the court would have to face serious consequences.

The court restrained the sugar mills from making cash payments to farmers and asked them to make these through cheque or bank draft.

During the proceedings, the chief justice regretted that the country was destroyed not by any driver or clerk but by those who were at the helm of affairs.

Just over two months ago, on Feb 19, the apex court had ordered JDW Sugar Mills, Hamza Sugar Mills, Rahim Yar Khan Sugar Mills, Indus Sugar Mills and Ashraf Sugar Mills, as well as Cane Commissioner Sanaullah and Rahim Yar Khan District Commissioner Suqrat Aman Rana to hold talks with sugarcane farmers and come up with a solution acceptable to all parties.

The court said that it was important to end the crisis and address the concerns of famers who were promised higher prices but were not getting them.

The situation was even more serious given the fact that the owners of the sugar mills had committed — before the Supreme Court — to purchasing sugarcane from farmers at the government-prescribed rate.

On Feb 21, the court had unsealed three sugar mills in south Punjab — Haseeb Waqas Sugar Mills Ltd, Chaudhry Sugar Mills Ltd, and Ittefaq Sugar Mills — when the five operational sugar mills failed to reach an agreement to procure the existing stock of sugarcane from farmers at the government rate of Rs180 per maund.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404144

AGRI SEES ‘HIGHEST GROWTH IN 13 YEARS’
Dawn, April 27th, 2018

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Stemmed from high yields, attractive output prices and supportive government policies, the agriculture sector continued strong performance with growth of 3.81 per cent during the outgoing fiscal year.

The Economic Survey 2017-18 noted that better availability of certified seeds, pesticides, agriculture credit and intensive fertiliser off-take also contributed to expansion of the sector.Presenting the survey, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance Miftah Ismail said that the growth in agriculture sector is the highest in the past 13 years. The growth rate exceeded the targeted growth of 3.5pc for 2017-18, and also last year’s growth of 2.07pc, survey notes.

The crops sector performed well and witnessed a growth rate of 3.83pc against the last year’s growth of 0.91pc. The growth in sub sectors, important crops, other crops and cotton ginning registered a significant growth of 3.57pc, 3.33pc and 8.72pc, respectively, against last year’s growth of 2.18pc, negative 2.26pc and 5.58pc respectively.

Major Kharif crops such as sugarcane and rice surpassed their production targets by recording growth of 7.45pc and 8.65pc, respectively, while cotton crop managed to exceed last year's production level by recording growth of 11.85pc during 2017-18.

Wheat and maize crop production remained subdued, as it witnessed decline of 4.43pc and 7.04pc respectively. Other crops having share of 10.80pc in agriculture value-addition and 2.04pc in GDP, grew by 3.33pc on the back of increase in the production of fodder, vegetables and fruits.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404152

RELIEF MEASURES FOR AGRICULTURE CONTINUE
The Express Tribune, April 28th, 2018.

Salman Siddiqui

Agriculture sector continued to win the government's heart and mind in the budget as it received extended relief measures and subsidies on multiple counts to remain vibrant and be able to feed the nation.

"The government has increased agriculture credit limit to (a cumulative) Rs1,100 billion for the next fiscal year… from Rs1,001 billion last year. Additionally, interest rate on agriculture credit has also been reduced significantly," said Finance Minister Miftah Ismail while announcing the budget in the National Assembly.

At the end of February 2018, disbursement stood at Rs570 billion, and it is expected to increase to Rs800 billion by June 2018 against the set target of Rs1,001 billion, he said. Considering fertiliser as the critical farm input, the federal government reduced sales tax on all kinds of fertilisers.

I am happy to announce that from July, 2018 there will be a reduced uniform GST rate of 2% on all fertilisers. This will eliminate distortions in the tax regime, further reduce fertiliser prices and promote use of balanced nutrients," he said.

The rate of sales tax on supply of natural gas to fertiliser manufacturing plants for use as 'feed stock,' presently chargeable at the rate of 10%, may be reduced to 5% to cater for cash flow issues of manufacturers. Likewise, the rate of sales tax on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to be imported by fertiliser manufacturers for use as feed stock is also proposed to be reduced from 5% to 0%, he said.

He also proposed to reduce GST on agriculture machinery from the current 7% to 5%.

Availability of water is necessary for crop production. The government presently provides electricity for agriculture tube well at reduced rates.

During 2018-19, the scheme will continue in these areas where the provincial governments agree to share cost of subsidy on a 50:50 basis.

The government is also proposing setting up an Agriculture Research Support Fund with an initial allocation of Rs5 billion. "The fund will provide financial grants for research and development of modern plant and seed varieties for achieving higher crop yields. The fund will be jointly managed by Finance Division and Ministry of National Food Security and Research," he said.

The government is also proposing to establish a separate fund for indigenisation of agriculture technology with an initial allocation of Rs5 billion.

Livestock

The livestock sector continues to be the largest sub-sector of agriculture in Pakistan. To sustain the growth in the sub-sector and provide further relief, it is proposed that "customs duty of 3% on import of bulls meant for breeding purposes be withdrawn," Ismail said.

Presently, available concessionary rate of customs duty on the import of feeds meant for livestock sector may be further reduced from 10% to 5% and fans meant for use in dairy farms be allowed at a concessionary rate of 3% to members of the Corporate Dairy Association.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1697306/2-relief-measures-agriculture-continue/

FARMERS DEMAND FLAT ELECTRICITY RATES FOR AGRI TUBE WELLS
Business Recorder, 28 April 2018

LAHORE: Different farmer organisations came up with a mixed reaction over the federal budget proposed for 2018-19 and urged the government to announce flat electricity rates for the agricultural tube-wells and withdraw levies on diesel as it will bring down the cost of input for the growers.

Pakistan Muttahida Kissan Mahaz (PMKM) Chairman Ayub Khan Mayo said that the growers are happy on bringing down the sales tax on import of agricultural implements and import of seed as 95 percent of seed is imported in the country. However, he said that the government should announce to make subsidy given on electricity to agricultural tube-wells permanent instead of revising it after every three months.

He said the government should also withdraw levies on diesel as annually Rs300 billion worth diesel is used by the agricultural sector and withdrawal of 40 percent levies will remove heavy burden on the farming.

Mayo also urged the government to revive the Research & Development (R&D) activities in the country to develop local seeds and local agricultural machinery.

Kissan Board Pakistan (KBP) Central President Chaudhry Nisar Ahmad in his immediate reaction to the federal budget said it seemed that the agriculture was again not the first priority of the rulers. He claimed that no subsidy had been announced on agricultural inputs, pesticides and electricity. He claimed that the economy could not improve without assigning top priority to agriculture. He urged the government to withdraw markup on agricultural loans. He urged the opposition to play its role so that this anti-farmer budget should not be approved by the parliament.

Ch Nisar also claimed that the government should have exempted agricultural inputs and implements from sales tax completely. He also lamented the government for not allocating any fund for development of livestock and claimed it created disappointment among the farmers.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/28/51-page/713180-news.html

AGRI SECTOR RECORDED 3.81PC GROWTH IN 2017-18: PAD

Business Recorder, 29 April 2018
LAHORE: The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) has said that Agriculture sector recorded a remarkable growth of 3.81 percent and surpassed its targeted growth of 3.5 percent and last year's growth of 2.07 percent.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, PAD spokesman quoting the Economic Survey Report 2017-18, claimed that the crop sector performed well and witnessed a growth rate of 3.83 percent against the last year's growth of 0.91 percent. This stemmed from higher yields, attractive output prices and supportive government policies, better availability of certified seeds, pesticides, agriculture credit and intensive fertilizers off take.

The growth in sub sectors, important crops, other crops and cotton ginning registered a significant growth of 3.57 percent, 3.33 percent and 8.72 percent respectively against last year growth of 2.18 percent, -2.66 percent and 5.58 percent respectively. Major Kharif crops such as Sugarcane, Rice surpassed their production targets during 2017-18 by recording growth of 7.45 percent and 8.65 percent respectively while Cotton crop production managed to exceed last year's production leveled by recording growth of 11.85 percent.

Other crops having share of 10.80 percent in Agriculture value addition and contribute 2.04% in GDP, grew by 3.33 percent on the back of increase in production of fodder, vegetables and fruits.

Spokesman further says that to sustain agriculture growth rate, Government of Punjab has planned to pin agriculture sector on pure scientific basis. So, keeping in view, farmers are now being empowered by inclusion of digital and financial inclusion.

Through Connected Agriculture Platform Punjab (CAPP) department is providing extension services to the farming community through specialized Apps of smartphone and 110,000 registered farmers are being given such smartphones in Punjab.

For immediate relief of cotton growers, government is providing approved varieties of cotton seed up to 50 percent subsidized rate and also providing subsidy voucher @Rs.700 per cotton bag to core area of cotton growers. More than Rs.14 million is being spent for provision of agricultural machinery to cotton growers.

To save cotton crop against Pink Bollworm attack, Rs.96.2 million spent on PB Ropes that was installed on 50 districts of Punjab on 50 acre blocks. What is more, Government of Punjab provided 110,000 smart phones to the farmers equipped with special applications through which extension services are being provided to cotton growers and other crops.

For Cotton high yield seed production Rs.350.889 million is being spent on "Commissioned Research Program". For White fly control, Government of Punjab is spending Rs.39.612 million to provide genetic modified varieties of cotton crop. In nut shell, Government of Punjab is taking many steps to put agriculture sector on path of profitability.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/29/43-page/713342-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 16TH TO APRIL 22ND 2018
CABINET APPROVES SINDH'S 'FIRST-EVER' AGRICULTURE AND YOUTH POLICIES
Dawn, April 17th, 2018

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: At the fag end of its five-year term, the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government on Monday approved the province's first-ever agriculture and youth policies.

The two policies were presented before the Sindh cabinet, which met here with Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in the chair, and after hours-long deliberation it approved what was being billed as the government's major policy decisions.

Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal while presenting the agriculture policy informed the cabinet that it was complimented by a series of background studies in the areas of macroeconomic factors in addition to consultation with farmers and other stakeholders.

The policy would remain in place till 2030, he added. However, various legal, regulatory, institutional and expenditure-related changes set out in the policy would be implemented over a period of two years — 2018-20.

Sharing some facts with the cabinet, CM Shah said that in terms of agriculture, Sindh accounted for 18 per cent of the country's land area, 16pc of its total cropped area and contributed about 23pc to the national value-added agriculture.

10 buses to be brought in Karachi in one week; new prosecutor general named

He, however, said that the sector did not perform to its potential in financial year 2015-16 which led to the agriculture growth being negative for the first time in the country.

He said that more critically, what little growth had occurred was the result of more land, water and input, higher livestock numbers or greater fishing effort.

The CM added that such an input-based pattern of growth was not sustainable as it was estimated that by 2025 the water requirements for agriculture would increase by about 50pc if the current irrigation practices continued. "In coming years, enhanced productivity has to take over as the principal engine of growth," he added.

The salient features of the new policy include increasing credit flows into crop, livestock and fisheries and for associated rural off-farm activities; development of new instruments such as warehouse receipts and building linkages; formal and informal sources of credit; to simplify the procedure for land use, land transfer and lease for establishment of rural enterprise; to reform the legal and regulatory system governing agriculture and livestock marketing and to redesign the price support system; to improve legislation, regulations, labelling and quality oversight in the market for inputs, particularly for seed, fertilisers, pesticides, animal feed and veterinary medicines, as well as for certification system for organic crop, livestock and fisheries products.

It also includes attracting investors, both domestic and foreign, to rural areas through fiscal incentives; a better legal/regulatory environment for commercial farming, cold chain and agro-based industry and to promote export of high-value food production; to review and reallocate government expenditure on agriculture as well as direct and indirect subsidies; to restructure, rightsize and rationalise government departments concerned to be made ‘fit for purpose’ avoiding duplication of efforts with improved conditions; to reform the public research and extension system for crops, horticulture, livestock and fisheries, particularly their governance mechanism.

The cabinet was informed that the Sindh youth policy, said to have been formed in consultation with all stakeholders, was the central tool to systematically integrate, implement and evaluate all youth development work in the province.

It aims at building youths who are economically sound, socially progressive and politically engaged and who possess appropriate skills and tolerant values of good citizens.

The highlights of the youth policy include establishment of a youth development commission; centralised information system on youth development and job database; formation of a job bank; establishment of institute placement bureaus; establishment of youth venture capital fund, annual innovation competitions and formation of small incubation centres at universities; entrepreneurship training at universities by private sector, crash programme of technical education; youth-led mass awareness campaigns; devise models of elected student councils, exposure trips, reactivation of students union, establishment of artisan support programme, reactivation of boys and girls guides at school and such others.

The cabinet also approved a plan to bring 10 air-conditioned intra-city buses in Karachi within one week as a pilot project.

Transport Minister Syed Nasir Shah told the cabinet that the fare slab for operation of the 10 AC buses on intra-city routes had been proposed in consultation with all the stakeholders at Rs20 for less than five kilometres, Rs30 for five to 15km and Rs40 for 15km and above.

These buses would run from Quaidabad to Tower via Malir, Star Gate, Sharea Faisal, Shah Faisal Colony, Natha Khan, Drigh Road, PAF Gate, Karsaz, Baloch Colony, Nursery, Jinnah Hospital, Metropole Hotel, Fawwara Chowk, Arts Council, I.I. Chundrigar Road.

The cabinet also approved the appointment of Ayaz Hussain Tunio as the new prosecutor general of Sindh.

Previously, the government appointed Fiazul Hassan to the post but he was stopped from taking the office as he is younger than the required age of 45.

The cabinet also made some amendments in the Sindh Sports Board. Earlier, it was headed by the governor and now it would be chaired by Sindh chief minister with provincial sports minister as its vice chairman.

The cabinet also discussed the issue of regularisation of NTS-passed teachers, who were appointed on a contract basis and a bill to regularise them was passed by the assembly but the governor returned it with the observations that the teachers were appointed to address the issue of non-availability of teachers at union council/taluka levels but the bill categorically killed the spirit of the policy.

The cabinet after addressing the observations made by the governor referred the bill back to the assembly to pass it again and also decided that the teachers' transfer/posting would be made in such a way that no school would be deprived of a teacher.

The cabinet also approved the draft bills to establish Shaikh Ayaz University after upgrading the Shikarpur campus of the Shah Abdul Latif University, and also approved the establishment of Begum Nusrat Bhutto Women University, Sukkur.

Also, the cabinet on the recommendation of the Sindh High Court chief justice repatriated District and Sessions Judge Mushtaq Ahmed Kalwar, presently working as the presiding officer of the Sindh Labour Court No. VI, Hyderabad, and approved nomination of DJ Abrar Hussain F. Memon, presently working as presiding officer of the Sindh Labour Court No. VIII, Larkana in place of Mushtaq Ahmed Kalwar with the request to the CJ to nominate a presiding officer for the Sindh labour Court No. VIII, Larkana, which had fallen vacant.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1402050

COMMISSION FORMED TO IMPLEMENT AGRICULTURE POLICY
Dawn, April 18th, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government has announced setting up of the Agriculture Policy Implementation Commission (APIC) and tasked it with the preparation of detailed strategies and action plans and addressing all emerging issues of the just announced agriculture policy, besides overseeing its implementation.

The announcement was made by Minister for Agriculture Sohail Anwar Siyal while addressing a press conference along with Minister for Information Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Mohammed Ali Malkani here on Tuesday.

He said the commission would be headed by the minister for agriculture, supplies and prices and its other members would be the planning and development board chairman, secretaries of the agriculture, finance, forest and irrigation departments, Sindh Agricultural Growth Project's coordinator, farmers' representatives — heads of the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) and Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) — representatives of livestock and fisheries producers, private sector and academia.

Mr Siyal highlighted salient features of the first-ever agriculture policy for Sindh approved by the provincial cabinet on Monday, and said Sindh was the second largest economy of the country endowed with many characteristics of a high-growth region including excellent conditions for the agriculture sector.

He said the government wanted to create an efficient, prosperous and resilient agriculture sector that could provide good income and decent employment to those involved in the production, processing, transportation and storage of [farm, livestock and fisheries] produce and at the same time provide safe, nutritious and cheap food to both urban and rural populations as well as help earn foreign exchange through export of high-value products.

The minister said that to achieve the objectives of the new policy, both public and private investments would be essentially required.

He said the government attached great importance to development of agriculture sector and the allocation of Rs64 billion in the current financial year to the livestock, fisheries and irrigation departments was reflective of the fact.

He, however, observed that the agriculture, livestock and fisheries in Sindh, as well as in the country, could not perform up to their full potential over the past two decades, the principal causes being low income and high food prices.

Under the new policy, he added, steps would be taken to increase the agricultural sector growth by 4-5 per cent per annum which was essential to raising incomes, alleviating poverty and containing food insecurity.

Mr Siyal said that the research and extension systems would be strengthened to introduce technological innovations in production through improved seeds of major and high-value crops and livestock breeds.

The minister said that the demand for products like fresh and processed fruits, vegetables and livestock was increasing.

The government would work to create a regulatory framework to encourage investments and increase the level and efficiency of relevant programmes.

“The key natural resources for agriculture in Sindh are its soil and water. The government will promote better on-farm water management, regulate and control groundwater resources as well as environmental flows downstream Kotri and coastal areas, manage rangelands, enhance effective controls on pollutants and promote agro-forestry,” he said.

Mr Siyal said that the idea of integrated water management would be implemented to contain water scarcity and manage the competing water demands of agriculture, municipal and industrial users.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1402188/commission-formed-to-implement-agriculture-policy

SINDH ASSEMBLY: GUNNY BAGS BEING SUPPLIED TO SELECTIVE FARMERS, DECRIES MPA
The Express Tribune, 17 April 2018

The Sindh Assembly’s proceedings on Monday were dominated by the issue of wheat procurement, including the distribution of gunny bags.

As the session started with speaker Agha Siraj Durrani in chair, Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz MPA Sorath Thebo moved a call attention notice alleging that that the procurement season of wheat had started in the province but gunny bags were not being supplied to farmers so that they could sell their wheat stock at the approved rates.

"Wheat procurement centres have not been established yet in many areas of Sindh and the officials concerned are unwilling to meet the farmers. Their phones are switched off. No farmer can get gunny bags without a 'parchi' or political influence," the MPA lamented, adding, that genuine farmers are protesting but no one is listening to them.

Responding to her, Parliamentary and Food Minister Nisar Ahmed Khuhro said the government had fixed 1.4 million metric tons of wheat for procurement, adding that a total of 5.5 million metric tons had been produced in the province and it was not possible for the government to purchase all the wheat at support prices – Rs1,300 per 40 kilogrammes. He maintained that the government had borrowed Rs1 billion from banks to procure wheat and give subsidies to the farmers.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1687328/1-sindh-assembly-gunny-bags-supplied-selective-farmers-decries-mpa/

GOVT LIKELY TO WITHDRAW CASH SUBSIDY ON UREA SALES
The Express Tribune, April 17th, 2018.

The government is likely to end cash subsidy on the sale of urea to farmers and impose a flat 2% sales tax on all fertiliser products in the upcoming budget for fiscal year 2018-19.

At present, the government is giving a subsidy of Rs100 on the sale of each bag of urea to the farmers. In the previous fiscal year 2016-17, the growers got a cash subsidy of Rs156 per bag.

However, fertiliser manufacturers argued that the government had not yet disbursed Rs13 billion to them for 2016-17. They revealed that the industry had also sold fertiliser to the farmers at the subsidised rate during the current fiscal year which amounted to Rs12 billion. But the government has not yet released a single penny, causing strain on the industry's cash flow.

At present, the government is collecting 5% general sales tax on the sale of urea to the farmers and a plan is under study to reduce the tax rate to a flat 2% for all fertiliser products, which the industry believes will further aggravate the refund situation.

At present, there is a mismatch between input and output taxes. According to the standard principle, taxes are higher on finished products and are lower on raw material, but the case is reverse for the fertiliser industry, which has given birth to the refund problem.

In a letter, the Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council, a representative body of fertiliser producers, has conveyed its concerns to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research secretary, saying it would compound miseries of the industry.

The council pointed out that it had come to know that the government was considering revising the output tax to impose a flat 2% sales tax on all fertiliser products and withdraw the urea subsidy.

Though “it is a welcome step, it will lead to huge financial implications for the industry unless the general sales tax on various inputs like gas and raw material is reduced proportionally,” the council said in the letter.

At present, 10% sales tax is paid on feedstock and 17% on fuel and other goods. Apart from these, 5% sales tax is collected on urea, Rs70 per bag is collected from the farmers while Rs123 per bag is paid by the industry, resulting in a huge burden of refunds.

The fertiliser body pointed out that the difference was greater in the case of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) which was produced by them with the help of imported raw material that was taxed at the rate of 3%.

It argued that a further reduction in sales tax on output would phenomenally add to the government’s refund liability. Moreover, it may lead to price revision by the industry to offset its impact.

In order to address the mismatch between input and output taxes, the council asked the government to scrap the sales tax on all inputs including gas, liquefied natural gas, phosphoric acid, steam and power for DAP.

At present, the government is receiving 10% sales tax on feedstock (gas supply), which the fertiliser industry demanded should be removed by the government.

“It will help the industry to overcome the cash flow challenge caused by the heavy amount stuck in outstanding refunds and sluggish pace of subsidy disbursement,” it said.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1687185/2-govt-likely-withdraw-cash-subsidy-urea-sales/

PUNJAB AGRI DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES ‘SMART’ PROGRAMME
Busness Recorder, 17 April 2018

Zahid Baig

LAHORE: The Punjab Agriculture Department has launched a comprehensive agricultural reforms package ‘Strengthening Markets for Agriculture and Rural Transformation Project (SMART)’ with an expected addition of US$2.2 billion to the economic value of farming, creating 350,000 jobs and bringing 1.7 million people out of the poverty over a period of five years.

The SMART reform package has five main components – making farm subsidies work, allowing the private sector to set up agricultural markets, stimulating production and improving the quality of meat and milk. Other components are increasing animal productivity and improving animal health care and improving the use of irrigation water. Secretary Agriculture Punjab Muhammad Mahmood sharing the salient features of this programme with journalists here on Monday claimed that the government of Punjab is committed to modernizing Punjab’s agriculture and to transform it into an engine of growth, job creation and multifold prosperity. He was of the view that the long-needed reforms under this programme will help raise farmers’ income, give consumers better quality, nutritious and safer food at lower prices, create more jobs on farms and opportunities in agribusinesses and improving the usage of irrigation water (more crop per drop).

Mahmood said agriculture in Punjab had been demonstrating a declining trend in last three decades, showing an average annual growth of less than 3 percent, while it has the potential to grow at a rate of 7-8 percent. High input costs and low yield output lead to low farmers' incomes and consumers are limited to buying low quality, he said. "Wheat flour, a staple food item for the local consumers, costs more than anywhere else in the world. The price of wheat in Punjab has risen by 300 percent in the last 10 years while the world market price of wheat has decreased by 50 percent over the same period."

He further said that for a long time Punjab's main agricultural goal had been to achieve food security through self-sufficiency and that goal had been achieved and even surpassed. Today Punjab is a massive wheat production hub and it is over producing wheat but at too high a price for consumers, he added.

Mahmood further said that a significant part of the 55 billion rupees a year of government spending on untargeted and expensive subsidies will be re-oriented towards "smart" and efficient subsidies targeted to small farmers, public investments that increase farmers' productivity and incomes, financial support to agribusiness, and improvements in irrigation management. He also threw light on crop insurance scheme launched by the provincial government and said that currently it is available for four crops in two districts and gradually it would be expanded to the whole of province. He said the agricultural marketing, research and development and extension work would also be revamped under this programme.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/17/13-page/711154-news.html

KHARIF CROP: PPCBL TO DISBURSE RS2500M LOANS
Business Recorder, 17 April 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab Provincial Co-operative Bank Ltd (PPCBL) has set a target of disbursement of Rs2 500 million loans for the Khareef crop.

The bank has also recovered Rs784.06 million under the head of non-operative loans up to March 29, 2018. This was informed to a meeting held between the officials of Co-operative department and PPCBL with Zulfiqar Ahmed Ghuman in the chair. The meeting reviewed loan schemes, status of recovery and non-operative loans.

It was told during the meeting that the bank was issuing Rs 11 billion loans annually. The meeting also reviewed implementation on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab. The Registrar Cooperatives Punjab directed the participants to ensure timely implementation of instructions.

He said all the cooperative housing societies should hold annual meetings of management and implement election rules and model by-laws.

The meeting also reviewed automation of the societies' record. They also discussed the dengue and tree plantation campaigns. Meanwhile, instructions were passed for timely issuance and early recovery of loans to benefit the members' maximum.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/17/13-page/711155-news.html

AGRICULTURE PACKAGE ON THE CARDS
Dawn, April 19th, 2018

Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: The government is expected to announce an ambitious agriculture package in the budget 2018-19 with relief in taxes, and a hefty subsidy to support the farmers.

Ahead of the next election, PML-N government has tasked top officials of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Ministry of Food Security to work out a comprehensive package by including demands of Kissan Ithihad as well.

As per the tax proposals of the agriculture package, government is considering to exempt sales tax on import of agriculture machinery which currently stands at 7pc.

It is also under consideration to introduce a uniform rate of sales tax on all types of fertilisers where currently differing rates are applicable — 5pc, 7pc and 8pc.

One of the major components of the package is the power tariff subsidy on tube wells used for irrigating crops. An announcement of a concessional tariff for agriculture tube wells from July 1, 2018 seems to be on the cards which will allow a uniform rate of Rs5.35 per unit for 24 hours.

According to a source in the finance ministry, the revision of concessional rate would mean a major relief to farmers in this one proposal. “The Kissan Ithehad has also demanded the same proposal,” the source added.

However, he said the financial impact of this subsidy will go into multi billions.

Tax officials are also considering various proposals received from different stakeholders, which will be made part of the agriculture package.

On the tax proposals, a high level meeting was also held in FBR attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue Haroon Akhtar Khan and Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan to give final touches to the tax part of package.

Haroon said agriculture was the backbone of the national economy and strengthening it along with linked sectors has been a key priority of the government which was committed to protecting the rights of the farmers and ensuring them better returns and prices on their farm yields.

“The government is keen to continue extending and improving various subsidies and incentives already given to the farmers and proposals and recommendations in this regard would be sincerely considered and examined to make them part of the upcoming budget,” he added.

The agriculture sector witnessed a negative growth in 2015-16, but the subsequent packages helped revived the outlook in the next subsequent years.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1402506

SINDH TO ALLOCATE RS70BN FOR AGRICULTURE SECTOR
Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The Sindh government is expected to allocate Rs70 billion to the agriculture sector under the Annual Development Programme 2018-19, with increased investments in crops, livestock and fisheries.

The proposed allocation will be in line with the new Sindh Agriculture Policy, 2018-2030 which has been approved by the provincial cabinet. The new policy emphasised the need to increase public investment in crops, livestock and fisheries.

The actual spending on agriculture, including crops, livestock, fisheries, forestry and irrigation, has averaged Rs20 billion over the past five years to 2016-17 of which over 80 per cent was for irrigation. Allocation levels for agriculture in 2017-18 have been increased dramatically to Rs64bn, showing an increase of 80pc over the allocation of 2016-17.

While the overall allocation is roughly in line with the requirements, the increase is largely for irrigation, mainly canal lining. Allocations for other activities have stayed virtually unchanged.

Agricultural GDP in Sindh is estimated at about Rs1,600bn, and in order to achieve a 5pc growth rate, a total investment — both public and private — in agriculture would need to be around 20pc of agricultural GDP (equivalent to Rs320bn per annum).

A review of overall levels of public expenditures on agriculture suggests two major weaknesses. Firstly, actual expenditures are generally well below allocations. The Departments of Agriculture and of Livestock and Fisheries were allocated almost Rs13bn in 2016-17 but actual expenditures were only Rs4bn — less than 25pc. In part, this is due to slow and late release of funds and partly due to financial, procurement, and expenditure issues within the departments.

Secondly, much of annual allocations, as well as actual spending are allocated to ongoing projects, which have already been approved, leaving little space for changing priorities or taking on new programmes and projects.

The new policy suggests that an efficient public investment programme needs to focus on key common-property infrastructure, public goods, and on regulatory functions, and as much as possible it should facilitate and encourage private investment. In a stable and well-functioning macroeconomic and political environment, each rupee should mobilise four to five times that in private investment, according to the policy.

The policy implies very substantive changes in the legislative and regulatory framework in the agriculture sector, in the work and functioning of the two concerned departments, and in the focus and scope of the public investment programmes. Undertaking such a change process is likely to prove difficult, and “business as usual” arrangements are unlikely to prove effective. There is a need to provide high level management and oversight to the process, along with technical support and guidance to line managers.

The timeline of the Agriculture Policy will be until 2030 to align with the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals. However, various legal, regulatory, institutional and expenditure-related changes set out in the Policy would be implemented over a two year period (2018-20).

The policy document says that yields in Sindh for many crops and livestock are well below potential and generally lower than in neighbouring regions. More critically, economic returns to water, which is one of the major limiting factors for expansion; and to labour which is a major determinant of incomes and living standards — are low.

On the other hand, in several areas where small to medium scale progressive farmers, or corporate farms using leased land, are taking the lead in high-tech commercial farming, yields and returns are very much higher. These large yield gaps indicate the potential of raising productivity across the province by using better seed, site specific fertiliser mixes, and improved cultivation methods.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1402667

SMALL GROWERS REJECT AGRICULTURE POLICY AS ANTI-FARMER
Dawn, April 20th, 2018

HYDERABAD: Small growers have rejected the recently announced agriculture policy and said the anti-grower and anti-labour policy has been formed in a drawing room to further deceive farmers and peasants.

They demanded the Sindh government should immediately appoint full-time ministers for agriculture and irrigation in the larger interest of growers.

Ali Palh advocate, president of small growers' organisation Sindh Agriculture Research Council (SARC), said at a press conference at the press club on Thursday that the Sindh government had formulated the policy in haste because of pressure brought to bear on it by some small growers and the World Bank (WB).

"It is a 'copy and paste' policy which neglects Tharparkar and fails to consult small growers who possess 15 to 200 acres each of agricultural land.

"How can it be possible to achieve efficiency, prosperity and sustainability without water, small dams, farm water management skills and machinery?" he said.

He said that there was an acute shortage of drinking and irrigation water in Sindh and without water, no agricultural policy could be successful.

The policy claimed that "all will be prosperous and efficient" but it was not even going to achieve the three parameters of efficiency, prosperity and sustainability, he said.

He said the SARC rejected the policy and considered it another attempt to deceive small farmers and peasants. It was in fact anti-grower and anti-labour policy formed in a drawing room, he said.

Mr Palh said that there was gross mismanagement and corruption in irrigation and food departments, zero performance by Sindh agriculture research wing and no subsidies for small farmers. The policy was not Sindh government's initiative; it had been formed under pressure of certain small growers and WB, he said.

He claimed that $2 million spent on formulation of the policy were squandered away by policymakers. WB wanted to ensure its project Sindh Agriculture Growth Project (SAGP) worth $76m became successful. The project aimed at training 122,000 growers, creating awareness, imparting techniques and conducting workshops but around seven project directors of SAGP had been changed over corruption and incompetence, he said.

He said that around a dozen big growers had been singled out for consultation on the policy on the basis of political affiliation and personal relationship. Small growers were being forced into beggary since they were being deprived of fair rates of their crops, he said.

Mr Palh said that sugar cane and wheat growers had to suffer huge losses of Rs66 billion and Rs7bn, respectively, this year because of unfair price and undue delay in the opening of wheat procurement centres.

He said that growers had to bear a big loss of over Rs100bn due to closure of Rohri Canal following National Accountability Bureau's investigation and other issues in recent past.

He accused the Sindh government of parcelling out forest land to influential persons and supporters and warned it might cause the worst climate crisis in Sindh. There was no full-time irrigation minister in Sindh while the agriculture minister who was also home minister had completely failed to safeguard interests of small growers.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1402613

COTTON GROWERS ADVISED TO USE ONLY APPROVED COTTON SEED VARIETIES
Business Recorder, 21 April 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) has once again advised the cotton growers to use only approved cotton seed varieties for sowing which include MNH-886, VH-259, BH-178, CIM-602, FH Lalazaar, FH-142, IUB-13, MNH-988, VH-305, AGC-999 & AGC-777 for BT cotton while for conventional varieties recommended seeds are CM-554, Niab-777, CIM-608, CRSM-38, SLH-317, BH-167, NIB G-115, FH-942, Niab-852, Niab-846, Niab Kiran, Niab-112, Cyto-124, CIM-620 and Niab-2008.

Farmers can cultivate BT Cotton crop from April 1st to 31st May, 2018 while conventional cotton crop cultivation in core cotton area is feasible from April 1st to May 31st & remaining non-core area of cotton cultivation recommended to from April 1st to end up till May 15th.

Spokesman of Agriculture Department disclosed here on Friday that Government has managed to ensure the availability of required quantity of certified cotton seed in the market for commercial cultivation during the forthcoming season. There is no deficiency of quality seed at all.

Cotton growers are advised to cultivate crop with approved varieties of cotton crop. Consult your neighbouring Agriculture department official for proper selection/information. Ensure to get the original Invoice of your payment from the Seed vendor mentioning particulars like Invoice/Receipt

No, Company name, Quality, Lot No., Price, Date of purchase and Name, address and contact of the vendor. Save a small quantity of seed from each lot for further reference that will be helpful if any issue arises.

spokesman further disclosed that it is highly recommended to cultivate 10% area of the total non-BT varieties and this practice will discourage to build up immunity of harmful pests & insects of cotton crop. The field should be made into furrow and ridges, then irrigate the 6-7 inches deep furrows. After irrigating the field sown the seeds by hand at a height of 1 inch from the standing water level of the field.

If gaps are left in the field, they should be filled with next irrigation. The furrow method of sowing has same benefits as mentioned with the seed drill method. Sowing by hands is helpful in reducing the seed used for sowing. The number of plants per acre is good and the practices like spraying and weeding can be done with rain or irrigation water in the field. Proper crop growth is achieved.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/21/7-page/711842-news.html

BALOCHISTAN PA DEMANDS WITHDRAWAL OF AGRICULTURE TAX
Dawn, April 22nd, 2018

Saleem Shahid

: Despite lack of quorum in the house, the Balochistan Assembly passed two resolutions on Saturday evening demanding withdrawal of agriculture tax and condemning firing at the residence of Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan of the Supreme Court in Lahore.

Eight members from the treasury and opposition benches were present in the house when both the resolutions were moved and none of the members informed the chair about the lack of quorum in the legislature.

In the absence of Speaker Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani, a member of panel of chairmen, Yasmin Lehri, was presiding over the session.

The majority of treasury members went out of the house soon after Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo left the assembly after making his speech.

The lack of quorum has become the order of the day in the Balochistan Assembly since the change of government in the province. Most of the sessions were adjourned by the speaker for want of quorum.

Earlier, the members approved a report of the house's standing committee which proposed conducting an investigation into the irregularities in recruitments in the education department in 2016, and an action against the officials responsible for the fiasco.

While taking the floor, Chief Minister Bizenjo said that the government had no powers to keep any

candidate on the waiting list and it also could not appoint any candidate on the basis of NTS test of 2015 in 2018.

He, however, informed the house that appointment letters of 407 successful candidates would be issued within a week.

"The remaining candidates should prepare for appearing in the next test," he said and added that no politics was being done on the issue.

Mr Bizenjo asked why those who were in government in 2015 had committed an injustice with the candidates.

He deplored opposition members who were criticising the present government on the issue and said that after sitting on the opposition benches they were considering themselves "neat and clean".

He said the leaders who had ordered baton-charge of protesting doctors when they were in power were now asking the present government to accept their demands. Speaker Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani had sent the issue to the house standing committee a week ago.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1403110

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 9TH TO APRIL 15TH 2018
BUDGETING FOR AGRICULTURE IN ELECTION YEAR
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 9th, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

FOR the federal government, budgeting for agriculture in the next fiscal year could be trickier than before owing to both political and economic reasons. Any change, either in underlying preferences or development allocations, in areas related to agriculture may have far-reaching implications.

After the devolution of agriculture to provinces in the 2010-11 fiscal year, the federal government's job has become less-involving but quite complex at the same time.

The PML-N government, after coming to power in May 2013 at the Centre, has relied more on big-ticket incentive schemes for small and marginalised farmers — such as Kissan Package. Moreover, through the State Bank of Pakistan, the government has assigned banks ambitious targets for credit distribution in the agriculture sector.

In both areas, it has made some achievements. In fact, banks' agricultural credit disbursement has more than doubled during the PML-N government. But key issues like judicious distribution of irrigation water among provinces, synchronising provinces' preferences and prejudices on climate change and declaring agricultural an industry remain unattended or only partially-addressed.

Whatever comes up in the next year's budget for agriculture must attract the majority of farmers and people associated with this sector. If that does not happen, PML-N may find it difficult to woo rural voters in the upcoming elections expected to be held a few months after the budget.

Despite some improvements, the PML-N government has largely failed materialise its vision on agriculture.

No one can say for sure who will implement the next year's budget unless elections are held and a new government takes charge. However, big budgetary promises for agriculture ahead of elections obviously have political value because they show that the ruling party cares for the rural folks — and can do more for them if elected again.

So, it can be expected that the agriculture sector will get attention in the upcoming budget, perhaps more than in the past four years.

However, the devil is in the detail.

"From identifying priority areas of action to finding fiscal space to detailing of schemes to accommodating provincial demands and inputs on a given subject, there are many things to take care of (in budgeting for agriculture)," says a senior official of the Ministry of Finance.

The next year's budget is expected to be announced by the end of this month — two months before the close of the current fiscal year. Estimated stats for the current fiscal year would fuel intense debate, as some data would be based on actual performance of eight or nine months. And once the total income and expenses of 2017-18 becomes hard to sell, agreement on projected fiscal room in 2018-19 would also not come by so easily.

"Then, given a deterioration in the external-sector account, and out of the need for making the country's defence stronger in a tense regional and international environment, external debt servicing and defence would as usual consume the bulk of budgetary resources," the finance ministry official says. "So, it's going to be trickier than before for the present government to find enough resources to allocate to the agriculture sector."

PML-N came to power with a manifesto full of big promises for agriculture. It promised "to accelerate the pace of agricultural development and to reduce poverty by diversifying the rural economy to expand non-farm employment."

The party also promised wide-ranging reforms, such as declaring agriculture an industry, focusing on small farmers and turning terms of food trade in favour of the country. But "unfortunately, PML-N never took the nation into confidence how the regime intended to implement its manifesto promises", Shahid Hussain Raja, a former federal secretary, recently wrote in a local English daily.

During its five-year term, the incumbent government has fallen short in materialising its vision on agriculture. The party has visibly failed on many counts, like declaring agriculture an industry and terming the terms of food trade in Pakistan's favour, activating market mechanisms for balancing the cultivation of different crops and promoting output of cotton, to name but a few.

In fact, the average cotton production of last five years has rather remained lower than in the preceding five years, and the country continues to import more cotton than before at a time when saving every single dollar is crucial to keep the current account deficit in check.

The PML-N government in the federation introduced with much fanfare the so-called Kissan package three years ago and set aside Rs341 billion to co-finance it with the provinces. But smaller provinces, where other parties are in power, lament that they have received little out of the allocation.

"This perceived deprivation is on top of a visible unjustifiable tilt in farm credit distribution towards Punjab. So, the next federal agriculture budget must be designed keeping such things in view if PML-N wants to gain political mileage in rural areas," says a former secretary of the Sindh agriculture department.

Apart from the size of budgetary allocations for agriculture in next federal budget and how the farming communities across provinces see them, the areas identified for new initiatives will also matter.

The five years of the PML-N government in federation as well as in Punjab have not even taken baby steps towards digitising the agriculture economy. The Punjab government has, however, made some progress in computerising land records.

How the federal budget inspires the private sector in investing to digitise the agriculture economy will be crucial, officials and progressive farmers say. They believe that initiatives aimed at promoting the culture of on-farm storage of crops and building large silos for bulk holding of crops at district level are also of equal importance.

Against the backdrop of growing demand for energy, agriculturists will also appreciate if concrete steps are taken to promote the culture of solar or wind-powered farming in the country. Moreover, policies are needed to check monopolies and ensure fair market competition.

For the next fiscal year and beyond, challenges in the agriculture sector will stem more from changing dynamics of the efficient use of land and water, climate change and growing need for digitising the agriculture economy. Solutions will have to be found to economise the use of water, make barren land arable and create a truly enabling environment for tech start-ups, agriculturists say.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1400372

KHARIF CROP TARGETS SET AMID IRRIGATION WATER SHORTAGE
Dawn, April 11th, 2018

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) on Tuesday set production targets of major Kharif crops including cotton and sugarcane.

Target for cotton production has been set at 14.37 million bales; sugarcane at 68.157m tonnes, rice at 6.931m tonnes, and maize at 5.3m tonnes.

The target for cotton would be achieved from an area of 2.955m hectares whereas the target for rice would be achieved from over 2.805m hectares.

The crops are threatened by the shortage of irrigation water during June to September period.

Among other Kharif crops, the target of mung has been set at 120,600 tonnes, mash at 11,300 tonnes, chilies at 117,900 tonnes, and tomato at 166,700 tonnes.

This is the first time the FCA has fixed the target for cotton production. The subject of cotton was previously held by the Ministry of Textile and has now been transferred to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research under a notification issued by the government.

Likewise, the National Fertiliser Development Centre, previously administered by the Planning Commission has also been moved to the national food security ministry.

Explaining the decisions taken at the FCA meeting, Minister for National Food Security and Research, Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan told a news conference that the availability of water in canal heads will remain 62.03m acres feet (MAF) as against average usage of 69.4MAF.

"There will be 33 per cent shortage of water in early Kharif and 11pc in later period. At present all the provinces are getting their indented supplies in the system," he said.

Pakistan Meteorological Department informed the meeting that winter snow cover is 20-25pc less than long-term average. However, the rainfall during April-June 2018 will be less than normal while the temperature is expected to remain one to two centigrade warmer than the normal.

The committee was informed that the availability of rice and maize seeds will be 85pc and 80pc respectively of the total seed requirements.

The allocation of institutional credit for agriculture had substantially increased to Rs1,001 billion for 2017-18 and the disbursement up to February this year was Rs570bn which is 57pc of overall annual target of Rs1,001bn. This is 39.4pc higher than the disbursement of Rs409bn made during last year.

The FCA appreciated the positive impact of fertiliser subsidy scheme which contributed to high yield. It was noted that the supply of urea and DAP fertilisers was satisfactory during 2017-18 Rabi season. Due to local production and available stock, the supply position of urea will remain comfortable subject to uninterrupted supply of natural gas to fertiliser manufacturing plants.

Mr Bosan said that three fertiliser plants have been closed down due to shortage of gas. If gas is provided to Pak-Arab, Dawood Hercules and Agri-Tech, fertiliser shortage would be eliminated, he said.

About the estimated wheat production from the current Rabi season, the minister stated that wheat production this year is expected to be 25.41m tonnes from an area of 8.76m hectares. Coupled with last year's left over stock of one million tonnes, the total availability of wheat will be about 26.41m tonnes which is well over and above the total national requirements.

About maize, the minister expected a good crop this year saying that cultivation of maize has increased this year. Country has achieved record production of potato, onion and tomato this year, he added.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1400914

PUNJAB GOVT, USAID TO MAKE POTOHAR REGION AN 'OLIVE VALLEY'
Business Recorder, 11 April 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab government has launched an initiative worth Rs279.88 million in collaboration with the USAID to turn the Potohar region in to ‘Olive Valley.’

A meeting of 10th Olive Development Group (ODG) was held at Barani Agriculture Research Institute, Chakwal to review progress on this project and to resolve emergent problems of olive grower. Muhammad Mahmood, Secretary Agriculture Punjab presided over the meeting while Dr Abid Mahmood, DGA (Research), Dr Tariq, Director BARI, Chakwal along with other stakeholders attended the meeting.

Speaking on this occasion, Muhammad Mahmood Secretary Agriculture Punjab said that Government of Punjab realizes the significance of the socio-economic opportunities offered by olive-producing regions. This initiative will not only support the department in implementing the project but will also create employment opportunities.

Muhammad Mahmood further said that Potohar Region possesses ideal climatic conditions and land for commercial cultivation of Olive orchards. Government of Punjab has a plan to develop this tract as Olive Valley and to support this vision a project with cost of Rs2782 Million is being implemented. To translate this dream into reality, 15000 acre was being brought under olive valley cultivation over a span of five years.

Secretary Agriculture was also briefed by scientist/ researchers during this session that content of olive oil production in our country is unique and can compare with Extra Virgin Olive Oil through worldwide level. Secretary Agriculture was also briefed about production of oil content by the factory established at BARI Chakwal for extraction of olive oil to the farmers and this factory has extracted 19134 KG oil free of cost for farmers.

In the end, Secretary Agriculture Punjab praised efforts of Olive Development Group (ODG) for making olive valley dream into reality. On this occasion, one MoU signed ceremony was held between Government of Punjab and Cholistan Institute for Desert Crop while another between Government of Punjab and Green Revolution to promote olive development in this region.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/11/10-page/709978-news.html

CALL TO ADOPT ‘CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE’
Business Recorder, 11 April 2018

LAHORE: There is a need to adopt Climate Smart Agriculture in Pakistan as a means for dealing with the changing climatic scenario, which can increase productivity in Pakistan as the country suffers from climatic extremes such as in 2011, 26 million people were affected by floods, which cost over 12 billion dollars; drought in Tharparker region of Sindh province hospitalized 21000 inhabitants with a number of deaths of infants etc.

This was stated by Dr Abrar Chaudhry, a fellow of the said Business School, University of Oxford during a special talk on, “Climate Smart Agriculture” organized under the auspices of the Information Technology University (ITU) the Punjab’s Centre for Governance and Policy here Tuesday.

The Climate Smart Agriculture assessment is a system through which different indices are factored in such as soil, climate risks, biomass and water availability, and their resulting impact on crop yield, nutritional values, and income.

Dr Abrar who has been working on the topic of climate change and agriculture for a long time said that before we look at the national or global level, it was the community level where change was coming and from where the solutions would also emerge. Highlighting the environmental challenges currently facing Pakistan he added that World's temperatures have increased in the last 100 years and in the last 136 years nearly all of the hot years have been recorded since 2001.

Focusing on agriculture, Dr Abrar said that 94% of Pakistan's water was used in agriculture and therefore its usage and regulation was imperative. He said the acuteness of the situation was clear when one realized that Pakistan depends on just one Indus water system; which may disappear one day while carbon dioxide emissions was mostly thought through industrial units only, but in Pakistan over 41% of the carbon dioxide emissions come from the agriculture sector and out of which about 78% was due to livestock, and therefore agriculture was part of the climate change discussion.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/11/10-page/709974-news.html

LEAVING AGRICULTURE BEHIND
Business Recorder, 12 April 2018

Unless you belong to Pakistan's 0.1 percent, it is quite likely the food you ate, the shirt you put on and the shoes you wore were made by inputs sourced from Pakistan's farming lands. Yet lost in the hype of e-commerce, and start-up culture, few understand that agriculture is still very important to this, or any other country's economy. Which is perhaps why the growth in national agricultural production has remained weak throughout the last few decades? The fiscal year 2018 was a bit better but given the lack of focus there is no guarantee that the next year will be better than the last.

According to provisional estimates, Pakistan's agriculture sector grew by 3.81 percent in FY18. That's remarkably better than the sector's growth rates of 2.07 percent and 0.15 percent in the preceding two years.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reports that this growth is mainly led by growth in production of three important crops: rice, sugarcane and cotton that are estimated to have grown by 8.7 percent, 7.4 percent, and 11.8 percent respectively. This offset the estimated decline in production in wheat and maize of 4.4 percent and 7.1 percent respectively.

In its just released State of Economy report the central bank reported that area under wheat cultivation declined by 3.5 percent year-on-year due to water shortage in rain-fed as well as irrigated areas, and the delay in harvesting of the sugarcane crop in most of the areas. However, on a side note, PBS's estimates of growth in cotton production of 11.8 percent are less than the central bank's estimates of 18 percent. Perhaps one could expect a much higher farming growth when the revised numbers are released.

Livestock sector that produced 59 percent of agricultural output in FY18 grew by 3.7 percent and contributed the most to agricultural GDP growth. The central bank expects the sector to benefit from increased focus of provincial governments on feeding, animal management, and genetics.

But with all the good intentions, there is no guarantee that agricultural growth would continue growing in the ensuing years. The sector suffers from a host of problems: water shortage and efficient water usage, low yields, low productivity, poor quality of seeds and pesticides, lack of financing and insurance, warehousing and transportation, and the whole nine yards.

Central to all these problems is weak governance, which no 'farming package' can fix overnight. It requires a concerted effort by the provinces and the center. For instance, even though a national agriculture and food security policy was drafted by Islamabad in 2014, it is still hasn't been passed, let alone implemented. Agriculture being a provincial domain, the provinces were expected to pass a policy, but save for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa none of the provinces have rolled out their own policies.

Meanwhile coordination lacunas dot the sector. For instance, as Dr Vaqar Ahmed highlights in his recent book, the issues of fertilizer, seed and pesticides remain the responsibility of federal government, the issues of impurities in these farm inputs and their subsidized supply remain in the domain of provincial government.

Or as a 2014 IFPRI paper observes there is widespread confusion over bio-safety laws for seeds as a result of overlapping mandates between the centre and the provinces following devolution. The impact of these regulatory distortions has not been evaluated to date, whereas all of this is compounded by the fact that different provinces have different capacities in their agricultural departments leading to different qualities of crops.

According to Dr. Hafiz Pasha's analysis almost 60 percent of the industry in Pakistan is agro-based and over 40 percent of transportation and trade is in agricultural commodities. Agriculture sector also helps yield decent foreign exchange earnings: cotton, rice and leather accounted for nearly 11 percent of Pakistan's exports earnings in FY15. And most importantly, it employs about 44 percent of the labour force. Leaving this sector behind is neither good for the people nor good for the economy.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/12/2-page.html

CROP INSURANCE SCHEME LAUNCHED IN PUNJAB
Business Recorder, 12 April 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab government has launched crop insurance scheme (Takaful) to protect the income of farmers against unfavorable circumstances.

In this regard, from Kharif 2018 first phase will be launched from Sheikupura, Sahiwal, Loadhran and Rahim Yar Khan. Under this scheme, 100% subsidy on Insurance Premium for land owners of up to 5 acres while 50% subsidy on Insurance Premium for land owners from 5 Acre to 25 Acres will be borne by the government.

This scheme will be applicable during its first phase on cotton & Rice fields. In the second phase Insurance (Takaful) will be applicable on more crops including Sugarcane, Maize, Wheat, Orchards and Vegetables, said a spokesman of the provincial agriculture department here on Wednesday.

Under this scheme, compensation will be done in case of natural calamity or low yield. Spokesman further disclosed that to ensure transparency, Government has also introduced online system.

Agricultural production and farm incomes in Pakistan are frequently affected by natural disasters such as droughts, floods, cyclones, storms, landslides and earthquakes. This scheme will give protection economically to farming community.

A farmer highlighting the importance of crop insurance said: “We live in uncertain conditions as we are not sure about our crops whether or not they will benefit us; if we get insured, it will help us to shift our loss/damage when our insurance claims are paid.” To get more information about Crop Insurance (Takaful) scheme, farmers may contact with Agriculture Helpline number 0800-15000 & 0800-29000, the spokesman concluded.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/12/20-page/710255-news.html

THE WAGES OF WHEAT
Dawn, April 14th, 2018

Assad Ahmad

The writer is a Lahore based columnist and consultant with a background in finance, strategy, and energy markets.

THE bulk of Pakistan’s wheat, covering nearly half our cultivable land, will be harvested in the coming weeks. In the spirit of the season, our neighbours across the border, in East Punjab, are celebrating the Vaisakhee festival today, to offer thanks for the harvest and usher in the Punjabi new year.

Despite the absence of noticeable revelry on this side of the Radcliffe Line, Pakistan’s, primarily Punjabi, wheat farmers have a great deal more to celebrate. At the cost of everyone else in the country.

The latest such toll is the $320 million that the state wants to pay as an export subsidy to anyone willing to take 2m tons of last year’s wheat from overflowing government stockpiles. This must be done to clear space and raise funds, so the incumbent government can keep farmers happy in an election year by buying around 6m tons of the current harvest. At a total cost of at least $700m more than global market prices. (This information has been calculated from data in the State Bank’s State of Economy report for the second quarter of this fiscal year and the US Department of Agriculture’s 2018 Pakistan: Grain and Feed Annual report.)

Trying to react to the market and to our needs is surely better than systematically doing the wrong thing.

Add to this the cost of storing the wheat, and interest on the money borrowed to buy and hold it (the State Bank pegs this around $200m in Punjab this year). Then add the multi-billion dollar welfare loss faced by consumers across the country in the last four years on the use of wheat that was overpriced because of import restrictions. Most of these costs were likely included by the food security ministry when its draft policy paper put the cost of the wheat policy near a stunning $2 billion annually. For context, that’s nearly twice the cost of the Benazir Income Support Programme.

Like most bizarre stories in our great land, the tale of how we got here starts and ends with the government.

Our wheat market is highly regulated, ostensibly to ensure food security. The state promises to buy a portion of the crop at a support price, restricts imports with high duties, and controls export. Around half of each year's crop remains in villages, a quarter is sold informally, and the remaining quarter is bought by the provincial and federal governments and added to storage. From there, it is released over the year to flour mills at a subsidised price for onward retail sale. Between all these flows, the state attempts to maintain a minimum strategic stock level. Naturally, with a bureaucratic maze at this scale, nothing runs smoothly. One can hardly speak to a farmer without hearing of influential middlemen, conniving with officials to sell their wheat at the support price.

If operations are a problem, strategy is a much bigger one.

Since mid-2012, international wheat prices have roughly halved. Since then, our support price has actually risen from Rs1,150 per maund to Rs1,300. Even as research organisations within the government were sounding the alarm on surpluses, the government actually kept adopting higher production targets. As a result, despite export subsidies regularly on offer, our local holdings of wheat rocketed — from under 50 days of supplies in 2012 to nearly 70 days of supplies before the current crop was planted.

Last October, when the Federal Agriculture Committee met to set a production target and a support price, it was in the backdrop of government agencies having run out of storage, and renting fields to store excess wheat under plastic sheets. While rats were having a field day with this poorly stored prize, the committee, under the leadership of PML-N's food security minister, Mr Sikander Hayat Bosan, set an unchanged support price and announced the highest wheat production target ever. And now, even though the target won't be met, we are scrambling to free up space. You can't make this stuff up.

In light of all this, the State Bank, restrained as ever, drily opined in its latest report that the "current mechanism of support prices and commodity operations requires a significant reorientation".

How?

There is no shortage of informed voices arguing against having any support prices at all. A proactive ministry, monitoring sowing and crop conditions, and forecasting production, could estimate import and export needs based on market prices and act appropriately. This, combined with reasonable levels of strategic reserves, safely stored in silos (away from rats), could form the foundation of a food security policy.

Alternatively, if we are going to retain a support price for wheat it needs to be responsive to international market conditions. When domestic stockpiles are high, and global prices low, support prices must be reduced to nudge the marginal farmer towards alternative crops. At the same time, duties should be removed to ensure any shortfalls can be imported. To offset the likely political fallout, farmers could be offered broad input subsidies. For example, in the past couple of years, if we had set a far lower support price, instead of spending too much money to buy too much wheat, we could have afforded an increased fertiliser subsidy for all farmers, improving productivity for everyone. Critically, this would have created an incentive for some farmers to shift towards growing other crops that we import — like oilseeds.

Of course, both these options require accurate forecasting and rapid responses to price fluctuations to maintain food security. There are risks involved, and at times there will be costly errors – especially in times of rising international prices. But trying to react to the market and to our needs is surely better than systematically doing the wrong thing, year after year. The draft food security policy speaks of these matters vaguely, buried inside dozens of policy measures, without timelines and tangible targets. A more concrete, sustainable wheat policy well before next Vaisakhee would be cause for a real celebration.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1401509

AS PRICES DECREASE: PUNJAB SEES ‘HEALTHY’ WHEAT PRODUCTION
The Express Tribune, 14 April 2018

Punjab foresees healthy wheat production this year while harvesting in several southern Punjab districts has picked up momentum, leading to a downward trend in the price, said a senior official of the food department.

According to the senior official, 19.96 million tons of wheat are expected this year against last year’s record production of 20 million tons. “We are still very hopeful of harvesting a good crop in the province,” he observed.

Anticipating an attractive support price in the election year, farmers once again opted to put more efforts to plant wheat crop. Also, a greater application of fertiliser and some timely rains during the growth period helped a lot, he observed.

The main challenge during harvesting has been inclement weather that can lead to post-harvest losses. However, the sliding prices of wheat are also concerning, as in several markets of south Punjab prices have decreased to Rs1,100 per maund against support price of Rs1,300.

According to official data, price of wheat in the whole sale markets of the province has been below the Rs1,300 benchmark. In the last couple of days, wheat price in wholesale markets like Mian Channu, Bahawalnagar, Pakpattan and Arifwala were around Rs1,100, Rs1,040, Rs1,020, Rs1,120 and Rs1,040 per mound, respectively.

Similarly, the wholesale price of wheat in Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur has been recorded around Rs1,250 per mound.

Such a market scenario depicts that price crash of wheat is imminent if the provincial Food Department fails to start the procurement drive next week, said Pakistan Kisan Ittehad (PKI) Chairman Khalid Khokhar.

He asked the Punjab chief minister to immediately start purchase of wheat through the food department to help stabilise the price.

Spokesman of Kissan Board Pakistan was also perturbed over the delay in initiation of wheat procurement drive by the provincial food department. He was of the view that the delay is costing farmers dearly due to a continuous downward movement in price.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1685274/2-wheat-prices-continue-slide-lower-food-department-yet-begin-buying/

PUNJAB ANNOUNCES WHEAT PROCUREMENT NITTY-GRITTY
Dawn, April 15th, 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Saturday notified wheat procurement policy 2018-19, setting a target of four million tonne and taking discretion out of all levels of procurement – application, gunny bags distribution and final purchase.

The government has fixed Rs1,300 per 40 kilo as the support price.

All deputy commissioners will receive applications for the distribution of gunny bags from April 16 to 20. Farmers owning up to 10 acre land have been declared eligible to apply.

Sets 4m tonne target; DCs to receive applications for gunny bags from tomorrow

Once the applications are received, they would be tabulated accordingly and serial numbers be issued to the farmers, which would also define their turn during the procurement process.

The policy notified by the Punjab food department calls for launching wheat procurement campaign across the province from Monday (tomorrow) – in two stages.

In the first stage, applications will be received from the eligible growers at all 382 procurement centres.

While the policy has notified deputy commissioners as overall in-charge of the purchase operation in their respective areas, they will appoint coordinators (gazetted officers) at procurement centres for receiving applications. The procurement centre coordinators shall issue an acknowledgement receipt, duly signed with serial number of the application.

The DCs shall ensure that the applications received on a daily basis from April 16 to 20 are typed and displayed serial number-wise at the centres by 8pm and uploaded on the PITB dashboard by 9pm. For the purpose, the food department has already provided tablets at the centres.

The Punjab Land Records Authority (PLRA) shall download the applicants’ information from the PITB network for which it has already been given access.

At stage-2, the received applications will be scrutinised at the procurement centres as well as by the PLRA at provincial level (through verification of girdawari and growers’ lists and ownership records) on April 21 and 22.

Once the scrutiny is completed, the DCs shall furnish the information of total acreage of eligible applicants with maximum limit of 10 acres for issuance of gunny bags [district-wise] to the director (food) by the evening of April 22.

The cabinet committee on wheat shall convene its meeting on April 23 and will be presented with district-wise position of total eligible applicants (their entitled acreage with 10 acres cut off) and district quota of gunny bags. “This is being done to accommodate all eligible applicants within the set target of procurement,” says the policy.

The cabinet committee’s decision would be communicated to all deputy commissioners the same day and the issuance of gunny bags would start from April 24. The process shall continue for 30 days.

The policy says gunny bags equivalent to four acres may be issued to growers without call deposit on personal surety of gazetted officer. The policy also explains the system of bulk procurement, standard of wheat, mode of payment of price and storage of the commodity.

During the time frame of receiving applications, the DCs will be required to run an awareness campaign at local cable networks, make announcements from mosques as well as put up banners and posters and use other means locally to inform growers about the campaign.

In order to rectify complaints, the procurement centres’ committees will act as dispute resolution forum. For security arrangements in and around the centres, the IGP has been requested to direct the police formations at district and divisional levels. “The respective DCs will coordinate with the district police officers regarding the arrangements based on their assessments of the ground situation,” says the policy.

The respective divisional commissioners, food director and secretary shall supervise the operations in their respective jurisdictions, while provincial ministers and administrative secretaries shall be assigned districts for supervision and monitoring.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1401695/punjab-announces-wheat-procurement-nitty-gritty

FAO, PAKISTAN WORKING ON NEW AGRI-POLICY
Dawn, April 15th, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Zero hunger, climate-smart resilient agriculture, sustainable ecosystems, and inclusive and efficient food systems are the priority areas that will be focused by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) under the new Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2018-21, currently being finalised, it was learnt on Saturday.

The five-year CPF is being jointly developed with the government and other partners, and reflects relevant priorities in key national development policies.

The zero hunger programme will cover healthy, safe and nutritious food for all while the climate-smart resilient agriculture and sustainable ecosystems will include forests, fisheries, livestock and water management.

These areas are also the key pillars of the National Food Security Policy which has recently been approved by the government. The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) is currently evolving a strategy and plan of action to implement the policy in collaboration with provinces.

An evaluation of the just-ended country programme has recommended that FAO together with MNFSR should include in the next CPF, a programmatic response to the key structural changes in the agriculture sector, such as agriculture subsidies, trade, industries, rural transformation, land tenure and market development and the more persistent issue of the Fata reforms.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1401759

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1ST TO APRIL 8TH 2018
PUNJAB VOWS TO PROMOTE HORTICULTURE SECTOR
Business Recorder, 1 April 2018

KARACHI: The Punjab government has assured full support and assistance for the forthcoming National Horticulture Conference being organised in collaboration with Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and All Pakistan fruit and vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) for the development of Horticulture sector.

Having concluded consultative meetings with the concerned stakeholders of Punjab, FPCCI vice president & Patron-in-Chief –PFVA Waheed Ahmed had meetings with Governor Punjab, Provincial Minister of commerce, Industry & investment & Secretary Agriculture (Punjab) to brief them about preparation of road map for development of the Horticulture sector.

The PFVA chairman Aslam Pakhali and regional head of Research based International Agriculture organization CABI Babar Bajwa were part of these meetings held during March 27-29 led by Waheed Ahmed. Major issues of the sector related to the country in general and province of Punjab in particular were highlighted during these meetings.

"Among the Agri- products exports of $571 million, the share of Punjab is more than 50 percent which is $325 million and by resolving issues of this specific sector and adopting modern trends in this sector, the current export revenue can easily be enhanced to one billion dollar within a short span of five years", Waheed Ahmed assured.

FPCCI vice president while apprising aims and objectives of the national horticulture conference, also spelled out serious issues of the sector during these meetings. He pointed out that lack of awareness of latest trends and practices in the sector, acute shortage of water; ill-effects of Global warming, non-availability of desired infra-structure and high cost of production were main issues of the sector.

He said the growers are unfamiliar with demands and trends of international markets and similarly low yield per acre is posing a serious problem to this Industry. "This sector has tremendous potential and the objective of holding National Horticulture conference is to tap immense opportunities by developing short, medium and long term policies to encounter these issues", Waheed elaborated.

The National Horticulture conference is tentatively plan to be held in May 2018 and would be a mile stone in the history of this sector, he disclosed.

He stressed strong need for establishment of common facilities including Hot Water Treatment Plants, Processing and Packaging units, cold storages and cool chain for further uplift of this sector in Punjab. Effective utilization of Multan Airport as an opportunity to enhance export of fruits & vegetable was also stressed.

Haling vision, timely initiative and commendable efforts of Waheed Ahmed for the development of this promising sector, the Punjab Governor Malik Muhammad Rafiq Rajwana assured full support and assistance of Punjab government for the forthcoming National Horticulture Conference. He pledged to extend further facilities at Multan Airport to ensure, it plays a vital role for further enhancement of export of fruits and vegetables.

The Punjab Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Sheikh Allauddin also admired vision and concerted efforts of PFVA and acknowledged that the forthcoming National Horticulture Conference in backdrop of challenges, the sector is confronted is timely initiative and need of hour.

The years to follow would witness acute shortage of water as a serious threat to the Agriculture sector in Punjab where level of water has drastically lowered and as result of that the current water level has gone down to 900 feet from previous level of 45 feet and thus prompt actions on war footings are required to be initiated, the Minister warned.

The secretary Agriculture Punjab Muhammad Mehmood shared that with exclusive allocation of fund of Rs 3.2 billion for development of the Horticulture sector; special projects have already been launched with emphasis on three major components of the project, namely-Market development, grants and International Certificate.

To inculcate awareness about current trend in the international market the secretary assured to organize training and seminars in consultation with PFVA for growers backbone if the sector.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/01/2-page/708152-news.html

WHEAT PRODUCTION OPTIMISM EVAPORATES AMID HOT WEATHER
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 2nd, 2018

Ahmad Fraz Khan

THE early optimism for a record wheat harvest of 26.44 million tonnes for Pakistan now seems to be evaporating, as Punjab starts having a second opinion about its 20m tonnes contribution.

Officials in the Punjab agriculture department now concede that the province may not produce more than 19m tonnes of wheat owing to a number of negative factors that now affect the crop as it nears maturity.

If the Punjab's yield drops to below 19m tonnes, it would be the lowest in the last five years and cause financial losses to farmers worth Rs32.20 billion. The production was 20m tonnes last years.

Moreover, experts and farmers fear the actual loss can be higher than official estimates.

However, both experts and the provincial agriculture officials agree on the factors leading to this crop scenario. Both believe that massive surface water shortage has affected the crop. Farmers say the crop, in fact, got only one full watering instead of the required three owing to persistent water shortages and limited rains.

The Punjab irrigation department's record clarifies the magnitude of the shortages. According to its figures, the province placed a demand of 41,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) daily for the first 10 days of February but got only 12,200 cusecs. The next 10 days saw only 29,200 cusecs flowing in against the demand of 51,000 cusecs. In the last 10 days of the month, only 34,700 cusecs were supplied against the demand for 47,000 cusecs.

Punjab may lose more than one million tonnes and Sindh another half a million tonnes owing to several negative factors

The situation did not change in March, when only 29,400 and 23,200 cusecs were provided against the demand of 52,000 and 59,400 cusecs. One must not forget that the demand made by Punjab was already 36 per cent less than its historical usages as the Indus River System Authority had told the province to factor in national shortages while placing demand for water.

"With these kinds of supplies, the crop was bound to suffer some losses, and it has. The height of crop is less compared with the last year's throughout the province, and farmers are waiting for harvesting to know the exact loss," says Abad Khan of the Farmers Associates Pakistan (FAP).

What has magnified and expanded the impact of water shortage so far is less than normal rains throughout the life cycle of the crop and above-normal temperatures during March.

According to officials of the metrological department, the season has so far received 30pc less rains during the Rabi season, and temperature has gone up by two to three degrees Celsius above the normal March mercury, especially during the night.

Water shortages, less rains and high temperatures hit a crop, which had already suffered bad supplies of phosphatic fertilisers. The Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission, or Suparco, in its February report on crops noted this phenomenon: "Another negative factor is the shortage in fertiliser supplies during early crop growth. A 30pc increase of nitrogen in January can almost compensate urea and other nitrogen fertiliser shortages in the start of season.

"About 80pc of the phosphate uptake by plants is generally done during the early six weeks of growth. The phosphate availability generally remained short during October-December and increased by 39pc in January. Such an incremental supply at a belated stage is not useful for wheat crop."

According to farmers and officials, the late-sown crop is particularly vulnerable to high mercury in March. "Out of the 10.64m acres of targeted and actually sown area, 10.25m acres were sown by Nov 30 and the rest was late sowing," says an official of Punjab Agriculture Department. The cane crisis delayed vacating of land and pushed a substantial chunk of crop into late sowing.

On the basis of all these negative factors, the farmers think that the Punjab may lose more than one million tonnes and Sindh another half a million tonnes. Therefore, the national yield may be a little less than 25m tonnes instead of the targeted 26.44m tonnes.

"But the trouble is that this loss may never be noted at provincial and national levels. When it actually hits farmers, they will be more concerned with disposing of the crop instead of finding time to lament and agitate the loss," says Abad Khan of FAP. "The governments (both federal and provincial) may not even feel this loss because of huge carryover stocks that fill their coffers. But this will certainly result in farmers losing around Rs50bn, and that is the main worry of the community."

https://www.dawn.com/news/1398929/wheat-production-optimism-evaporates-amid-hot-weather

FERTILIZER INDUSTRY URGES GOVT TO ABOLISH GIDC ON FEED GAS
Business Recorder, 3 April 2018
Rizwan Bhatti

KARACHI: The fertilizer industry has urged the federal government to abolish GIDC on feed gas instead of product subsidy to ensure affordability of fertilizer to farmers and link the feed gas prices with Middle East (ME) gas prices.

The fertilizer industry in its budget proposal has highlighted several issues including subsidy, GIDC, price capping, taxes, import and exports being faced by the domestic producer and proposed their solutions to facilitate the industry as well as farmers.

According to budget proposal submitted by Fertilizer Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council (FMPAC), presently urea producers are paying highest rate of GIDC on fertilizer feed gas Rs300 per MMBTU as compared to any other sector, thus higher cost of production with least option to pass on its impact. "Therefore, abolishing of GIDC to be considered instead of product subsidy to ensure affordability of fertilizer to farmers and feed gas prices to be linked with Middle East gas prices as stipulated in Fertilizer Policy 2001, inclusive of all taxes/cess," the industry proposed.

Fuel gas price Rs600 per MMBTU is also much higher than power sector and need to equalize fuel gas price and fuel gas GIDC with other industry, they added.

The proposals revealed that all provincial governments are not on board with the subsidy mechanism and subsidy being handled by Punjab government as well. In addition billion of rupees subsidy claims of the industry are pending till date. In order to resolve this issues, industry has urged immediate settlement of all pending subsidy claims and proposed that subsidy and prices should be handled by only federal government to avoid unnecessary operational complications. "If at all subsidy schemes is to be continued then subsidy to be granted direct to the farmers by the federal government with uniform terms and conditions," it added.

For GST on Subsidy, fertilizer industry has suggested that no GST to be charged on subsidy amount and for all fertilizer products, GST on feed and fuel gas be reduced to ZERO percent. Abolishing/Reduction in gas GIDC can also help balance input/output GST, with no revenue loss to the government. In addition, GST on import of LNG and supply of RLNG, Phos Acid, Rock Phosphate and Power & Steam should be reduced to Zero percent.

Presently, input gas GST is Rs83 per bag urea (based on 10 percent GST on feed gas + 17 percent GST on fuel gas), besides Rs20-30 on other items whereas, product urea GST is Rs70 per bag (evaluated at 5 percent). Similar Input/Output GST imbalance is there for other fertilizer products as well Proposal.

The federal government has fixed urea bag price at Rs1400 per bag in FY17. Industry absorbed Rs50 per bag cost on urea in FY 2016-17 and had to absorb another Rs56 per bag in FY 2017-18. Now the producers have recommended that to line with Fertilizer Policy 2001, urea price capping has to be removed to allow market forces to adjust prices.

Fertilizer industry has proposed that fertilizer import by manufacturers be brought under normal tax regime and additional Sales Tax on import of DAP and other fertilizer by manufacturers be abolished to improve availability/affordability of phosphatic fertilizer in the Country as presently some 1.5 million ton per year DAP demand covered through imports.

A 'one-time' Super Tax of 3 percent was levied on the corporate sector during 2015 to support IDPs. The Levy has continued for third consecutive year, therefore industry has asked for removal of super tax and demanded the government to avoid other adhoc taxation measures in future.

According to proposals, gas compression infrastructure expenses made by Fertilizer Industry to be adjusted/incorporated in determination of notified gas price for Mari gas based and other fertilizer plants. In addition, Gas compression equipment & machinery to be fully exempted from import taxes and duties to support sustainability of fertilizer industry.

The industry pointed out that Pakistan has potential to produce up to one million metric tons surplus urea that can be exported to generate valuable foreign exchange for the country. In this regard it has proposed that blanket approval for export of urea subject to availability of 0.2 million metric tons surplus inventory in the Country to be considered. While, urea, whenever required, should be imported by Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and may be distributed through local urea manufacturers as per their production shares as practiced previously as this will result in saving to the government.

For farmers training, domestic fertilizer producers have said that Pakistan's average yields are far behind the best in the World. However, significant yield improvement is possible with the help of improved farmer education. Therefore, joint efforts on Public Private Partnership basis may be undertaken for farmers' education.

As several urea producing plant on SNGPL are shutdown for the last six months, they have urged for gas availability and proposed that either system gas to be provided to all fertilizer plants instead of RLNG or support should be provided to absorb exorbitantly high cost of RLNG based fertilizer.

For withholding tax on import of raw material exemption is granted only if tax paid in current year is more than the highest tax assessed in the preceding two years. "This condition be removed, considering that profitability of the entity may be declining, which is the case," the fertilizer industry recommended.

The industry has also demanded that 15 percent income tax on inter company dividends to be abolished to encourage corporate investment and corporatization and companies should be given the option of whether to avail the benefit of initial and first year allowance or not.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/03/5-page/708471-news.html

UREA SHORTAGE LOOMS LARGE
Business Recorder, 4 April 2018

RIZWAN BHATTI

KARACHI: The closure of three urea plants due to non-availability of gas could lead to shortage of the commodity besides price escalation in Kharif season.

Industry sources told Business Recorder Tuesday that urea is expected to be in short supply starting May 2018 and may have a major negative impact on the agriculture sector – the backbone of the economy.

Presently, three urea plants operating on the SNGPL network are shut for the last 6 months due to lack of basic raw material – natural gas. There is no natural gas left to allocate to the urea producing plants on the SNGPL network, resulting in short production of some 85,000 tons urea every month or cumulatively over 0.6 million tons in the last few months, they added.

Sources said urea plants operating on the SNGPL network are even unable to operate and start production on LNG as it is much expensive compared to natural gas. The continued closure of these three urea plants could lead to the shortage of this essential commodity as well as price escalation in Kharif season, they added.

As per market estimates, with 2.79 million metric tons domestic production and about 270,000 metric tons opening inventory, overall some 3.060 million tons of urea stocks will be available in Kharif season against the expected offtake of 2.96 million tons. The domestic urea production estimates are excluding production of three SNGPL-based urea plants, which are presently closed and despite requests unable to get gas for urea production.

Sources said that the country is required to maintain at least 200,000 tons of urea stocks at all times to avoid any shortage in the domestic market. However, urea stocks are expected to go down to some 100,000 tons in Kharif, if National Fertilizer Development Centre (NFDC) monthly urea offtake forecast will be matched and gas supply to SNGPL-based plants could not be restored.

“This will spell disaster not just for the economy of Pakistan but also will be a major embarrassment for the government since they will take the blame for not averting a major urea shortage starting by May,” they added.

Against the industry estimates, NFDC claimed that Kharif 2018 is expected to begin with 307,000 tons of opening inventory. Total available urea would be about 3.229 metric tons including 2.922 metric tons of domestic production. Offtake is estimated around 2.959 metric tons. Thus there will be 270,000 metric tons of urea stock at the end of the season.

Sources said that the NFDC's domestic production estimates are higher than actual production; therefore it is showing an inventory of some 270,000 metric tons end of season.

"The only ways for the government to avoid this shortage is through urgent imports of around 200,000 tons of urea or allocation of LNG at low rates to the three plants or restoration of gas supply to SNGPL-based fertilizer producers on priority basis to enhance the local urea production," they suggested.

Fertilizer dealers are also taking full advantage of expected shortage and started hoarding the urea, of which panic has already been created in the market and prices of urea are gradually increasing in the domestic market. Presently, 50-kg urea bag is available at Rs 1,430 to Rs 1,450 against the Minimum Retail Price (MRP) of Rs 1,400 per 50-kg bag. The costly urea will be burden on the pockets of poor and small farmers which are in majority in the country.

Sources said urea export was allowed in a very ideal situation, when local production was on increase with massive stocks. Increase in urea production and exports were claimed as a big achievement by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in January. He approved additional 35,000 tons export of urea. An export of 184,000 tons of urea has been reported since October 2017 including some 64,000 tons of urea exports in March 2018 alone.

Overall, urea production capacity in the country stood at 6.5 million tons annually, however with the closure of three plants on SNGPL, overall production has declined to 5.5 million annually against the demand/consumption of 5.5 million to 6 million tons annually.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/04/5-page/708665-news.html

FARMERS DEMAND COMPENSATION FOR LOW CROP PRICES
The Express Tribune, April 6th, 2018.

With the threat of staging a sit-in at the Parliament House on the eve of federal budget announcement, leading farmer bodies have demanded compensation to offset the 'huge losses' suffered on account of low prices of sugarcane, potato, rice and cotton.

They have also called for announcement of a minimum support price for all major crops like the way neighbouring countries offer to their growers.

Import of cotton and milk powder should be strictly regulated by imposing hefty duties in order to protect the interest of local farmers, in addition to taking robust measures for ending water shortage by constructing reservoirs on war footing, said officials of varying farmers' associations at the Farm Leaders Pre-budget Seminar organised by the Agriculture Journalists Association.

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad President Khalid Mehmood Khokhar said all farmers had been facing losses as they could not get due price for their produce.

"Government should announce a compensation of Rs30,000 per acre for the farmers, sadly, the ruling elite only gives monetary benefits to powerful sugar, textile and other agriculture-based industries and shies away when farmers' losses are to be compensated," he added.

“Taxes on fertiliser should be withdrawn to increase its demand, which will eventually translate into a visible jump in the output of crops.”

He suggested that farmers’ marketing problems could be resolved by introducing minimum support price for cotton, rice, corn, potato and other main crops like India did to shield the interest of farmers.

He underlined the need for providing relief for the farmers to make up for the rising cost of pumping groundwater, otherwise, they would have no option but to protest.

Speaking on the occasion, Kisan Board Pakistan Senior Vice President Sarfaraz Khan said all political parties should come forward to adopt a unanimous national development agenda by giving top priority to the agriculture sector.

Farmers Associates of Pakistan Director Ebad Khan said most of the subsidy schemes introduced by successive governments had failed to produce desired results as these were not executed while keeping in view a result-oriented approach.

He also pointed to the lack of coherent approach among policymakers, saying due to absence of synergy, the farmers could not adopt new techniques because of loopholes in government schemes.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1678509/2-farmers-demand-compensation-low-crop-prices/

40,000 TONS OF WHEAT GIFTED TO AFGHANISTAN
Business Recorder, April, 7TH, 2018

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, in a goodwill gesture on Friday, announced the waiver of additional regulatory duty on Afghan exports to Pakistan to help lift the economy of war-torn Afghanistan, besides gifting 40,000 tons of wheat for the Afghan people, the Foreign Office said.

The announcement comes following a meeting of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul during his day-long visit in which the two leaders also urged the Taliban to join peace process without further delay. The Prime Minister in his visit on the invitation of President Ghani was accompanied by Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Iqbal Zafar Jhagra and National Security Adviser Lieutenant-General Nasser Khan Janjua (retd). President Ghani and Prime Minister Abbasi held a one-on-one meeting followed by delegation-level talks at the Afghan Presidential Palace. However, the two sides issued press releases separately at the conclusion of the visit.

“President Ghani and Prime Minister Abbasi discussed the entire gamut of Pak-Afghan relations including peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, return of Afghan refugees, bilateral trade and regional connectivity,” the Foreign Office of Pakistan said in a press release issued here.

It stated that Prime Minister Abbasi welcomed President Ghani”s vision for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and his offer of peace talks to Taliban. “Both leaders called on the Taliban to respond positively to the peace offer and join the peace process without further delay,” it stated, adding that they agreed that there is no military solution to the ongoing Afghan conflict and that the political solution is the best way forward.

The two leaders agreed that Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) provided a useful framework for broad based and structured engagement on all issues of mutual interest and decided to operationalize the five working groups under APAPPS. The two leaders reiterated that terrorism is a common enemy and threat. They agreed not to allow their soils to be used for anti-state activities against each other.

Both the leaders agreed that peace, prosperity and stability of the two countries are interlinked. They reaffirmed their resolve to work together to address all issues of bilateral and transit trade. They also expressed their firm resolve not to allow politics to affect their economic relationship which is important for the welfare of the peoples of the two countries.

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to regional connectivity as they had done in Herat on 23rd February 2018 while jointly inaugurating the entry of TAPI Gas Pipeline from Turkmenistan into Afghanistan. They agreed to hold an early meeting of the Joint Economic Commission to take forward planning and implementation of key rail, road, gas pipeline and energy projects that would integrate Pakistan and Afghanistan with Central Asia.

The Prime Minister and Afghan President also agreed to move forward on Chaman-Kandahar-Herat railway line, Peshawar-Kabul motorway, and other connectivity projects which can help realize the tremendous potential of South and Central Asian regions by providing shortest access through the sea ports of Gwadar and Karachi. They emphasized early completion of TAPI and CASA-1000 projects, it added.

The Prime Minister announced a gift of 40,000 tons of wheat for the Afghan people, it stated, adding that Prime Minister Abbasi also announced a waiver of additional regulatory duty on Afghan exports to Pakistan to help lift the Afghan economy. The two sides also agreed to initiate discussions on consular matters and exchange of civilian prisoners, it added.

President Ghani and Prime Minister Abbasi reaffirmed their resolve to build trust and confidence between the two countries by working closely for peace, prosperity and stability in their countries. The two leaders agreed to continue the exchange of high-level visits. The Prime Minister also met Chief Executive Dr Abdullah Abdullah. Both leaders discussed the entire range of bilateral matters and agreed on regular leadership contacts.

Prime Minister Abbasi extended invitations to President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to visit Islamabad at their earliest convenience. The Prime Minister met with senior political leaders including Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Ustad Mohammad Mohaqiq, Ustad Mohammad Karim Khalili and Pir Sayed Hamed Gailani, to convey the support of the government and people of Pakistan to all ethnic groups in Afghanistan and underscore Pakistan"s commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a separate press release, sharing the "key principles" to finalize APAPPS agreed upon during the meeting of the President Ghani and Prime Minister Abbasi. It stated that the two sides agreed on the following key principles to finalize Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS):

(i) Pakistan will support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation.

(ii) The two countries will undertake effective actions against fugitives and the irreconcilable elements posing security threats to either of the two countries.

(iii) Both countries commit to deny use of their respective territories by any country, network, group or individuals for anti-state activities against either country.

(iv) The two countries commit to put in place a joint supervision, coordination and confirmation mechanism through liaison officers (LOs) for the realization of the agreed actions,

(v) The two countries commit to avoid territorial and aerial violations of each other"s territory.

(vi) The two countries will avoid public blame games and instead use APAPPS cooperation mechanisms to respond to mutual issues of contention and concerns.

(vii) The two countries will establish working groups and necessary cooperation mechanisms as per APAPPS for full implementation of the APAPPS and the above mutually reinforcing principles.

The visit comes a day earlier Afghanistan blamed Pakistan for violating its air space and conducted air strikes inside Dangam district of Kunar province and warned that "continuing such violations of international norms and that of good neighborliness will have further consequences on the relations between the two countries."

The Foreign Office, however, rejected the Afghan allegations as baseless. "Pakistan rejected the baseless Afghan allegations of violation of its airspace and air raids inside Afghan territory by Pakistan Air Force…Pakistani security forces are undertaking counter-terrorism operations in Bajaur Agency directed against terrorist groups which continue to attack Pakistan from their sanctuaries based on Afghan soil that have resulted in loss of lives and injuries on the Pakistani side," the Foreign Office said in a late night statement on Thursday.

It insisted that information about the ongoing counterterrorism operations is shared with the Afghan security forces on a regular basis. In the meeting of the Directors General Military Operations of the two countries held in Rawalpindi on Thursday, Pakistan shared details of the operations with the Afghan side indicating that these operations were on the Pakistani side of the border, the Foreign Office further stated.

"Pakistan urges Afghanistan to focus on taking effective counterterrorism actions including plugging of large gaps existing along the Afghan side of Pakistan-Afghanistan border to prevent the targeting of Pakistani civilians and security forces by terrorists from Afghan soil," it stated, adding that it is also important that the Afghan government should refrain from blame game.
"Instead there is a need to work together to combat terrorism and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation for shared progress and prosperity of the peoples of the two countries," it added.
http://fp.brecorder.com/2018/04/20180407358358/

GAS SUPPLY: FERTILISER INDUSTRY DEMANDS CUT IN TAX ON FEEDSTOCK
The Express Tribune, April 7th, 2018.

The Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council has pushed the government to reduce tax on gas being used as feedstock in order to end disparity between taxes on input and output in the fertiliser industry that has caused accumulation of huge refund claims of Rs13 billion.

Executive Director of the council Brigadier Sher Shah told The Express Tribune that gas being consumed as feedstock constituted 80% of the raw material used for urea production. The fertiliser industry is paying 17% sales tax on the feedstock.

According to Shah, the industry was paying Rs114 per bag in tax on input whereas the tax on output stood at 5%, which amounted to Rs70 per bag. This way, he said, they were facing problems in getting tax refunds that had piled up to Rs13 billion.

He proposed that the government should cut the rate of sales tax on urea in order to end disparity between input and output taxes and avoid the piling up of tax refunds.

Some time ago, a committee was constituted by the prime minister, headed by National Food Security and Research Minister Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan, which recommended a flat 2% sales tax on all fertiliser sales to ease the burden on farmers.

The fertiliser manufacturers welcomed the restructuring of output tax provided it was matched by a similar reduction in input tax as well.

They say the industry, which is a key contributor to agricultural growth, has been suffering over the years because of a high cost of input.

Gas prices have gone high due to the imposition of gas infrastructure development cess and the industry's output and products are also subjected to sales tax.

"If no relief is given in taxes, the additional financial costs lead to higher cost of production and resultantly takes the cost of cultivation to an uncompetitive level," the council said.

It asked the government to come up with effective measures in a bid to reduce the cost of input so that fertiliser prices may be made internationally competitive and the country's agricultural economy could be developed.

The council underscored the need for reducing the cess and sales tax on natural gas, re-gasified liquefied natural gas and other raw material like phosphoric acid and phosphate rock.

Apart from this, support prices for major crops like cotton, rice, potato and corn should also be announced to have desired impact on the economy and make Pakistan more competitive and sustainable in the international market.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1679486/2-gas-supply-fertiliser-industry-demands-cut-tax-feedstock/

May 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 21st TO MAY 27TH 2018

Non- ADP scheme
Sindh allocates Rs1.16bn for tagging livestock

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: In an astonishing move, the Sindh government has allocated Rs1.16 billion for a pilot project of tagging livestock approved by CM Sindh under non-Annual Development Program (ADP) scheme, for FY 2018-19.

According to sources, the Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had allowed the department to undertake the Livestock Tagging and Traceability project under the traditional PC-I mode as non-ADP scheme during last financial year and gave directions to Planning and Development (P&D) department to process the PC-I at the earliest.

Following the said approval, the PC-I of the project titled 'Livestock Zoning Project Sindh' as a pilot has been prepared in no time and forwarded to the P&D department for further decision as this project is being patronized by the front man of one of the highly influential political figures in Sindh politics.

Moreover, the PC-I of the project, which was earlier approved under non-ADP scheme by CM, has been received to P&D department on March 15, 2018 and the technical committee, which was supposed to carry out long deliberations, has given go-ahead to this scheme (1062) on same date.

Therefore, this scheme has been approved by Provincial Development Working Party (PWDP) within six days (March 21, 2018) and later incorporated in Sindh budget FY 18-19 with Rs1.16 billion allocation.

Replying to a question, sources said that the non-ADP project could not be inducted in ADP without board's approval however said requirement was utterly neglected in this scheme with the best reason known to the concerned authority. Furthermore, sources said that the budgeted cost of this pilot project for livestock tagging in divisions of Karachi and Hyderabad was at Rs3.856 billion for the period of 36 months (2017-18 to 2019-20).

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/24/7-page/718528-news.html

Sindh to collect tax on agricultural income

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated May 22, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh cabinet, which met at the Sindh Assembly building with Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah in the chair on Monday, decided to collect tax on agricultural income and amend the Sindh Arms Act, allowing people to keep more than four weapons.

Briefing the media about the decisions the cabinet took, Provincial Information, Transport and Labour Minister Nasir Hussain Shah said the cabinet took serious notice of the reports that certain private schools were collecting hefty fees from students for the months of summer vacations, thus overburdening the parents, and decided to initiate action against them.

He added that the cabinet deputed education minister, education secretary and other officers concerned to investigate the reports of collection of additional fees for the summer vacations.

In reply to a question, Mr Shah said tax would be collected on the agricultural income from 50 acres of land or on the annual income of over Rs1.2 million.

He further said the cabinet proposed changes to the Arms Act. “Now a person can possess as many weapons as he or she likes,” he added.

Besides, he said, the cabinet also extended the date till December 2018 for computerisation of arms licences.

While giving an explanation, the minister said the federal government had allocated a major share of its budget to Punjab and that was why progress was visible there in the social sector.

Regarding the caretaker set-up in Sindh, he brushed aside the reports of any meeting between the chief minister and the leader of the opposition which he said had not been held so far.

He maintained that the names for the caretaker chief minister were not final.

Mr Shah further said the bills which had not been signed by Governor Muhammad Zubair and were returned were once again approved by the cabinet.

Talking about his party, he said the PPP had always supported democracy and would never be part of any undemocratic or unconstitutional move.

Published in Dawn, May 22nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1409183/sindh-to-collect-tax-on-agricultural-income

Punjab approves act to protect farmers

By Our Correspondent

Published: May 24, 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly has approved Punjab Agriculture Markets Regulatory Authority Act (PAMRA), which will replace the decades-old existing system in the province.

Agriculture Punjab Secretary Muhammad Mahmood has said that the previous law was very restrictive and discouraged competition.

PAMRA will pave the way to increase competition in agriculture produce markets, and provide new horizons for the farming community.

Mahmood disclosed that the emerging competitive marketplace will improve the bargaining power of farmers and retailers/ consumers. Resultantly, the farmers will earn more for their produce and consumers will pay less.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 24th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1717559/2-punjab-approves-act-protect-farmers/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 14TH TO MAY 20TH 2018

UREA PRICES LIKELY TO SHOOT UP
Mushtaq Ghumman
Business Recorder, May 14th, 2018

The domestic fertilizer industry is likely to further increase urea prices by Rs 200 per bag in case government fails to release remaining subsidy, well informed sources in Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MoNFS&R) told Business Recorder.

Minister for National Food Security and Research, Sikandar Hayat Bosan held a meeting with the fertilizer industry and sought reasons for the increase in urea prices. The industry has already increased price of urea by Rs 100 per bag.

The Minister mentioned government ‘favours’ in support of the industry, including GST restructuring on inputs in the next budget. He expressed his annoyance at the decision to unilaterally raise prices of urea that has embarrassed the outgoing government.

The industry gave the rundown of events since the inception of subsidy scheme in 2016, the industry’s decision to limit the price rise by Rs 106 per bag and the complications due to processing of claims and resultant financial cost due to delayed payments.

“Industry appreciated the efforts of the Ministry but expressed remorse over non fulfillment of commitment by the government and inordinate delays in the release of funds by the Ministry of Finance,” the sources added. One of the participants of the meeting told this scribe that the industry had been running from pillar to post for release of subsidy. Prime Minister’s office directive of July 24, 2017 for release of payments on the basis of 80:20 was cited again and again but was not followed either in letter or spirit and payments of 80% remain pending and nothing is evident on 20% third party validation process.

“Fertilizer industry maintains that in order to recover the exact amount, besides subsidy and industry’s contribution, and recurring financial cost, inflation and other factors, the price should have been raised by over Rs 200 per bag,” he added.

The Prime Minister office on March 29, 2018 was informed about the rise in prices after April 15, 2018 in case of non-payment of pending amount. And with no response from the government, industry was constrained to revise the prices upward to partially mitigate the liability and recover losses, he continued.

The Secretary MoNFS&R Fazal Abbas Makan revealed that he has processed a case for release of 80% of claims of 2017/18 up to February and hoped to receive the amount to the tune of Rs 4.74 billion shortly within a couple of days.

He phoned the Finance Minister during the meeting and the Food Minister requested release of the amount of claims. The Minister desired that industry may oblige the government at this critical juncture and he will make a concerted effort for release of the remaining payments. "I guess the government felt political pressure due to the price hike and for face saving has partially released claims. Dr Miftah Ismail does not understand the political price of his dillydallying approach", said another stakeholder. The Secretary identified favours granted to the industry like subsidized gas and permission to export and resistance to allowing imports.

In response the industry pointed out that the cost of gas in Pakistan is higher vis-à-vis countries from where urea maybe imported and suggested that those plants that have shut down due to lack of gas may be operationalized through provision of gas.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/05/20180514371406/

PPP'S SWEET TALK TO AGRICULTURISTS
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, May 14th, 2018

Greater allocation of expenses, larger development allocations, the continuation of several important projects and subsidy schemes — everything may sound music to ears of most farmers.

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah presented the 2018-19 budget for the entire fiscal year, but said in his budget speech that he is seeking the authorisation of budgetary expenses for the first quarter only, leaving it to the next elected government to set their own priorities for the rest of the year.

This is like leaving room for changes in all budgetary announcements, including those related to agriculture.

Having said that, the mere announcement of a 34pc increase (from Rs7.7bn in 2017-18 to Rs10.10.36bn in 2018-19) in the current revenue expenditure and an enormous Rs10.94bn annual development spending in the agriculture sector is enough to excite agriculturists. Of the Rs10.94bn ADP, Rs5bn will cover locally envisaged development schemes (excluding new schemes) and Rs5.94bn is earmarked for foreign-funded projects.

Mr Shah, who also holds the portfolio of provincial finance minister, announced that a subsidy of Rs9.65bn would be offered to farmers for purchase of tractors, agricultural implements, solar pumps, tube wells, etc.

This might sound big and ambitious in view of the need for mechanisation and modernisation of agriculture in the province.

A cursory look at the development plan document reveals that no new development scheme has been designed

But a cursory look at the development plan document reveals that no new development scheme has been designed, though allocations have been made for 35 ongoing schemes — eight in agricultural research, 11 of agricultural extension services, one pertaining to Sindh Seed Corporation, 10 related to agriculture mechanisation, and five for agriculture water management.

Since the outgoing government has sought the budgetary expenses authorisation only for the first quarter of the next fiscal year, leaving the rest for the next government, focusing on ongoing development schemes in agriculture makes sense, officials of provincial agriculture department say. “It’ll be up to the next elected government to decide whether or not to include a new development scheme (in agriculture) in the last three quarters,” one of them says.

“Let the details of the development schemes come out and let’s see how much of the promised subsidy is for tractor buying and how much for other purposes and only then one can comment on its impact on agricultural productivity,” said an official of Sindh Chamber of Commerce and Industry reached immediately after the announcement of the budget. “Past experience shows that politically powerful landlords manage to buy subsidised tractors under the name of their servant farmers only to rent them out to the ordinary folks.”

For the next fiscal year, the provincial government has set aside Rs1.08bn under the ongoing Sindh Irrigated Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Programme. That perhaps can be helpful in boosting per-acre yields of major and minor crops, including cotton, rice, wheat, sugar cane, fruits and vegetables.

What makes this a more likely scenario is the budgetary allocation of more than half a billion rupees, under an ongoing project, to promote preservation and storage of fruits and veggies and another subsidy of Rs113m for subsidising purchase of solar water pumps and tube wells also under an ongoing scheme.

During his budget speech, the Sindh chief minister boasted of the continuation of two World Bank projects in the province’s agriculture sector, one for improving farm productivity and market access in important commodity value chains and another for improving water courses, mitigation of flood risks and introducing a high-efficiency irrigation system.

In the next fiscal year, Sindh will contribute to these projects out of the Rs5.94bn reserved for local participation in the foreign-funded projects.

The need for undertaking more extensive research on agriculture is obvious in case of all provinces. Sindh does realise this and Mr Shah boasted in his budget speech about the favourable impact of such research on agricultural output of the province and the contribution of the province in overall agricultural economy of the country.

But a little scanning of related official documents reveals that seven out of the total eight ongoing agricultural research schemes are supposed to be completed by June next year and the eighth one by June 2020.

Throw-forward costs of all of these projects, as shown in sectoral annual development plans, are huge and estimated expenses as of June this year is relatively small. “This means that though these research projects were initiated several years ago, progress on them has so far remained slower than desired," explains a source privy to the monitoring of these schemes.

The total cost of all these projects is now Rs837m, but estimated expenses on them as of June 2018 is Rs298m which has resulted in a big throw-forward cost of Rs539m.

All of the eight above-mentioned projects are of such nature that their completion would help in boosting crop yields and set the stage for sustained high growth in the areas of major and minor crop production.

After the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, agriculture became a fully provincial subject from the 2010-11 fiscal year. Pakistan Peoples Party has been in power in Sindh even before that year, as this is its second term in the provincial government.

Agriculturists may wonder why the provincial government couldn't implement several key development schemes in agriculture during these years. Wouldn't it have been wiser for the provincial government to come up with a sort of provincial economic survey detailing the completion of development schemes instead of presenting a budget strategy paper?

In that case, government efforts to pursue development agenda for agriculture in 10 long years could have been highlighted and left to stakeholders to judge their veracity.

The budget strategy paper chiefly consists of projections for the next three years from 2018-19 to 2020-21. But nobody knows for sure who will be in power in the province for these three years.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1407452

PROSPECT OF DELAYED COTTON SOWING UNNERVES FARMERS
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, May 14th, 2018

Ahmad Fraz Khan

AS Punjab announces May 31 as the deadline for Bt cotton sowing, farmers wonder what it would mean for them this year. Last year, they could achieve only 11.98 million bales from 2.8m hectares (6.92m acres) against the target of 14.04m bales on 3.1m hectares.

This year, the acreage target has been reduced to 2.9m hectares, but the production target has been increased to 14.06m bales. But no one seems to know how this could be achieved.

Farmers in Punjab, who are supposed to contribute 10m bales to the total production target, are clueless about the situation. Their fears grow from three sources. Two of these three factors are new and one is almost a routine now. The new factors are: total chaos in the seed sector, which is only confusing farmers about the crop, and a massive water shortage (running over 40 per cent) that is making sowing almost impossible. The third factor is the standing wheat crop that occupies a major chunk of land.

As far as the seed sector goes, recent reports from local laboratories and discussed in a pre-sowing meeting at the Central Cotton Research Institute, Multan, noted that the majority of the non-Bt cotton varieties now carry Bt genes. According to these reports, more than 60 non-Bt varieties now stand infected by the gene, wiping out the distinction between Bt and non-Bt varieties.

Pakistan may be the first country in the world that has seen its local varieties infected; no such infection has been reported from any part of the world so far. The Bt gene has crept in other crops (such as alfalfa) but not cotton.

Pakistan may be the first country in the world that has seen its local cotton varieties infected

This infection is now further confusing farmers, as Bt and non-Bt genes have different input requirements and could compromise yield if not taken care of as per their own protocol. The Punjab Agriculture Department only added to the confusion when it missed out the names of some local seeds in its list of approved varieties, which it issued in March and later added them in the deadline press release, which it issued in the second week of May.

The second factor that is now making cotton a risky proposition is water shortages, which have been running over 40 per cent: Tarbela dam hit dead level twice in the last fortnight. The Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (under Ministry of National Food Security and Research), which sets the production target, also in its meeting discussed water shortage, as reported by the Indus River System Authority. But it still increased the production target, without explaining how higher target would be achieved from smaller acreage, and that too with less water.

The third factor is the pace of wheat harvesting in Punjab. It is under way but yet to gain full momentum because of different reasons. Most of the cotton crop is sown on the lands vacated by wheat.

It is especially true for the southern part of the province, where harvesting starts early and water shortages hurt the most because it is located at the tail end of the Punjab irrigation system and has brackish water underground. These factors make sowing impossible without canal water. Even the perennial canals started running almost two weeks later than scheduled time in the area, adding to farmers’ woes.

These three factors are making cotton crop an uncertain prospect this year. The Punjab government says efforts are afoot to facilitate the crop. It says that fertiliser and pesticides inventories are satisfactory and so is the subsidy regime, which should have positive impact this year.

In addition to federal subsidies on fertiliser and GST-free pesticides, Punjab is providing certified seed for around 200,000 acres at half of the market rate. It has provided scratch cards to seed companies, and farmers are free to buy seeds from the company of their choice (for two acres) and claim subsidy. All these factors should have a salutary effect upon the final yield.

But officials of the Punjab Agriculture Department concede that it would only happen if the crop is sown at the most propitious time, which is not later than May 31.

If the sowing gets delayed until June, germination problems will immediately hit the crop because of high temperatures. If somehow the seeds do germinate, heavy shedding could follow and crop would be too weak to withstand the monsoon onslaught that comes in the form of a pest attack.

Given these factors, south Punjab is the most vulnerable, but the rest of the province is not any better off, where all three factors are present with full force.

Unfortunately, the delayed sowing now seems a distinct possibility, which farmers fear the most.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1407450

MANGO PRODUCTION LIKELY TO GO SOUR
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, May 14th, 2018

Mohammad Hussain Khan

A BUMPER mango crop is not likely in Sindh for many reasons, mainly water shortage at a time when the crop was at crucial stage, ie March onwards.

Farm owners believe that mangoes have started reaching markets, but they are not hopeful about a good crop this year.

By April 1, Sukkur barrage had to bear with 75 per cent less water as compared to its allocated share in Water Apportionment Accord of 1991, according to Sindh irrigation department’s official figures. Until April 15, shortage varied between 68pc to 72pc. Situation improved only after mid-April and the ratio dropped to 46pc to 40pc in the first week of May.

Of all mango orchards of Sindh, around 80pc of them are fed by Nara and Rohri canals on the left bank of Sukkur barrage, which is the lifeline of the province’s farm sector. Both these perennial and major canals feed mango orchards in districts of Khairpur, NaushahroFeroze, Benazirabad, Matiari, Hyderabad, TandoAllahyar, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and Sanghar.

“The overall loss in mango production is expected to be between 25pc and 30pc this time around,” says Sindh Horticulture Research Institute’s (SHRI) Mirpurkhas Director Mohammad Khan Baloch. The loss will be maximum, at 40pc, in areas where water flows remained unavailable.

Mr Baloch’s assessment is based on a survey conducted by an SHRI team in different big mango farms of the province, mainly in Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas districts.

It is the Sindhri variety of mangoes that is mostly grown in Sindh besides Saroli, Chaunsa, Langra, Daseri, Began Phalli, etc. Sindhri is the province’s main exportable variety.

Many progressive mango growers have adopted good agriculture practices (GAP) to get better returns from their farm. Another general trend among growers is that they lease out their farms to contractors for an annual fee.

Several farmers have been exporting mangoes themselves after learning best management techniques under foreign assistance.

TandoAllahyar’sRaisImdadNizamani, a GAP-certified farmer who has adopted modern practices to manage his mango and banana orchard for a long time, expects Sindhri’s production to decline this season. “I think the size and quality of Sindhri is hit primarily owing to a change in weather. Besides, water shortage at crucial time has also aggravated the situation,” he says.

Mango orchard owners generally keep mango trees dormant between November and February. They start watering them from March, the same month water shortage started affecting the province this year after storages in Mangla and Tarbela dams hit dead levels.

Growers who had been cultivating other crops in addition to mango had to use available irrigation water flows for those crops as well, thus compromising water needs of mangoes.

Mangoes, however, have started reaching markets. But it still requires Sindhri around three weeks to develop its taste, and its arrival is expected to be in full swing by the end of this month.

Currently, vendors are selling Sindhri at Rs120 a kilogram. However, orchard owners don’t rule out a steep rise in its prices in case of a considerable drop in production.

Horticulturist Mohammad Khan Baloch points out that third flowering in mango trees was badly hit, as fruit could not resist rising temperature. Resultantly, flowering could not lead to desired fruit setting in trees. KaramullahSaand, another orchard owner, subscribes to Mr Baloch’s

views, saying less mango production is on the cards and the fruit is unlikely to develop its normal size.

Mango trees often see alternate fruit bearing every year. Since mango is usually grown on a large scale, it remains available in the market despite a drop in production.

Sindh’s orchards stood at 61,943 hectares in the 2017-18 season while the production was 399,686 tonnes in the last season. Figures have recorded decline both in production and area, which varied between 62,000 and 63,000 hectares from 2013-14 to 2016-17.

Progressive growers like Ghulam Sarwar Abro and Mahmood Nawaz Shah — who export mangoes to European and other foreign markets — point out that water availability remained as low as 25pc during March-May, which is the crucial phase of orchard management. “In my view, production deficit is currently 15pc to 20pc that can potentially go as high as 30pc as season progresses,” Mr Shah says.

He says that Rohri canal was closed by irrigation authorities for a longer-than-usual period — ie 40 days — owing to an inquiry by the National Accountability Bureau into the lining project of the canal. This necessitated increased demand for other crops on the part of growers.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1407451

BARDAANA DISTRIBUTION: FARMERS ASSURED OF ADDRESSING ISSUES WITH SINDH GOVT
Business Recorder, 16 May 2018
KARACHI: Bawany Director General NAB Mohammad Altaf on Tuesday assured the farmers to address issues related to Bardaana distribution with the Sindh government under NAB’s prevention regime.

Speaking at a seminar on "Problems faced by farmers due to corruption" organized by Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, he said that only administration had solutions for host of the issues and the governance issues would improve if home grown alternative solutions were also adopted for redress of problems, instead of looking towards the resource constrained government for providing ready solutions at doorsteps for every problem.

He called upon farmers to adopt mechanization in agricultural techniques like system of sprinklers, instead of waiting for the water distribution mechanism to be improved by the government and added that contributory approach complements the governance for improving it.

Moreover, he said issue of non-operational district units for computerization and reconstruction of revenue record would soon be taken up.

DG NAB said that menace of corruption couldn't be curbed single handedly except with the effective part played by the members of general public with their contribution by exposing the corruption.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/16/5-page/717020-news.html

KHARIF CROPS MAY FACE DROUGHT-LIKE SITUATION
Dawn, May 16th, 2018

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in five years, the Kharif crops may face a 'drought-like situation in sowing season', as all early indications and estimates for the agriculture produce appear worsening.

Irrigation authorities and weather pundits reported that water shortfall in the remaining four weeks of the sowing season could increase up to 52 per cent.

The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) advisory committee in an urgent meeting held on Tuesday noted that water shortage since the start of the sowing season early last month had turned out to be 42pc — much higher than the previous estimate of 31pc — with the result that the provinces would have to brave a proportionate cut in their water share during the remaining period of early Kharif season ending on June 10.

The agriculture sector had generally performed well particularly in major crops such as wheat, sugar cane and cotton, as it had not faced acute water shortage over the past five years.

The water regulator noted at the meeting, which was presided over by Irsa Chairman Ahmad Kamal, that since the provinces had drawn their water shares on the basis of 31pc shortage instead of actual 42pc, they would have to bear a proportionate cut in their water share during the early sowing season.

The Kharif crop season starts from April-June (crucial time for sowing of Kharif crops) and lasts until October-December in different parts of the country. Rice, sugar cane, cotton and maize are some of the key crops of the season.

"(Water) shortages for early Kharif increased from 31pc to 42pc as water inflows remained 15pc below anticipation," said Irsa spokesman Khalid Idrees Rana soon after the meeting. In this situation, he said, the authorities had pinned their hopes on monsoon showers for the Kharif crops.

Contrary to the estimates of Irsa and irrigation authorities for 9.32-million-acre-foot (MAF) water inflow in reservoir, the actual inflow remained at around 7.9MAF, which was 15pc less than the estimated figure, added the spokesman for the regulatory authority.

So far Sindh suffered 53pc water shortage while Punjab faced 47pc water shortfall, he added.

An official of the Pakistan Meteorological Department told the meeting that the remaining period of May and the first half of June was predicted to remain mostly dry with "no change in present situation". However, the official added, monsoon was expected to start in the mid of June.

The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) reported that snow availability in the catchment areas of reservoirs was 50pc less than normal and whatever minimal water quantities reach reservoirs would be provided on run-of-the-river basis to the provinces according to their shares.

He said the Irsa would again review water situation in June mid after the Met Office weather forecast related to monsoon.

Mr Rana said Punjab expressed concern over heavy water losses from Taunsa to Kotri Barrage, which were estimated at around one million acres feet. Irsa constituted a regulations director-led committee comprising directors from Punjab and Sindh to measure discharges at Guddu barrage and other barrages of the country and submit its report to the regulator.

All the five Irsa members representing the four provinces and the centre highlighted the need for the construction of new dams on a war footing as a tool to improve water regulation through better utilisation of surplus flows.

On a complaint of Balochistan government, the Sindh government also agreed to take immediate steps to overcome shortages faced by Balochistan given the fact that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have been exempted from water shortage due to their infrastructure constraints as they suffer the most when they do not get their approved shares.

In view of the ongoing rainy spell, the regulator also changed its regulation pattern and increased provincial shares based on improved flows. As a result, Punjab's water share was increased from 56,000 cusecs to 64,000 cusecs while Sindh's share was enhanced from 43,000 cusecs to 55,000 cusecs. Balochistan's share was set at 5,000 cusecs and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's share was fixed at 3,100 cusecs.

The meeting was attended by Irsa members from Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab besides Wapda's chief engineer (hydrology), Met Office director and irrigation authorities from Mangla dam and the provincial governments.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1407958

35pc drop in mango production feared

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter

Updated May 18, 2018

MULTAN: In this March 17, 2018 photo, a farmer sprays pesticides on mango trees.—APP

KARACHI: Acute water shortage — which may cause 35 per cent decline in mango production this year — as well as global warming and small size of the fruit are major concerns for exporters.

Due to acute shortage of water, mango orchards in Sindh — particularly in Hyderabad, Tando Allah Yar, Mirpurkhas districts — would be severely affected. The same goes for Punjab where overall mango production is anticipated to be less by 30-50pc in Muzaffargarh, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan and Shujabad districts.

Along with low production, the smaller size of Pakistani mangoes is also a cause of great concern for exporters, Patron-in-chief All Pakistan Fruits and Vegetables Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA), Waheed Ahmed said.

Due to increased demand and short supply this year, the wholesale price of mango is expected to increase from Rs2,400 to Rs3,000 per 40 kg.

Export target fixed at 100,000 tonnes

Due to relatively longer winter season in different mango growing areas, production has been badly hit, he said. He added that mangoes are also faced with attacks by new diseases which would lead to low production.

Exporters have set the mango export target at 100,000 tonnes for the current year. Foreign shipments would start from May 20, 2018.

MrWaheed said utilisation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor route for the first time for mango exports to China and devaluation of rupee against the dollar would provide some benefit.

"Queries are pouring in from Chinese buyers and hopefully 500-1,000 tonnes may be shipped to China this year. This can emerge as a big market for Pakistani mango once it's fully developed where 20,000 tonnes mango could be conveniently exported. 150 tonnes of mango will also be exported to Japan," he added.

Mango exports, he said, would fetch $95-100 million this season by meeting export target of 100,000 tonnes.

He recalled that there was 50pc reduction in mango production last year due to which export target was curtailed to 81,000 tonnes.

He said people of Gulf countries, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arab and European countries would enjoy Pakistani mangoes this year at a time when Ramazan is also in full swing.

Mango promotions in China, Maldives, and European countries would be held during this year to further enhance of export of mango, he said.

Iran is also an important buyer, however due to unprecedented devaluation of Iranian currency, the exporters are not expecting to get good return value of their export, he said.

The PFVA has been intensely demanding for many years to initiate research and development activities for effectively handing menace of the global warming on the horticulture sector but it's unfortunate that so far no serious attempt has been made by the government.

"Shifting of responsibilities to the provinces for betterment of agriculture sector after enforcement of 18th Amendment could not yield desired results due to lack of coordination among the provinces," he said.

Published in Dawn, May 18th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1408417

Punjab Agri Expo 2018 in June

RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: The Punjab Agriculture Department is going to organise another expo named as 'Punjab Agri Expo 2018' on June 23 & 24, 2018 at the Expo Centre Lahore.

It will be an ultimate opportunity for growers, processors and exporters to develop National as well as International linkages and International stakeholders for development and export of agricultural products in Pakistan, said a spokesman of the provincial agriculture department here on Saturday.

He further said that this event will be a commitment of the department to promote Pakistan as a land of investment and opportunities, for growth of agricultural trade in domestic and international markets and to initiate a collaborative dialogue between passionate minds that envision a prosperous future.

Pakistan having all the resources is the preferred country where lots of investment opportunities are emerging to support the sustainability of quality food production and Government is fully committed to facilitate foreign investors with provision of technical services.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/20/5-page/717795-news.html

Drought-like conditions imperil paddy output in parts of Sindh

Jan Khaskheli

May 20, 2018

HYDERABAD: Sindh, which has the second largest economy among all four provinces with strong irrigation canal system and agriculture production, is experiencing drought-like condition that are most likely to take a serious toll on rice production in parts of the province.

The graveness of the situation can be measured from the facts that almost all watercourses in tail-end areas are parched, while lakes and water ponds have been contaminated.

Realising the seriousness of water crisis, the government has asked the growers of main Phuleli canal not to prepare land for rice cultivation till the next decision, because of uncertain water situation.

The 153km long Phuleli canal starts from Kotri Barrage and feeds Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan and Badin districts.

ZaibunnisaJatoi, an official at Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority’s (SIDA) Left Bank Area Water Board (LBAWB), disclosed that there was no clear decision on rice cultivation around Phulei canal. “The farmers have been asked to wait,” Jatoi said at a canal level alliance meeting held recently.

The situation is same for farmers around Akram Wah and Piniari canal. They are even unable to get water for drinking purposes.

In this situation, the farmers believe that if they get a chance to have water in the month of June, as expected, they will not have proper yield to cover the cost of production.

Traditionally, Hyderabad district is not among rice-growing area, farmers are compelled to utilise lands and produce this food crop at a small level.

Badin is one of the biggest rice producing zones of the province. But presently the rice farmers are facing hardships.

The officials believe that growers should not develop rice nurseries, which usually start in February and March for timely sowing, because of uncertain water availability.

Traditionally, farmers start growing paddy nurseries in the months of February and March. Following the set cultivation system, the seedling transplanting begins in April and first week of May, depending on the situation. But this year, the farmers are unable to set up nurseries in the third week of May. This will affect entire major food crop in these districts.

Four canals start from Kotri barrage, of which three canals Phuleli, Akram Wah, and Piniari come out from the left bank of the river, while another, KalriBaghar (KB) feeder, emerges from the right bank.

The KB feeder feeds Keenjhar Lake to meet the needs of drinking water of the citizens of Karachi.

The nature activists point out the water level is declining in the lake due to a reduction in KB feeder flow, affecting water quality. This may create problems to fulfill the needs of Karachi. They justify that since water scarcity is an overall issue facing the entire province, almost all fresh water bodies will suffer.

Thus in case of continuous shortage in the River Indus, especially at Kotri barrage, the situation will worsen further.

Officials at SIDA-LBAWB say the shortage starts from downstream Sukkur barrage. Looking to this situation, the government has put KB feeder on priority to fill up Keenjhar Lake.

Officials claim to supply exact requirement for the lake, but community activists say KB feeder gets low stream, which has affected the quality of lake water. Keenjhar Lake supplies 1200 cusecs of water to Karachi city, as decided by the authorities.

Since the water level at Kotri barrage is not satisfactory, the government is yet to decide about the release of minimum water to all three canals on the left bank, as hundreds of people depend on these canals for agriculture, raising livestock, and drinking.

According to the crop targets, fixed by federal committee on agriculture, rice will be cultivated over 2,805,000 hectares of land and is expected to have 6,931,500 tons production. However, given the water crisis Sindh was likely to miss the target big time.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/318880-drought-like-conditions-imperil-paddy-output-in-parts-of-sindh

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 7TH TO MAY 13TH 2018
SUGARCANE GROWERS DEMAND DISBURSEMENT OF OVERDUES
Business Recorder, 8 May 2018

AMJAD ALI SHAH

PESHAWAR: Represen-tatives of farmers association have demanded the disbursement of arrears to cane growers from sugar mills in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the light of superior court verdict to procure sugarcane from them at Rs180 per mand.

Speaking at a news conference at Peshawar Press Club on Monday, Kisan Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Rizwanullah Khan said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa millers had procured sugarcane from growers at Rs120 and Rs130 per 40/kg during the last season, which was against the total cost of production. He said the delay in procurement of sugarcane was also caused huge financial losses to provincial exchequer.

Rizwanullah Khan said the growers lodged a strong protest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab against the unfair price. He said the Supreme Court took notice of the issue and issued ordered to ensure disbursement of the outstanding dues to sugarcane farmers as per price of Rs180 per mand. But, he said the sugar mills mafia is openly defying the order of the superior judiciary and yet not released the arrears to farmers in KP, which was created great unrest among the farmers community.

Flanked by the association office bearers, Haji Abdul Akbar, Irshad Ahmad, Abdul Samad Safi, Ahmad Ali Khan and others, Rizwanullah urged the authorities concerned to play their effective role for early release of the outstanding dues to the sugarcane farmers to spend the amount in harvest during the upcoming season.

The association president informed that the tobacco is cash crop of the province, which is mostly cultivated in Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda and Hazara division, while federal and provincial governments had generated hefty revenue on federal excise duty and provincial cess.

However, he said the federal government had imposed additional taxes on tobacco crop, by taking stance of substantial decrease in tobacco revenue, due to which the farmers had faced with financial crisis. He called for regulating of gur export to generate revenue in the formal economy of the country.

He criticized the provincial government for its failure to frame any vibrant policy for uplift of agriculture sector. He hoped the new government would give priority to agriculture sector in the province.

Abdul Samad Safi said that no testing laboratory was established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said the growers had suffered huge financial losses due to wrong policies of the provincial government. He said the association had prepared a draft regarding the development of the agriculture sector. Rizwanullah Khan said the growers would strongly protest and stage 'sit-in' in Peshawar, if their demand was not accepted amicably.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/08/21-page/715724-news.html

AGRICULTURE GETS HEFTY SUBSIDIES IN SINDH BUDGET FOR FY19
The Express Tribune, May 11th, 2018.

The Sindh government has followed in the federal government's footsteps in doling out hefty relief and subsidies to the agriculture sector in the provincial budget for next fiscal year 2018-19.

"Current revenue expenditure on agriculture has been increased by 34% to Rs10.36 billion for the next fiscal year against Rs7.7 billion in CFY (current fiscal year)," Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah announced while presenting the FY19 budget in the provincial assembly on Thursday.

Shah pointed out that the provincial agriculture department was engaged in promoting mechanised farming for which subsidy was being provided on the purchase of tractors and agriculture implements including tillage, seedbed preparation, planting, inter-culture, fertiliser and chemical application equipment and machinery for reducing post-harvest losses. "In the next fiscal year, a subsidy assistance of Rs9.650 billion will be provided to the farmers on tractors, agriculture implements, solar pumps, tube wells, etc," he said.

"Provision of solar water pumps and tube wells at subsidised rates to the farmers will continue under the ongoing scheme of Rs113 million."

The provincial government has set aside Rs508.8 million in subsidy to help the farmers preserve and store fruits and vegetables through hot water treatment and controlled atmosphere.

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the country's economy and contributes 24% to the annual gross domestic product (GDP) – the size of national economy.

"Sindh's contribution to the national production is 36% in rice, 29% in sugarcane, 34% in cotton and 15% in wheat," boasted the chief minister, who also holds the finance minister portfolio.

Among horticulture crops, Sindh produces 73% of banana, 34% of mangoes and 88% of chillies grown in the country.

Under the Annual Development Programme 2018-19, the provincial government has earmarked Rs5 billion for ongoing agriculture development projects.

However, it did not announce any new development project for the sector as the administration was going to complete its five-year tenure in less than a month and left it to the next government to come up with new schemes.

Apart from these, the government has allocated Rs5.94 billion for foreign-funded projects in the agriculture sector.

The World Bank, through two development projects, has provided financial assistance to the growers for increasing productivity in Sindh.

"The Sindh Agriculture Growth Project is for improving productivity, market access in important commodity value chains (onion, chilli, dates and rice). Another project is for improvement of water courses, mitigation of flood risks, introducing high-efficiency irrigation systems and improved agricultural practices," the chief minister elaborated.

The Sindh Irrigated Agriculture Productivity Enhancement Programme got an allocation of Rs1.08 billion as part of ongoing schemes.

The provincial government earmarked Rs2.54 billion for additional lining of already improved water courses in Sindh which included government's share of Rs1.62 billion and revised farmers' share of Rs911.05 million.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1707367/2-agriculture-gets-hefty-subsidies-sindh-budget-fy19/

FURTHER HIKE IN UREA PRICES LIKELY AS SUBSIDY STAYS BLOCKED
The Express Tribune, May 12th, 2018.

The fertiliser industry has warned of a further increase in urea prices as the government is looking reluctant to release pending subsidy claims, which could prove a political setback for the current PML-N administration in upcoming general elections.

Fertiliser manufacturers increased the urea price by Rs100 per bag last week and they could jack up the price by another Rs106 following delay in the release of subsidy by the finance ministry, say industry players.

Finance Minister Miftah Ismail was also not paying heed to the demand from National Food Security and Research Minister Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan, who wanted to provide relief for the crisis-stricken farmers.

As the Kharif sowing season has already got under way with cotton being its major crop, the urea price hike will dent the income of farmers. Already, during the current government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the cotton production has slumped to its lowest level in history because of lack of attention given to the farmers.

The fertiliser manufacturers, in a meeting held at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Friday, offered to withdraw the price increase if the government agreed on the payment of subsidy.

The main agenda of the meeting, chaired by the national food security minister and attended by industry representatives, was the increase in urea prices.

The minister listed the incentives given by the government for support of the industry, including the restructuring of sales tax on inputs in the budget for next fiscal year 2018-19.

He, however, voiced concern over the unilateral increase in urea prices that caused embarrassment for the outgoing government.

Responding to that, representatives of the fertiliser industry gave a rundown of the events since the inception of subsidy scheme in 2016 and the industry’s contribution of Rs106 per bag.

They highlighted the difficulties faced in processing subsidy claims and the resultant financial cost borne due to delay in payments. They pointed to the government’s failure to meet its commitment and reluctance of the Ministry of Finance to release the subsidy.

On July 24, 2017, the Prime Minister’s Office had given the directive for subsidy payments at a ratio of 80:20 but, according to the industry, it had not been followed in true letter and spirit.

While payment of 80% subsidy was pending, nothing was heard about the third-party validation process for the remaining 20%, they said.

They told the meeting that the price should have been raised by over Rs200 per bag, adding the Prime Minister’s Office had been cautioned on March 29, 2018 about potential rise in prices after April 15 in case of further delay in the release of outstanding subsidy.

“The industry has exercised prudence for all these days. However, with no response from the government, it is constrained to revise prices to partially mitigate the liability and recover losses,” a fertiliser company representative said.

The Ministry of National Food Security secretary highlighted the relief measures taken by the government for the industry like provision of subsidised gas, permission for exports and restriction on imports.

The secretary revealed that he had processed subsidy cases for the release of 80% of the claims up to February for financial year 2017-18 and voiced hope that funds amounting to Rs4.74 billion would be received in a couple of days.

He called the finance minister during the course of the meeting during which the national food security minister talked about the release of subsidy. The minister asked the industry to support the government at the critical juncture, adding he would make concerted efforts for the release of remaining subsidy.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1708101/2-hike-urea-prices-likely-subsidy-stays-blocked/

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT: WANG TERMS SMALLHOLDER FARMERS' ROLE VITAL FOR AGRI SECTOR
Business Recorder, 15 May 2018

Zahid Baig & Itrat Bashir

LAHORE: Lance Wang, Vice President of Monsanto ASEAN and Pakistan, has termed the lack of awareness and proper understanding of new technological advancements in agriculture a major hurdle in its adoption.

He was talking to Business Recorder during his recent short visit to Pakistan. Wang who has been with Monsanto for more than 24 years said that considering the complexity of Asia-Africa market, which largely comprises of subsistence farming, it is important to reach out to farmers and engage them in a manner that makes the adoption process easier for them. "This requires intense effort around farmer education and capacity building," he added.

He said, "Monsanto realizes the importance of driving growth in small holder markets and focuses on enabling the farmers to produce more from their land while conserving natural resources. Our 'serving smallholders' strategy facilitates transfer of agronomic knowledge through innovative means and provides networking opportunities with other value chain participants, so they can fully capitalize on the opportunities offered by modern agricultural technology.

For example, we organize learning centers and farmer expos during both the maize crop seasons. These events provide farmers the opportunity to experience, firsthand, our latest crop technologies and participate in classroom style capacity building sessions run by experts. We also take great care in providing farmers a holistic learning experience by facilitating linkages with other key players of the value chain, including micro finance institutions, farm service providers, machinery manufacturers, grain millers and silage producers."

When asked about the Monsanto's approach towards smallholder farmer outreach and engagement, Wang said that there are a range of programmes that aim to overcome the technological barriers and learning limitations through awareness and exposure. "For example, Monsanto Pakistan's Farmer Ambassador Programme, 'Numberdaar', engages progressive farmers from corn growing belt and encourages them to act as change agents for the proliferation of best farming practices amongst the broader farming community.

Talking about Monsanto's role in delivering agriculture technology and innovation to smallholder farmers, he said that they fully appreciate the role of small-hold farmers in the agriculture value chain.

"Therefore, much of our research and existing technology platforms aim to address small-hold farmer needs. We like to call such technologies 'scale-neutral', allowing small farmers to gain the same benefits when compared to a large corporate farm employing that technology. Biotechnology is a great example of one such technology platform, whereby farmers benefit from useful traits that provide their crop protection against insect and weed infestations. This of course leads to greater farm productivity and profitability for the farmer," he added.

Wang averred that Pakistan has done remarkably well in developing its maize crop, especially in Punjab. He said that this has only been made possible by the concerted efforts of multinational seed companies, such as theirs, introducing high yielding hybrid seeds to the farmers in Pakistan during the later part of 1990s.

"Consequently, there was a steady increase in yields, attracting more and more farmers towards cultivating maize. Within 15 years 95 percent of corn cropping area in Punjab was under hybrid seed cultivation. According to statistics published by Punjab Agriculture Department, the area under maize cultivation has almost doubled between 1995 and 2015, going from 0.83 million acres to over 1.6 million during the period. Similarly, average yield in Punjab was recorded at 14 maunds per acre in 1995, which now stands at a staggering 60 maunds per acre, showing fourfold increase over the past 20 years. Our sustained investment in seed research and development together with high stewardship standards, have been key drivers behind this success."

According to him, while the impact of the corn crop on the rural economy and farmer livelihoods is self-evident, its implications with respect to downstream industry and processors are more profound and far reaching. For example, the poultry industry is the largest consumer of corn grain in Pakistan, utilizing 65 percent of the total production as poultry feed. In recent years, the poultry industry has exhibited eight-10 percent year-on-year growth, much of it fueled by the steady supply of quality corn grain in the domestic market. With improving economics of poultry production, the industry has emerged as the foremost source of cheap and accessible animal protein for the populace. This contribution is also evidenced in Food and Agriculture Organization's nutrition indicators for Pakistan, showing 20 percent increase in daily per capita consumption of animal source proteins across the country since 2001.

He foresaw the role of smallholder farmers vital in Pakistan, which will evolve with passage of time. "With the gradual move towards adoption of modern agricultural technologies, the role of small holder farmers is expected to become more vital. The future of agricultural economy does not only seem profitable but also very exciting, as we will get to witness how the transformation of agriculture through technology will contribute towards growth in rural economy and improvement in farmers' livelihoods," he added.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/13/7-page/716552-news.htm

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 30TH TO MAY 6TH 2018

BIOSAFETY STRESSED AT LABS
Dawn, April 30, 2018

KARACHI: Experts at a biosafety workshop on Sunday called for adopting international safety standards and precautionary measures at the public and the private health laboratories to prevent pathologists and technicians from laboratory-acquired infections.

They said such standardisation would allow lab professionals and community to be saved from biological, chemical and radiological hazards.

They expressed these views at a workshop on “laboratory acquired infections and biological waste management” organised by the Karachi Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) in collaboration with the Health Security Partners, US at a hotel.

They called for proper disposal of infectious and hazardous waste generated at laboratories on daily basis so that they could not cause biological and chemical hazards for people.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404659

FARMERS SAY RELIEF MEASURES TOO VAGUE AND TOO FEW
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 30th, 2018

Amjad Mahmood | Mohammad Hussain Khan

THE tax relief and incentives announced by the federal government in the budget for 2018-19 have failed to find buyers in the agriculture sector, as stakeholders term the measures too few and vague. Most players in the sector do not like the step of devolving the issue of deciding subsidy regimes to provinces and also doubt sincerity of the government for the cause of agriculture.

Farmers, the main stakeholders, are also not satisfied with the relief package announced in the budget. The say this is not what the government promised during recent meetings with the authorities concerned.

“Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, his adviser [now finance minister] Miftah Ismail and National Food Security and Research Minister Sikandar Bosan did not keep their promise made in the April 12 meeting of introducing zero regime for farm inputs for reducing cost of production and bringing it on a par with neighbouring India,” claims Pakistan Kisan Ittehad Chief Khalid Mahmood Khokhar.

“The government did introduce uniform and reduced sales tax rate for all fertilisers on our demand, but we are afraid what kept it from not announcing a flat tariff rate of Rs4 per unit for agriculture tubewells and minimum support prices of at least four major crops,” he laments.

Some doubt the sincerity of the government in announcing the budget early. “We have apprehensions about the earnestness of the government, whose tenure is going to end in just one month,” says Ibadur Rehman of the Farmers Associates Pakistan. “What if the incoming government is formed by PML-N’s rivals? The situation will remain volatile and none of the stakeholders will be ready to take a serious step.”

There is a general complaint that the government fails in ensuring that benefits of its measures reach the target community. Some argue that seed, pesticide, fertiliser and other farm input companies recover money from farmers whenever the government imposes taxes, but they do not return the benefit when the taxes are reduced or abolished altogether.

Mr Rehman recalls that the government halved sales tax on pesticides a couple of years ago, but the benefits did not trickle down to farmers because the companies dealing in the business either maintained or increased prices on various excuses.

Some agriculturists also believe that rising per-acre cost of production and lower commodity prices have made farming unviable. They say Economic Survey 2017-18 wrongly links 3.8pc growth in the farm sector with better commodity prices, which were never encouraging for farmers. “We sold our sugar cane for lower prices this season owing to exploitation by sugar millers,” says Rizwanullah, provincial president of the Kissan Board Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter.

Sindh Abadgar Board Vice President Mahmood Nawaz Shah also contests the government view that commodities prices remained adequate during the previous fiscal year.

Mr Shah appreciates 2pc duty on fertilisers which he says is in line with Sindh farmers’ demands. But he is sceptical about the announcement of Rs5bn allocation for agriculture fund and another Rs5bn for agriculture technology. “Unless backed by a proper mechanism, it is just an announcement,” he says.

Furthermore, the government’s initiative of increasing agriculture credit disbursement to Rs1.1 trillion has also failed to impress growers, who allege that the disbursement procedure remains cumbersome.

Naseer Shahwani, general secretary of Balochistan’s Zamindar Action Committee, points out that the province does not feature anywhere in credit disbursement and hardly 40 to 50 such cases can be found across Balochistan. He adds that credit availability can help overcome the cost of production of farmers to some extent.

He observes that Finance Minister Miftah Ismail did not make any announcement for converting 30,000 tube wells to solar energy in Balochistan despite commitment by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and incumbent premier Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

Mr Shahwani also blames the federal government for not harnessing the potential of Balochistan’s horticulture sector despite the fact that the province has been seeking to import new seed varieties of grapes or pomegranate and their cultivation on a trial basis to encourage an average grower.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404636

MOVING AWAY FROM A SUBSIDY-DRIVEN APPROACH
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 30th, 2018

Ahmad Fraz Khan

AS expected, the federal budget has left everything as it was on the agricultural subsidies front. Finance Minister Dr Miftah Ismail summed it up when he told the National Assembly in his budget speech, “The incentives announced in the last budget, including in agriculture credits, exemption of customs duty on harvesters, the removal of GST on the import of sunflower and canola seeds, etc, would continue next year as well.” But he scrupulously avoided the mention of new measures.

He explained that fiscal constraints did not allow the government to be as lavish as it has been for the last few years, saying: “After the 7th National Finance Commission award, fiscal space of the federation shrank by 10 to 11 per cent while expenditure could not be reduced. Provinces have received an additional transfer of Rs2.5 trillion in the last eight years which otherwise could have been spent by the federal government.”

Second reason to avoid expansion in subsidies, as stated by the minister, was a paradigm policy shift: “A radical transition of the agriculture sector can only be achieved by moving away from a subsidy-driven approach to a market-driven dynamic policy regime. Going forward, the federal government will leave the business of subsidies to provincial governments (where additional money is) and focus on building a conducive policy environment for research and development, productivity enhancement, market access, improving management, labour practices and technology.”

The budget, however, took two important measures. First, it reduced the general sales tax (GST) on fertiliser to 2pc, instead of 5pc on urea and 9pc to 11pc on other varieties of fertiliser. Secondly, it created two federal funds, each with Rs5 billion, for promoting research and technology in the sector.

The reduction of GST on fertiliser is also a trade-off: the federal government offered a subsidy of Rs52bn to the sector when it reduced GST from 17pc to 5pc. It has now further cut GST by another 3pc, squaring off the subsidy amount. So, it is basically an extension of last year’s subsidy regime.

Another perfunctory measure taken this year was increasing credit line (partially subsidised) for the sector to around Rs1.1 trillion — up from last year’s Rs1tr. The increase is more of a theoretical exercise, as 52 participating institutions have never fully exhausted it — neither for the farm sector nor for the non-farm sector. Even during this fiscal year, total disbursement has only been Rs570bn so far (as indicated in the Economic Survey 2017-18). Of this amount, Rs261bn (or 45.8pc) went to the farm sector and Rs309bn (or 54.2pc) to the non-farm sector.

If the government’s avoidance of new subsidies was expected, so was the reaction of farmers, who were quick to reject new proposals. In fact, they announced a charter of demand before the budget which not only included support price for four major crops but also more subsidies for reducing electricity charges and tax cuts and additional money for off-setting increase in international prices of inputs.

However, none of the demand was met. Khalid Khokhar of Kissan Ittehad, the most active farmers’ organisation, wondered how the federal government can leave things to provincial governments, which are its primary responsibility.

“The agriculture sector is not only a business but national food security as well. Can it be relegated to provinces? How would provinces cut federal taxes or duties being charged on the ports? The federal government, instead of leading the sector, is now trying to get rid of it on different excuses,” he said.

He said that it should not be forgotten that the sector landed back on its feet only because the federal government led the initiative and provinces followed. The federation has also claimed credit for the result, ie an 18-year-high growth of 3.8pc in the agriculture sector. “Why squeeze all those drivers of growth which made this performance possible and shift the responsibility on provinces?” he wondered.

“The crop sector responded to federal efforts of reduction in the cost of production. Now, with that cost of production going further up because of different international and domestic variables, the federation is backing off,” he regretted.

One can also point out weakness of the federal government's argument about expecting provinces to finance the new subsidy regime. The sector was devolved to provinces after the 18th Amendment, but they never created institutions necessary for its performance owing to financial and time constraints.

The sector has practically been hanging in the air, as the federal government wound up institutions. The huge additional funds received by the provinces were spent on other politically lucrative programmes rather than agricultural infrastructure and subsidies.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404635

BUDGET 2018-19: AGRICULTURE'S HIGH HOPES DASHED
Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 30th, 2018

IN its end-of-the-term budget for the next fiscal year, the PML-N government has set the agriculture sector's growth target at 3.8 per cent. This is just the same rate that the government claims to have achieved this fiscal year against the target of 3.5pc.

Can our underdeveloped agriculture sector achieve such high growth for a second consecutive year?

Dr Miftah Ismail, who was elevated to the post of finance minister from his previous position of adviser to the prime minister hours before presenting the budget, provided a clue in his budget speech. He said this is possible if the country moves away "from a subsidy-driven approach to a market-driven dynamic policy regime".

He said the country needs a second green revolution to unleash its growth potential of agriculture, which will help it achieve better yields, increase investment in agriculture technology, improve research and development, make cropping patterns more adaptable to climate change and improve management and labour practices.

But the question is: will the upcoming fiscal year create enough room for the caretakers (who will come shortly) and for the next government (that will take charge after end-July elections) to achieve all this? No one can answer it at this point, as lots of ifs and buts are involved.

However, in his budget speech Mr Ismail proposed a couple of measures that he thinks should be helpful. These steps include the continuation of previous fiscal year's incentives to the agricultural sector, a reduced uniform rate of general sales tax (GST) on all kinds of fertilisers and a cut in import duty on agriculture machinery.

In addition, a couple of concessions in duties and taxes for the dairy and livestock sector are also part of a package that the present government believes can be helpful.

However, there is a contradiction of sorts in these measures. One the one hand, Mr Ismail says the country can achieve high growth potential of agriculture by moving away from subsidy-driven approach to a market-driven dynamic policy regime. On the other hand, he is proposing exactly the opposite. Or is it because the PML-N government cannot afford to propose bitter pills for agriculture before elections?

Leave it here and now consider this: better performance of major crops has been a key driver of this year's high growth rate of agriculture. But dig deeper and you note a decline in the targeted production of cotton, how an increase in sugar cane output emboldened sugar millers to keep cane suppliers unpaid, and despite a big wheat output only a part of the total surplus found its way to foreign markets.

Such things point towards structural flaws in cropping patterns, commodity storage, price discovery and information sharing mechanism and in the lack of harmony among stakeholders and between provinces and the federation. Sadly, the next year's budget does not give us hopes for their early resolution.

Mr Ismail mentioned in his speech two developments: one, the transfer of the subject of cotton from the Ministry of Textiles to Ministry of National Food Security and Research; and two, the passage of Plant Breeders Rights Act.

Plant Breeders Rights Registry established under this act would help in producing higher yield varieties of cotton and other crops through the availability of better-quality seeds, he said.

He said the federal government is working with provincial governments to formulate and enforce a policy to halt the conversion of cotton-growing areas into sugar cane fields. But making this announcement at the end of the government's term is unusual, to say the least. If the PML-N was serious in this matter, it should have formulated and implemented such a policy during its five-year term.

Some other announcements about promoting agriculture are of similar nature. For example, the finance minister said that tariff subsidy on agriculture tube wells would continue, agriculture research support fund and agriculture technology fund would be established, each with initial allocation of Rs5bn, and agriculture research organisations would be revamped.

Even if these and similar announcements are taken as PML-N's pre-election promises, our farmers can ask the government why it failed to take these measures in the past five years.

For the next year's budget, the outgoing government has set a target of Rs1.1 trillion for agricultural lending, up from Rs1.001tr for the current year. As a corollary measure, it has once again increased the production index unit, or PIU, value for the next year to Rs6,000 from Rs5,000 for this year. That, of course, will help farmers get larger bank loans.

Enhanced bank lending to agriculturists, application of GST at a reduced uniform rate of 3pc and lowering of sales tax on agricultural machinery from 7pc to 5pc are three key measures that may help achieve an ambitious 3.8pc agricultural growth target in the upcoming fiscal year.

Some other measures proposed in the budget should also help boost productivity in livestock, fisheries and minor crops. These include withdrawal of 3pc customs duty on imports of bulls meant for breeding purposes, a reduction in concessionary customs duty on imports of feed meant for livestock from 10pc to 5pc, permission for the import of fans for use in dairy farms at a concessionary duty of 3pc to members of Corporate Dairy Association, exemption from sales tax currently charged on animal feed of dairy farms, removal of an existing 10pc duty on sales tax on fish feed, and the provision of freight support on potato exports.

However, as the legality of presenting a full fiscal-year budget by the government just a month before its departure remains under question, one cannot be sure whether these or other incentives for the agriculture sector would materialise. And even if they do, promoting agricultural growth would not be very sustainable, as the government has conveniently left several structural issues unanswered.

For example, the budget says nothing on how the mass of total arable land would be increased, how water shortages in different parts of the country primarily due to discord between provinces and the federation would be addressed or how cotton economy would get a boost just because of the transfer of this subject from one ministry to another.

Besides, the budget makes no mention of how CPEC investments would impact the agricultural sector. Nor does it remove concerns in the minds of ordinary farmers regarding the possibility of mass-scale agricultural land transfers to Chinese companies in the name of corporate farming.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404637

PFMA DEMANDS EQUAL REBATE RATE FOR WHEAT EXPORT, PRODUCTS
Business Recorder, 30 April 2018

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter has demanded equal rebate rate for wheat export and its products through seaport and land route.

The demand was made during a meeting of executive body of the PFMA KP, which met with chairman, Haji Adan Khan in the chair at Darwasih Flour Mills, Azakhel Payan.

Speaking in the meeting, they termed the offering of $159 rebate on direct wheat export as compare to 120 dollar rebate on wheat products is open enmity against the flour milling industry.

They demanded of the Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Federal Minister for Food Security to reject the summary of the Punjab Food Committee as the step will play havoc with the flour mills industry.

They said not inclusion of flour products in the recent summary sent to National Food and Security by the Food Department of Punjab is equal to the exploitation of the flour milling industry, which will not be tolerated in any circumstances.

Besides, senior vice president, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI), Mohammad Naeem Butt, senior vice chairman, Haji Musarrat Shah and executive members including Haji Yousaf Khan Afridi, Anis Ashraf, Merajuddin, Bashir Matta, Haji Tariq, Mohammad Sadiq, Haji Iqbal and Sartaj other senior members of the association also attended.

http://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/29/13-page/713519-news.html

AGRI LANDS PARCHED, LARGE CROP DAMAGE, COTTON SOWING DISRUPTED
Dawn, May 1st, 2018

KARACHI: Alarming situation has developed as all the major Kharif crops including cotton, sugarcane, rice and maize are looking at a possible acute shortage of irrigation water.

According to reports reaching from rural Sindh and Punjab, cotton sowing has been adversely hit by the water shortages. The agricultural economy has a 19 per cent share in GDP and engages 42.3pc of labour force.

Although the government has fixed higher cotton crop production target for 2018-19 season at 14.37 million bales, so far the sowing of cotton which starts early in April in lower Sindh has yet to commence.

The growers in lower areas of Sindh like Tando Adam, Shahdadpur and Hyderabad as usual started sowing cotton crop but after receiving no water their entire exercise went in vain.

Dr Jassumal Neemani former chairman Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) talking to Dawn from Hyderabad said that hardly 25 per cent of cotton sowing has been down so far in lower Sindh and 75 per cent has yet to be done because growers are waiting for irrigation water.

He feared that cotton from Sindh fields normally start reaching ginneries from June 15 each year but due to delay in sowing the crop would not be available before July 15, or may even go beyond this timeline.

A farmer based in Badin, with lands in the tail end of Akram Wah canal originating from Kotri barrage, tells Dawn that the shortages have sparked a highly politicised allocation of water between the perennial and six month canals, adversely impacting those lands fed by canals that do not feed the lands of powerful individuals connected with the provincial government.

“Much of the sugarcane crop is burnt since it has not been getting water since January” he tells Dawn. “Red chilli, which is planted latest by April 15 is also gone. Cotton, which should be planted latest by first week of May is also a casualty, since the water was supposed to come on Monday but it has not come, and what is on the way is less than one foot, which will reduce to two inches by the time it reaches the watercourses. Its a disaster!” he exclaims.

In Khoski and Shadi Large also in southern Badin, scuffles have been reported among people gathered at filter plants for drinking water.

Similar situation exists in Punjab which normally has an advantage of being upper riparian and historically Sindh always complained of being deprived from its due share of irrigation water.

But today both the leading provinces in agriculture sector are faced with similar situation of acute shortage of irrigation water to the extent that all the Kharif crops are at stake.

Talking to Dawn via telephone, Mian Mahmood Ahmed, a leading ginner and founder member of Rahimyar Khan Chamber, said that being member of district coordination committee, he attended a meeting in the Deputy Commissioner’s office on Monday in this regard. “The water situation is so grim that people were not interested in getting irrigation water but were asking for drinking water,” he said.

Mr Ahmed further said that due to no irrigation water, people complained that they even don't have green fodder (chaara) for their animals.

He said that since December last year, irrigation water was not available but at the government level it seems the policy makers are least worried and are leading normal life. The rivers are dry and people are running from pillar to post in search of drinking water, he said.

Responding to a question, he said, "We are in a situation where all development works should be stopped and country's entire resources be diverted for the construction of dams particularly Kalabagh dam."

Mian Ahmed pointed out that recently even the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) spokesman accepted a fact that after the flow of water to both Punjab and Sindh to 34,700 cusecs and 31,000 cusecs, respectively the former is still facing shortage of irrigation water up to 52pc and later by 35pc.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1404885

GOVT APPROVES 500,000 TONNES OF SUBSIDISED WHEAT EXPORT QUOTA
Business Recorder, 1 May 2018

PARIS: Govt has approved the export of an additional 500,000 tonnes of wheat with a subsidy of $155 per tonne to be shipped by sea only, European traders said on Monday.

The measure was taken during a Pakistani committee chaired by the Prime Minister last week but details were still awaited, they said.

The wheat should be offered for sale via the state company Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO).

"All exporters are waiting for further information about the procedure and timing of export sales. No announcement has yet been made. But the 500,000 tonnes is expected to be sold for export May and June 2018," a trader said.

A bumper crop last year and large stocks led the Pakistani government to introduce a new export subsidy scheme in January which has led to a series of large export sales in the past month.

A cabinet committee in December had approved a programme to export 2 million tonnes of wheat in the current financial year, with 1.5 million tonnes coming from the state of Punjab and 500,000 tonnes from the state of Sindh.—Reuters

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/01/19-page/714455-news.html

POTOHAR REGION'S WHEAT YIELD LOWER THAN AVERAGE
Dawn, May 2nd, 2018

CHAKWAL: Punjab agriculture department officials have attributed the Potohar region's lower-than-average wheat yield this year to low winter rainfall and March winds that affected wheat production in the area.

"The sowing of wheat was done according to the set target in the region. In some areas, the sowing target was surpassed," an official said.

"In the Chakwal district, the sowing target was set at 278,000 acres, but the crop was cultivated on an area of 392,000 acres," the Chakwal agriculture department's deputy director Mohammad Aslam said.

According to officials and farmers, the wheat crop was in good condition in the initial stages, but was hit by a drought in March.

Rainfall is needed in March, as this is the time when the wheat crop is in the flowering stage, Chakwal Assistant Director Agriculture Dr Mohammad Khalid said.

"Grain formation is also done during March, but there was less rain in March, which not only raised temperatures but also left the crop parched," he said.

Mr Aslam added: "The winds that blew in March also caused moisture to evaporate, which adversely affected the wheat crop."

Although the recommended wheat varieties for the Potohar region guarantees a yield of up to fifty maunds per acre, but the average wheat yield remains 15 to 17 maunds.

"This year, we set a target to achieve 13.4 maunds per acre, but it remains as low as 12.59 maunds per acre," Mr Aslam said.

There are over 20 small dams in Chakwal, but the majority of farmers are unable to irrigate their crops because the main dams are not functional due to faults in their design.

Only 42,000 acres in the district are irrigated, and half of this area is irrigated by tubewells installed by farmers themselves.

Mr Aslam said a wheat yield of 38 maunds was witnessed from the irrigated area this year.

The region's yield is 10 to 20pc lower, Dr Khalid said, and the size of the grain has also decreased because of the drought.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1405061

PAMA DEMANDS IMMEDIATE CLEARANCE OF ST REFUNDS

Business Recorder, 3 May 2018

KARACHI: Tractor industry is facing serious financial crunch due to non-payment of over Rs 3 billion sales tax refunds, pending since Nov 2017.

In a letter sent to the Haroon Akhtar Khan, special assistant to the prime minister on revenue, Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA) has request for immediate liquidation of the pending sales tax refunds of over Rs 3 billion of the tractor industry.

The PAMA through its letter drew its attention to the challenge to country's indigenous farm tractor industry regarding stoppage of sales tax refunds.

"Accumulated sales tax refunds of tractor industry have now risen to over 3 billion rupees and still rising as the process of refunds has completely stopped in Nov 2017, resulting in liquidity crunch which is unsustainable and substantially adding to the costs," Abdul Waheed DG PAMA said.

Agricultural tractors are subjected to sales tax at the rate of 5 percent whereas on procurement of required parts, both locally as well as imported, sales tax at standard rate of 17 percent is levied; consequently, in one unit of tractor the amount of input tax is always higher than the output tax. The outcome is an anomaly on perpetual basis such that refunds are consistently accruing and increasing on a regular basis.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/03/21-page/714800-news.html

MEETING SHORTFALL: PLAN TO IMPORT FERTILISER IRKS LOCAL INDUSTRY
The Express Tribune, May 4th, 2018.

The Ministry of Industries and Production has endorsed the idea of importing urea to meet the shortfall in fiscal year 2018, instead of reviving plants to meet domestic needs.

In a recent meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee (FRC), the National Fertiliser Marketing Limited (NFML) laid down the idea of importing 0.6 million tons of urea to bridge the current demand-supply gap. As per estimates, shortfall of 0.2 to 0.3 million tons is expected in the current Kharif season. Additionally, shortage till December 2018 is also speculated.

To end the shortfall, some participants favoured the import of urea rather than running local plants. In fact, sources said that the FRC meeting was dominated by NFML management as the entire attention was diverted towards the urgency of imports. It was highlighted that shortage could only be met through trade.

Sources added that secretary industries and production, who chaired the meeting, supported the stance of NFML and encouraged imports. Interestingly, the ministry oversees affairs of local industries including fertilisers. The earlier decision of the ministry was to provide RLNG to closed urea manufacturing plants.

"It is pathetic that no one thinks for the country or see the bigger picture about national economy", said an official while commenting on the import plan. "Instead, everyone is ready to please one powerful lobby or business group.

"The decision is aimed at keeping NFML alive and allowing the rise of import mafia at the cost of industries and the economy.

Imports will only help the country of origin while we will continue to suffer. Local factories create jobs coupled with growth of manufacturing sector and widening of the tax net."

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1701858/2-meeting-shortfall-plan-import-fertiliser-irks-local-industry/

WANA AGRI PARK READY FOR CHILGOZA, FRUIT PROCESSING, PRESERVATION
Dawn, May 6th, 2018

WANA/MIRAMSHAH: A Rs880 million agricultural park is likely to begin the processing and preservation of pine nuts (chilgoza), fruits and vegetable in Wana shortly to benefit the entire region's growers.

The local military officials said after flushing out militants from North and South Waziristan agencies through operations, the Pakistan Army was focusing on the socioeconomic development of the region and better border management.

They said the military engineers had completed the colossal Wana Agri Park in South Waziristan at a cost of Rs880 million, while the Ghulam Khan border crossing in North Waziristan was also opened lately.

Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa had inaugurated the park last month.

A military official told Dawn that the formalities were being fulfilled to hand over the huge complex to the political administration.

He said the park would boost economic gains for the region's chilgoza and fruit growers.

Major Mohammad Imran Khan Niazi, project director of the Wana Agri Park told reporters that the Sulaiman range of mountains had the world's largest pure pine nut forest spread over 260 square kilometers.

He said Waziristan produced around 4,460 tonnes of pine nuts annually and the facility had nut processing plant and after it starts production the growers to produce would go out in finished form instead of raw product and would earn better economic gains for the locals.

"South Waziristan accounts for nearly 90 per cent of the Pakistan's pine nut produce," he said, adding that a smaller portion of chilgoza produce came from Shinghar mountains in Zhob area of Balochistan.

He said the complex also had 128 shops for the local traders.

The official said around 10,000 tonnes of pine nuts produced in Afghanistan would also came here for finishing for further distribution.

The facility is located on the road leading to Angur Adda, one of the region's major border crossings.

Major Imran said the facility also had a cold storage with a capacity of 1000 metric tonnes. "South Waziristan fruit production accounts for nearly 71 per cent of Fata's," he said, adding that the agency produce amounts to 70,043 tonnes.

The official said the cold storage would help local growers and traders store fruits for a longer time and thus, increasing their earnings.

He said the region produced 749 tonnes almonds, 990 tonnes pomegranates, 788 tonnes apricots, 842 tonnes watermelons, 1260 tonnes peach, 46,203 tonnes apples and 4,460 tonnes pine nuts.

Besides fruits, the agency also produces huge quantity of vegetables which amounts for 29 per cent of Fata's agricultural produce. Major produce include potato, tomatoes and onion.

The official said the cold storage was going to extend the shelf life of fruits and vegetables from two to 12 weeks.

He said the region produced a huge quantity of fruits and vegetables but there was nothing to store and finish the produce and that facility had removed that deficiency.

General Officer Commanding of North Waziristan Major General Azhar Abbasi told a group of reporters in Miramshah that the Pakistan Army had completed 504 projects in order to improve the region's socioeconomic indictors.

He said the army had constructed 224 kilometers of roads, 182 water supply schemes and 1344 shops and work on three micro-hydels was in process.

Major General Azhar said an oil exploration company was working on Mir Ali-Spinwam block.

Commandant of the Tochi Scouts Colonel Jehanzeb said the recently opened Ghulam Khan border-crossing that the trade terminal has the capacity to handle about 2000 vehicles a day and its opening on March 9, it has handled about 1600 trucks.

"Ghulam Khan is third most important trade corridor after Torkham and Chaman," Colonel Jehanzab added.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1405939

WHEAT EXPORT: RS 8.572 BN SUBSIDY TO BE GIVEN TO PASSCO
Business Recorder, 6 May 2018

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is to extend $ 77.5 million (Rs 8.572 billion) subsidy to Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) for export of 0.5 million tons of wheat, including 0.2 million tons to Bangladeshi private sector, well-informed sources told Business Recorder.

The decision was taken by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet in its recent meeting presided over by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

According to sources, on November 28, 2017, the ECC had authorised PASSCO to offload 0.5 million tons of wheat in the local market at subsidized rates. In pursuance of ECC's decision, PASSCO has since successfully completed offloading the allocated quantity of wheat.

However, despite offloading the allocated quantity of 0.5 million tons of wheat, PASSCO was still carrying a surplus stock of wheat from the preceding procurement seasons. Besides, local sale by

PASSCO, the initiative for export of surplus wheat by the provincial governments has received a discernibly positive response from exporters. Therefore, on the lines of the permission granted to the provincial governments of Punjab and Sindh, it was proposed that PASSCO may also be allowed to export 0.5 million tons of wheat through sea route.

The cost analysis based on the price of soft red winter wheat in the international market was $ 223 per ton as on March 8, 2018 at the exchange rate of $ 1= 110.50 (PKR) which was as follows: (i) stock proposed to be disposed off – 0.5 million tons at a cost of Rs 32,500 per ton or $ 294.12; and (ii) incidental charges of Rs 6,748.68 per ton or $ 61.074, amounting to a total of $ 355.192 per ton. The international rate of SRW wheat as on March 8, 2018 was $ 223 per ton, incidental charges $ 23 per ton, difference or subsidy required ($355-223+23($ 155 per ton) and subsidy required for 0.5 million tons $ 77.5 million .

The sources further stated that at the time of processing of the proposals of provincial food departments of Punjab and Sindh for export of surplus, Finance Division through U.O. No 1(10) of April 10, 2017, in principle, had agreed to pick up the carrying cost of PASSCO, in case of inclusion of PASSCO, in the export scheme.

In response to a query received from Pakistan High Commission in Bangladesh for import of 0.2 million tons of wheat from Pakistan by a private sector Bangladeshi firm, PASSCO has shown its willingness to supply wheat and provided the requisite working. It has been estimated that the total financial implication (in terms of export rebate) for export of 0.2 million tons of wheat is projected at $ 41.972 million or Rs 4.642 billion.

Keeping in view the situation, Ministry of National Food Security and Research proposed that PASSCO may be allowed to export 0.5 million tons of wheat at a rebate of $ 155 per ton through sea route. The financial implications for export of 0.5 million tons would be $ 77.50 million or Rs 8.572 billion to be picked up by the federal government on the basis of actually lifted quantity.
The sources said, Ministry of National Food Security and Research proposed that the quantity of 0.2 million tons demanded by Bangladeshi private sector may be considered on priority, subject to the settlement of terms and conditions as per the prevalent international prices/norms.

The Ministry submitted the following proposals to the ECC: (i) export of wheat and wheat products (flour, Maida and Suji) may be completed before June 30, 2018 while the export process may be completed up to July 31, 2018 in order to facilitate the exporters after completing their codal formalities; and (ii) in this context Ministry of Maritime Affairs may advise the concerned authorities to reserve exclusive berthing at all the sea ports especially at Port Qasim for speedy export of the wheat till the export period allowed by the ECC; and (iii) according to the modalities approved by the ECC, PASSCO will export wheat either through direct export on the basis of international tendering or contract with individual private exporters, on the pattern of procedures/modalities being followed by the provincial governments.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/06/18-page/715388-news.html

June 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 18th TO JUN 24th 2018

Wheat and sugar remain neglected

Mohiuddin Aazim June 19, 2018

THE Punjab food department has failed to procure four million tonnes of this year's wheat from farmers and ended up buying a little over 3.6m tonnes.

The reason, according to media reports, is the failure of the department to initiate the procurement drive on time and inform farmers that those interested in selling wheat to the provincial government needed to apply for it formally.

It is the same case with the other provinces. Delayed or below target procurements, despite an adequate crop size, are examples of the mismanagement of the wheat economy in Pakistan.

For the past few years, there has been a surplus wheat output but due to a lack of proper storage facilities hundreds of thousands of wheat grains kept rotting and could not be used for consumption at home or be exported.

The repeated increase in support prices of wheat during the past 10 years or so has sometimes resulted in exports remaining low, despite production surpluses, as high domestic prices made them less competitive.

On some occasions, millers even resorted to imports as the landed cost of imported wheat was below domestic prices. The subsidised sale of wheat to wheat millers via provincial food departments has long served as a tool for corruption for officials dealing with quota allocations rather than a relief for end-consumers.

Wheat and sugarcane crops have the potential to change the fate of the local food industry and the entire spectrum of food exports. Sadly though, a large part of this potential remains untapped.

In the past, the Pakistan Flour Mills Association has recommended to the federal and provincial governments to do away with this subsidy and instead link it to performance-based incentives. But so far, there has been no change.

Last year, sugarcane growers and sugar millers were engaged in a bitter quarrel over the payment of dues to growers by the millers and the issue was finally resolved, after causing much damage to the economy, on the intervention of the Supreme Court.

According to growers, some of them incurred crippling financial losses as the millers delayed sugarcane procurement, while the millers claimed that fresh milling amid a large carryover stock of sugar created a glut in the market resulting in a price crash and subsequent losses to individual mills.

At the heart of these two seemingly unrelated developments lies the perennial problem of a near absence of implementation of policies related to agricultural output governance and value chain management.

Perhaps it was this that prompted the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) to send to previous federal and provincial governments on May 7 a set of recommendations to boost the efficiency of the sugar sector.

The CCP recommended abolishing the support price of sugarcane and advocated the idea of letting the market determine the price based on supply and demand. It said that “if sugarcane (support) price needs to be set, it should be based on independent and reliable data, taking stock of divergent conditions and factors prevalent in different areas and should also factor in applicable support price of other crops such as cotton.

“Where support prices are set, the government must act as an underwriter and ensure complete and timely payments to the farmers,” it added.

In addition to this, the Commission recommended that quality considerations should determine any support price rather than weight. The government should also encourage and take research and development initiatives to reduce the cost of producing sugarcane and increase its quality.

The Commission also recommended that millers should make their processes more efficient with incentives to encourage the optimal use of their by-products and reduce the overall cost of sugar production.

This will help make them internationally competitive and enable them to make timely payments to farmers. It urged the provincial governments to review the legislative framework and encourage open competition in the sugar sector.

To control price hikes, the CCP recommended that the Trading Corporation of Pakistan should keep a minimum reserve of sugar, but this measure should only be used sparingly as it could affect the free market mechanism.

The CCP also recommended that all the relevant government departments should be cognisant of the sugar supply situation at all times to utilise export opportunities on time. The Commission suggested constituting a stakeholders’ committee to discuss ways and means of implementing its recommendations.

One wonders though why the CCP floated such valuable recommendations just three weeks before the end of the previous federal and provincial governments’ tenures. Sugarcane and wheat are two of the four major food crops in Pakistan and their contribution to the economy is huge.

Wheat and sugarcane crops have the potential to change the fate of the local food industry and, by extension, the entire spectrum of food exports. Sadly though, a large part of this potential remains untapped.

Value-chain improvement is taking place at a painfully slow speed. Up till 2010, sugar and wheat exports remained low as outputs were not always in excess of local demand. But for the past few years, this has not been the case.

However, neither the exports of the two items have shown any visible increase in the per-unit price nor have their value-added by-products received a boost.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, June 19th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1414679/wheat-and-sugar-remain-neglected

Shortage looms as urea price goes up by 15pc

RIZWAN BHATTI

KARACHI: Urea price posted a sharp increase of 15 percent to Rs 1,600 per bag during last six weeks. The shortage of the commodity now looms large.

The market sources told Business Recorder Monday that the price of urea, an essential raw material for crops, continues to move up in the domestic market as the domestic urea production got affected due to gas curtailment to SNGPL's base urea producing plants.

Presently, three urea plants operating on the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) network are shut for last 7 months due to unavailability of natural gas. There is no natural gas for the urea plants on the SNGPL network, resulting in short production – some 85,000 tons urea every month or cumulatively over 0.7 million tons in the last few months.

The price is the best market indication to determine the urea availability in the market. As the urea shortage is looming, its price is gradually increasing in the local market, industry experts said.

They said that shortage of urea already exists, due to which urea price has posted an increase of 15 percent or over Rs 200 in last six weeks due to higher demand and lower supply. Urea retail price has jumped to Rs 1,600 per 50 kgs bag in the domestic market compared to Rs 1,390-1,400 per bag one and half months ago, they added.

Out of overall increase, domestic producers raised Minimum Retail Price (MRP) by Rs 100 to Rs 1,400 per bag due to nonpayment of subsidy, while the remaining Rs 100 per bag hiked by market movers due to massive demand or expected shortage.

Industry sources said domestic urea prices are likely to remain higher during the current fiscal year, if gas supply is not restored to SNGPL-based three urea plants.

Urea plants operating on the SNGPL network are even unable to start production on imported LNG as it is much expensive compared to domestically available natural gas. The continued closure of these three urea plants could lead to shortage of this essential commodity as well as price escalation during the Kharif season. As the production of SNGPL-based producers has currently shut, the remaining plants' production will be up to 460,000 tons per month.

Kharif season started in April and there is a huge demand of the commodity by farmers for crops. Therefore, severe shortage of urea is expected to start by the end of July and this will cast a major negative impact on agriculture sector, which is the backbone of Pakistan's economy.

As per the estimates, May urea offtake will be minimum 0.5 million tons and some over 300,000 tons of cash orders have already been booked with urea producers.

They said that ending stocks for any month must be at least 200,000 tons to prevent the shortage of urea in the domestic market. However, stocks are expected to go down to around 120,000 tons by the end of July and zero by the end of August, if gas supply to SNGPL-based plants could not be restored or import of urea not initiated.

Sources said urea export was allowed in a very ideal situation, when the local production was on sufficient level with massive carryover stocks. The previous government has claimed urea export a big achievement and some 184,000 tons of urea was exported since October 2017. However, now, the country would be compelled to import the commodity, if gas to SNGPL plants is not restored.

Overall, the urea production capacity in the country stood at 6.5 million tons annually, however with the closure of three plants on SNGPL network, overall production has declined to 5.5 million tons annually against the demand/consumption of 5.5 to 6 million tons annually.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/06/19/16-page/723130-news.html

After urea price hike, farmers to bear extra Rs30b cost

By Shahram Haq

Published: June 21, 2018

LAHORE: A recent surge in prices of fertilisers will force farmers to bear an additional cost of around Rs30 billion per annum, which will eat into their income from crop harvests, say agriculture experts.

Urea's market price has now settled at Rs1,600 per bag across the country, a rise of Rs200-Rs250 compared to late 2017 when prices stood around Rs1,300 per bag.

Experts estimate annual impact of the price revision at around Rs30 billion on the farmers, which rely on fertilisers to reap a good harvest.

Farooq Bajwa of the Farmers Associates Pakistan blamed fertiliser manufacturers for what he called an unreasonable increase.

"We are paying Rs1,650 per bag for urea in Bahawalpur district whereas di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser is being sold for Rs3,300 per bag, which is too high for the farmers," he said.

Urea, DAP: Fertiliser sales surge as dealers build up inventory

"Now, the farmers instead of applying DAP are preferring nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium (NPK) fertiliser, which is a better alternative during days of water scarcity as it does not require immediate irrigation," he said, lamenting that the caretaker government had no interest in checking the price hike.

Urea supply is estimated at around 3.12 million tons in Kharif 2018 comprising 0.38 million tons of leftover stock and fresh production of 2.74 million tons. Its demand is projected at around 2.81 tons, leaving 302,000 tons in reserves for the next season.

In the case of DAP, the Kharif 2018 season started with a stock of 190,000 tons. Domestic production during the season is estimated at 381,000 tons and imports at 345,000 tons. Total availability will be around 916,000 tons compared to estimated demand for around 720,000 tons. This will leave a buffer stock of 199,000 tons at the end of the season.

Gas supply: Fertiliser industry demands cut in tax on feedstock

A federal government official, on condition of anonymity, said average urea price in the entire country stood at Rs1,500 per bag on June 13, 2018 compared to Rs1,300 in November 2017, an increase of Rs200 or 15%.

He clarified that since fertiliser was a deregulated commodity, there was no check on its price hike. "Government does monitor prices of fertilisers, but has no mechanism to keep them at a certain level," he said.

He cited the withdrawal of subsidy and reduced supplies as significant factors that contributed to the price surge. Fertiliser plants have fewer inventories and some plants have been closed.

An official of the National Fertilizer Development Centre (NFDC) conceded that urea prices had been jacked up to Rs1,550-Rs1,600 per bag, a steep rise from Rs1,250 in October and November 2017. Imported urea was being sold at Rs1,000 per bag at that time, he said.

Fertilizer Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council spokesman dismissed the perception that urea price had been climbing continuously. He recalled that urea price had been reduced to Rs1,400 from Rs1,790 in June 2016 whereas it was sold at around Rs1,200 to Rs1,290 during 2016-17.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 21st, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1738698/2-urea-price-hike-farmers-bear-extra-rs30b-cost/

Wheat exports surge to 1.1m tonnes on subsidy, good prices

Aamir Shafaat Khan June 22, 2018

KARACHI: Wheat exports swelled to 1.120 million tonnes in July-May 2017-18 as against just 3,937 tonnes in the same period last year. Market players are hopeful that the target of 1.4m tonnes by sea route will be achieved by end of this fiscal year.

Export earnings from wheat in the first 11 months of FY18 surged to $222 million compared to just $1m in July-May period of 2016-17.Wheat is being exported to Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam, Dubai, Muscat, Oman, etc. at a price of $185-200 per tonne.

The government in December allowed exports of 2m tonnes of wheat and wheat products before June 30 to clear carryover stocks as new crop finds way into the market. The government is providing an export subsidy of $120 per tonne by land and $169 per tonne by sea routes.

Pakistan resumed its wheat exports from February — after a gap of five months — by sending 65,649 tonnes that earned $12.5m compared to nil foreign sales of the commodity since September 2017.

Attractive prices in world markets coupled with handsome subsidies boosted exports of the commodity while around 15-16pc rupee devaluation against the dollar in the last six months further made shipments competitive.

Exports of the commodity continued to break single-month records. Highest-ever shipments were recorded in April with 486,828 tonnes ($96.4m), 326,133 tonnes ($66m) in May and 241,522 tonnes ($47m) in March.

Local prices rising

The local rates of wheat are crawling up with the surging export of wheat. For example, in March, the 100kg wheat bag was available at Rs2,975 which rose to Rs3,050 in April. In March the rate of flour no.2.5 was Rs1,800 while fine and maida rate fixed by the millers were Rs1,875 per 50 kg bag.

In April the price of flour no.2.5 stood at Rs1,675 while the rate of fine and maida were fixed at Rs 1,750 per 50 kg bag.

Now the open market rate of 100kg wheat bag is Rs3,375 which was Rs3,125 in May. Due to rising trend in wheat price, the millers slightly pushed up price of flour no.2.5 at Rs1,775 per 50 kg bag, up by Rs25 per 50 kg bag while the rate of fine flour and maida were fixed at Rs1,925, up by Rs75.

As a result, the price of Ashrafi and Bake Parlour 10kg flour bag price went up by Rs10-20 per bag.

All Pakistan Flour Mills Association Chairman Chaudhry Ansar Jawed said increase in flour price has nothing to do with rising wheat exports as new crop arrival had earlier resulted in decline in wheat price few months back followed by drop in flour prices. Now the stocks are being consumed and finding way into the godowns making the prices slightly under pressure as per market practice.

He said after completing wheat export target there is a need to stop wheat exports despite surplus stocks of 4.5 million tonnes of last year's carryover stocks.

"Pakistan should keep a reasonable wheat stocks in hand to avert any crisis as issues of water shortage still loom," he said, adding the exports of wheat related products should continue. Country's wheat crop this year is a bit lower than last two years.

Wheat export target of 600,000 tonnes via land route may not be achieved as Afghanistan is getting cheaper wheat from Uzbekistan and Kazakhastan, he added.

Sindh Food Department is reported to have procured approximately 1.3 million tonnes of wheat from the growers from the current crop while Punjab Food Department has lifted 3.8m tonnes.

Published in Dawn, June 22nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1415374/wheat-exports-surge-to-11m-tonnes-on-subsidy-good-prices

Cotton prices move up

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter June 23, 2018

KARACHI: Strong demand for new cotton crop pushed prices on Friday to a seasonal high level of Rs8,100.

However, trading activity could not expand and remained restricted due to slow supply of phutti (seed cotton).

Although the quality of cotton was initially normal, it has now deteriorated as supply of phutti from lower Sindh began.

According to market sources, cotton coming from lower Sindh is of poor in quality. Shortage of irrigation water and excessive heat affected the growth of cotton plants, eventually restricting growth of staple. Also, incidents of yellow spots are also being reported.

So far around 5,000 to 6,000 bales have reached market from new crop cotton. The demand continues to rise and around 1,200 bales deals were reported to have transpired today.

Strong demand for cotton from spinners kept prices between Rs8050 to Rs8100 per maund. Prices for Sindh variety phutti also remained on the higher side in the range of Rs3,800 to Rs4,150 per 40 kg. Punjab quality was being quoted from Rs3,700 to Rs3,900 per 40kg.

The world leading cotton markets remained mixed due to rising tensions between the US and other countries including China and India over tariffs.

The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) spot rates were firm at overnight level at Rs7,500 per maund.

Published in Dawn, June 23rd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1415579/cotton-prices-move-up

Commodities: Slow phutti arrivals hit cotton trading

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated June 24, 2018

KARACHI: Listless conditions prevailed on the cotton market on Saturday owing to extremely slow arrival of phutti (seed cotton) and high rates being demanded by ginners.

Ginners — who have accumulated some phutti during Eidul Fitr holidays — ran into oversold position whereas spinners are keen to get hold of any quantity of new cotton crop.

Delay in arrival of crop from lower Sindh – where early sowing took place – has totally upset the market mechanism. New crop normally arrives from these areas in late May or early June every year.

The small quantity of cotton that has made it to the market so far is of poor quality and has yellow spots.

Sindh annually produces around four million bales, however this season around 0.5m less bales would be produced. Sowing in lower Sindh suffered badly owing to acute shortage of water and excessive heat wave which deprived the crop from necessary moisture, thereby affecting growth and cotton quality, experts said.

Though cotton and phutti prices for new crop are steady, the market is devoid of activity in the absence of sustained supply of phutti and cotton, brokers said.

Rising tensions on the global front over tariffs also slowed down trading activity in cotton markets.

Cotton prices remained steady at around Rs8,050 to 8,100 per maund whereas phutti (seed cotton) was being quoted in the range of Rs3,800 to Rs4,150 per 40 kg. The prices are fairly higher than previous season's rates quoted during the corresponding period.

Meanwhile, ginners are holding round 50 to 60 thousands cotton bales from last season and demanding Rs5,500 to Rs7,600 per muand.

The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) spot rates were firm at overnight level at Rs7,500 per maund.

Published in Dawn, June 24th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1415764/commodities-slow-phutti-arrivals-hit-cotton-trading

Punjab Agri Expo begins

RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: Agriculture department organized Punjab Agri Expo 2018 to highlight the importance of fruits, vegetables and high value agriculture crops, rice of country's own produced at international level. Expo will come to an end on June 24.

Minister for Agriculture Punjab Sardar Tanvir Ilyas inaugurated opening ceremony of Punjab Agri Expo, 2018 whereas Dr Wasif Khursheed, Secretary Agriculture, Punjab also participated in it. Ambassadors of Bella Rosa, Karghistan and Nigeria were also present on the occasion.

On this occasion, Minister for Agriculture Punjab Sardar Tanvir Ilyas said that this event will give a new horizon and open new doors of opportunities for producer, exporter and companies indulging in agriculture business in this country.

He also appreciated Agriculture department for organizing such a mega event. Minister for Agriculture, Punjab also said that it is obvious that horticultural, high value agriculture and rice production is a highly profitable enterprise which increases employment opportunities and brings about increased commercialization of rural areas. But, much more efforts are needed to be undertaken to bring resource-poor farmers and landless laborers into this development. So, for the first time it is the central theme for Agriculture Department to high light the importance of agricultural product.

Dr Wasif Khursheed, Secretary Agriculture Punjab disclosed that agriculture is a major contributor to the national economy, accounting for over 21 percent of its GDP. About 80% of the country's foreign exchange originates from agriculture and Punjab contributes over 60% to this amount.

Pakistan is 3rd largest producer of dates and citrus. Pakistan is currently an important producer and exporter of citrus by generating 95% of the world Kinnow production. Pakistan is ranked at 4th in the world for mango production.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/06/24/5-page/723981-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 11th TO JUN 17th 2018
July-April 2017-18: pulses import slumps by 47 percent

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 12TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Pulses import slumped to $442.731 million in July-April 2017-18, lower by 47 percent, official figures say. The fall in pulses import now stands at $392.575 million in July-April 2017-18 from $835.306 million in July-April 2016-17, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics shows. In term of quantity, pulses import falls to 576,916 metric tons in July-April 2017-18, down by 495,900 metric tons or 45.15 percent, from 1,072,816 metric tons in July-April 2016-17.

In April 2018, the country imported $34.803 million of pulses comparing to the commodity's import of $112.648 million in April 2017, lower by 77.845 million or 69.10 percent. Import volume of pulses also plunged to 40,170 metric tons in April 2018 comparing to the commodity's import of 160,277 metric tons in April 2017, lower by 120, 107 metric tons or 75 percent. Traders say the global price decline has reduced the pulses import.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180612381279/

Dependency on imported seed: SAP urged to submit detailed proposal

ZAHID BAIG

LAHORE: Additional Secretary Agriculture (Planning) Punjab Dr Ghazanfar Ali Khan has asked the Seed Association of Pakistan (SAP) to submit a detailed proposal on how to reduce dependency on imported seed by ensuring technology transfer and encouraging local production.

The Additional Secretary gave these directions while speaking at an important meeting of all the stakeholders of seed sector held at the agriculture house here on Tuesday to develop a mechanism for reducing dependency on importing seeds for different crops.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Guard Agricultural Research & Services Shahzad Ali Malik while speaking at the meeting proposed the department that it should announce incentives for those companies who are producing seed of different crops locally. 'If it is not possible then all the companies who are importing should be asked to produce 20-30 percent of their total import locally and then gradually go for 100 percent local production in next seven to 10 years,' Malik added.

He said that those companies who fail in achieving this target should be penalized through higher tariff on their imports. He regretted that it is a very late decision by the government but still good that the transfer of seed technology has been included in the priorities of the department.

While wrapping up the meeting, the Additional Secretary Agriculture directed the Seed Association of Pakistan (SAP)'s Chairman to work in detail on the proposal in collaboration with Shahzad Malik to fine tune it and make it practicable.

Sources privy to this meeting said that although use of hybrid seeds in Pakistan is increasing day by day for raising crops like maize, sunflower, and few vegetable crops but there is need for domestic hybrid seed production in the country.

There is a need for evaluating feasibility of production of hybrid seeds in the country along with cost benefit prospects. Over-dependence on heavy imports of hybrid seeds has put seed security of Pakistan on fragile grounds, sometimes imported seeds are not adapted to local environment and result in crop failures, cost of imported hybrid seeds is high and lot of foreign exchange is spent on seed imports.

The meeting discussed seed import issues, technology transfer for seed production, issues being faced in local seed production and to develop some way forward for reducing dependency on imported seed.

http://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/06/13/1-page/722382-news.html

Programme to preserve agriculture commodities begins

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 14TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The Agriculture Department has started "Agricultural Warehouse-Receipt Program" on the basis of Public Private Partnership to ensure prosperity of the farmers by preserving agricultural commodities. Under this program, farmers are able to store their agricultural commodity from natural disasters (rain or bitter). These warehouses will also be able to store commodity for long time with the help of modern technology. Farmer will save from Mandi's deduction charges.

Under this program, farmers will open their account by contacting the bank (nominated) and later on contact the fixed warehouse management. After that, the required quality of agricultural commodity will reach warehouse. After receipt of the weight and ensuring quality of the environment properly, farmer will get receipt from warehouse management.

To obtain the benefit, the farmers will submit the invoice receipt by contacting the designated bank and after the necessary action loan up to 70% according to the current rate of crop will be issued him. The amount of the sale will be paid to the farmers' bank due to the amount sold. Under this program MCB Bank will enact to facilitate farmers to issue loans. Other allied facilitators are Directorate of Agricultural Information, Punjab and Islamabad Field Mills, Okara, which will also act as buyer of warehouse consumer.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180614381872/

Punjab promotes drip irrigation to fight water shortage

By Salman Siddiqui / Our Correspondent

Published: June 16, 2018

KARACHI / LAHORE: The government of Punjab, in collaboration with the World Bank, is encouraging drip irrigation in the province as part of ongoing Punjab Irrigated Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project in order to overcome water scarcity, said a spokesman for the Agriculture Department.

Under the project, he said, the department was installing drip and sprinkler irrigation systems on farms at subsidised charges.

Drip irrigation is suitable for crop cultivation when irrigation water or rainwater is scarce for conventional farming. This technology has so far been adopted by many farmers across Punjab because of acute shortage of river water and limited rainfall.

The spokesman underlined the need for creating awareness among farmers of the drip irrigation system keeping in view its high efficiency in conserving water, increasing per-acre yield and reducing cost of cultivation.

"With this technology, the farmers can save 60% of electricity and diesel costs as well as enhance per-acre yield by 100%. The government is helping farmers adopt this system by providing drip irrigation equipment at subsidised rates and 60% subsidy on installation," he said.

Drip irrigation saves 40-50% of fertiliser consumption. Currently, the system is used for small-scale cultivation over 12.5 acres of land. However, other techniques and methods are being adopted to extend the programme for large-scale plantation.

“This technology is being provided to the farmers at subsidised rates with financial assistance of the World Bank. It is the need of the hour to move towards modern resource conservation practices such as drip irrigation to cope with water scarcity in upcoming years,” the spokesman added.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 16th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1736033/1-punjab-promotes-drip-irrigation-fight-water-shortage/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 4th TO JUN 10th 2018
WWF-Pakistan seeks complete ban on illegal fishing
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: The WWF-Pakistan sought a complete ban on illegal fishing in the country’s seawaters in line with the UN resolution adopted last year 2017.

The UN’s resolution is about “Observance of the International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing” on June 5 every year to draw attention to the threats posed by IUU fishing and highlight the sustainable use of fisheries resources.

In collaboration with the Department of Fisheries, Sindh government, the WWF-Pakistan held a national Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on May 9, in Karachi, in which a decision was taken to carry out a strict monitoring of the country’s seawaters against serious poaching by Indian fishing boats.

Pakistan Maritime Security Agency confiscates hundreds of illegal Indian fishing boats every year. It was also recommended to develop a national plan of action for IUU, which is a requirement under the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Commenting on the day, Muhammad Moazzam Khan, Technical Advisor, WWF-Pakistan emphasized on an early ratification of the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) by Pakistan, which is the first binding international accord to specifically target the IUU fishing. It aims to deter and eliminate IUU fishing by preventing vessels from using ports and landing their catches.

He said that there should be a system of registration of fishing boats to streamline and make log book mandatory to ensure that fish catch. A strict vigil, he said, should also be placed on trans-boundary areas to ensure effective control of poaching activities as they deprive fishermen from fisheries resources.

The WWF-Pakistan stressed the need to declare more Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) along the coast of Pakistan as they contribute towards controlling IUU fishing and conserve natural resources. The Balochistan government has already declared Astola Island as an MPA whereas consultations are underway for the declaration of Miani Hor and Churna Island.

IUU fishing is a grave issue faced by the nations of the Northern and West Indian Ocean which have limited Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) capabilities. It recommends building knowledge and technical capacity within government departments and relevant sectors on the negative impacts of IUU fishing on the fisheries industry of the regional countries.

Globally, IUU fishing is estimated to be about 20% of the total marine wild catch and is worth between $10 billion and $23.5 billion, annually. IUU fishing can jeopardize and debilitate conservation and management efforts for sustainable tuna fisheries, ultimately undermining profits and livelihoods of the fishermen that play by the rules.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/06/05/12-page/720797-news.html

Capital real estate: SC endorses enhanced construction on agro farms
By Shahzad Anwar

Published: June 6, 2018

ISLAMABAD: In a move which would ease the fears of rich farm owners who had converted part of their farmlands into palatial houses, the apex court on Tuesday upheld a decision by the civic authority which allowed construction on 9,500 square feet of farms in the capital.

However, any construction spanning more than the limit would have to be removed within six months. Basements, though, can
be kept by paying a substantial fine of Rs20,000 per square foot.

Pakistan’s agriculture productivity among the lowest in the world

Capital Development Authority (CDA) original lease agreement allowed tenants to build single-storey buildings on agro-farms in the capital where the covered area has to range between 2,500 square feet (sqft) and 4,000 sqft. In 1994, the CDA increased the covered area limit to 10,000 sqft.

However, this was frequently abused by tenants who built larger houses on the relatively cheaper farmlands.

Former Supreme Court (SC) Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry in 2013 had taken suo motu notice of this abuse and directed the CDA to restore 504 farmhouses violating the law to the status of agriculture land by removing the structures.

The CDA had subsequently decided to reduce allowed covered area on agro farms from 12,000 sqft to just 4,850 sqft.

The owners of these farmhouses, however, appealed the direction in the Supreme Court.

Last year, the apex court referred the case back to the CDA directing it to decide the matter after consulting with the owners.

In June 2017, the CDA Board decided to enhance the allowed construction area on agro farms in the federal capital from 4, 850 sqft to 9,500 sqft. However, this permission was subject to approval from the apex court.

The civic body presented its decision to the apex court which upheld it.

Relief measures for agriculture continue

Agri compensation

The land had been originally awarded to rehabilitate people who had been displaced by the development of the capital city and to ensure that they continued agricultural practices in the rural areas of the city, growing products such as fruits, vegetables and poultry to meet the needs of the capital.

However, with the passage of time, the locals sold their farms to influential people who built palatial houses there.

According to the 2013 records, when the apex court took suo motu notice of the matter, the names of several influential people emerged as the owners of palatial farmhouses.

These include former president Pervez Musharraf, former prime minister Shaukat Aziz, ex-Senate chairman Mohammed Mian Soomro, Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) Chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Senator Wasim Sajjad, former Senator Dr Shahzad Waseem, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Raja Nadir Pervez and several retired army officers.

Reducing the covered area from 10,000 sqft to 4,850 sqft in 2013 had also halted the transfer of farmhouses where the built-up property was larger than the prescribed limit. Under this scenario, the CDA was losing revenue in the shape of a transfer fee.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 6th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1728650/1-capital-real-estate-sc-endorses-enhanced-construction-agro-farms/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 28th TO JUN 3rd 2018
How heatwaves affect agriculture

F.H. Mughal Updated May 28, 2018

The US National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) defines a heatwave as a period of abnormally and uncomfortably hot and unusually humid weather, typically lasting two or more days.

Geneva-based World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has a number of definitions of heatwave. One such definition is: a marked unusual hot weather (maximum, minimum and daily average) over a region persisting at least two consecutive days during the hot period of the year based on local climatological conditions, with thermal conditions recorded above given thresholds.

In order to understand the heatwave, it is necessary that the basics governing the phenomenon are known. The readings of air temperature (also known as dry-bulb temperature) given by the meteorological agency are recorded in a “shade”, typically at two meters above the ground. The temperature under “direct sunlight” is higher, by about five to eight degrees Celsius, depending on air movements.

Another important concept is that of apparent temperature, or the temperature that body feels. The process of evaporation requires heat. As the body temperature increases it perspires. Evaporation of that bodily moisture takes heat from the body in order to cool itself. The higher the temperature the more it perspires in the attempt to cool itself.

The impact can be direct (physical damage to crops, animals and trees), or indirect (loss of potential production, lost capacities, and increased costs)

The rate of evaporation is directly related to the amount of moisture in the atmosphere. As humidity increases, the rate of evaporation of perspiration decreases. At the decreased rate of evaporation, the body’s heat is not removed efficiently. Therefore, the body ‘feels’ like the temperature is higher than it actually is. The apparent temperature takes into account the amount of moisture in the atmosphere to simulate how the body ‘feels’ how hot it is.

For example, based on the heat index chart, developed by the US National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, if air temperature is 38 degrees Celsius and the relative humidity is 40 per cent, the apparent temperature, or the temperature that body feels is 43 degrees Celsius.

In future, heatwaves will be more frequent and of greater severity. Human beings are themselves to be blamed for this. Heavy fossil-fuel burning adds more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, which in turn traps the heat.

There are some environmental interventions that can, to some extent, minimise the severity of heatwaves. Installing white roofs helps reduce heat build-up in cities. Current research shows that making surfaces more light-reflecting can have a major impact on lowering high temperatures.

For instance, Los Angeles has coated several streets in a light grey paint to reduce road-top temperatures by as much as six degrees Celsius. Trees and green areas also beat the heatwaves.

The phenomenon of urban heat island is well known (countryside areas are cooler than city areas). In cities, the building materials and roads absorb solar radiation. The darker the surface, the more the heating. Fresh asphalt reflects only 4pc of sunlight compared to as much as 25pc for trees and grass. Rooftop gardens are now gaining momentum in many cities.

Impact on agriculture

There are two types of natural disasters: hydro-meteorological disasters (landslides, avalanches, droughts, famines, extreme temperatures, heatwaves, floods, hurricanes, forest fires, windstorms; waves, surges and insect infestation; and geophysical disasters (earthquakes and volcanic eruptions).

Agricultural activity is dependent on climate, weather, and water availability. Weather- and climate-related disasters adversely affect agricultural production.

The impact of a heatwave on agriculture can be direct (physical damage to crops, animals and trees caused by the extreme hydro-meteorological events), or indirect (loss of potential production owing to disturbed flow of goods and services, lost production capacities, and increased costs of production).

This impact can be tangible (one that can be easily measured in monetary terms) or intangible (anxiety or fear of future natural disasters, inconvenience, disruption, and stress-induced ill health).

Heatwave impacts crop growth and development at different levels like soil moisture uptake, root and shoot growth, photosynthesis, respiration, plant water uptake and final yield. Heatwave competes for soil moisture by hastened evaporation, leaving almost no moisture for uptake by plants. Heatwave also causes an overall environmental degradation, which is a major factor contributing to the vulnerability of agriculture, forestry and rangelands to heatwaves.

Quite often, poor people work on the agricultural lands. These under-nutritioned and weak poor people, when exposed to extreme heat, are simply knocked down health-wise. This is another factor that adversely affects agricultural problem.

Agricultural activity is also affected by water availability. Due to extreme heat all around, there is a great demand for water in municipal sectors, leaving restricted water for agriculture.

Sindh is currently experiencing heatwave with ambient temperatures in the range of 43-46 degrees Celsius. Heatwave occurred previously in the province in July 2015.

Unfortunately, there was no systematic and standardised data collection from the July 2015 episode. This is the major problem in dealing with natural disasters in agriculture, rangelands and forestry.

With no scientific data from the earlier episode, it will be difficult to adopt mitigation measures at present. The Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam, needs to become more active, learning from the previous disasters and taking corrective measures during the ongoing disaster.

The writer earned his Master of Engineering in Environmental Engineering from the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, in 1975

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1410327/how-heatwaves-affect-agriculture

Govt unveils food security policy, terms it most vital after defence

Kalbe Ali Updated May 30, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Just two days before the end of their five-year term, the government unveiled the National Food Security Policy — calling it the second most important issue after the national security policy.

The government's official policy was announced by Minister for Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Bosan on Tuesday, who claimed that the food security policy was interlinked with the national water policy and national zero hunger programme.

The policy not only focuses on the development of crops and enhancing farm produce but also addresses the issue of food wastage which accounts for one-third of the food produced in the country.

Discussing the water shortage issue, the minister said it was a national failure and criticised the lack of a unified approach among the provinces and the centre. "We need to focus on justified water usage and enhance storage capacity by building new reservoirs," he said.

The minister, however, did not respond to queries related to the failure of the government in developing consensus over the establishment of new water reservoirs. He did not reply to another query regarding the food security policy which was approved by the federal cabinet on March 21 but was being unveiled at the end of the national assembly's tenure. The minister did claim that the formulation of the comprehensive food security policy took time as they had input from all stakeholders.

With 37.26 million malnourished citizens, Pakistan's National Food Security Policy 2018 aims at promoting sustainable food production systems by an average growth rate of four per cent with goals of improving food availability, accessibility and sustainability.

The key goals of the policy are to make agriculture more productive, competitive and climate friendly along with diversifying the food systems for nutritious diets.

The policy intends to improve food availability by bridging yield gaps, supporting kitchen gardening and farmers with new high value crops. Similarly, better availability of agriculture inputs with qualitative seeds, pesticides along with management and reduction cost of agriculture loans.

According to the policy, despite a huge population of 72m cattle, Pakistan imports dry milk and other dairy products.

The policy aims to improve livestock production of local breeds, fodder production and quality animal feed along with investment in dairy farming and disease surveillance and control.

Published in Dawn, May 30th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1410850/govt-unveils-food-security-policy-terms-it-most-vital-after-defence

Sindh govt fails to impose ban on fishing

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: The outgoing Sindh government has shunned banning fishing across the provincial seawaters for two months – June and July, sources said on Friday.

Now, fish and shrimp hunt in the breeding season will continue across the Sindh seawaters, though Karachi Fish Harbor Authority (KFHA) placed the restriction for two months in its jurisdiction. With the partial ban imposition, no seafood landing will be permitted at the fish harbor.

"We [KFHA] have just placed the ban in the harbor jurisdiction," the official said, adding that elsewhere in the province fishing may continue as the outgoing Sindh government missed issuing notification to place the ban in June and July. The new fishing season will start from Aug 1, 2018 at fish harbor.

The PPP's Sindh government completed its five-year term in office on May 28, 2018 and quit their departments at once but failed to recognize its key responsibility to place the ban in a bid to help the sea relieve from the unabated hunts taking place around the year, sources said, fearing that the continuing fishing will ravage the marine life.

The shrimp breeding starts in the summer season including the months – June and July, which suggest the complete ban to let the marine life hatch its reproductions. The political interferences, sources said, upstaged the environmental protocols. "It is a political season and also shrimp breeding, so politics will win," experts said.

They warned that the ban violation will have its far-lasting implications on fisheries growth, as shrimp breeding stands at the stake and urged the interim government to look into the issue immediately after taking the office to help the fisheries sector survive the over fishing onslaught. There is also a need to impose rules on excessive hunts that had already brought down the volume of shrimp and fish species.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/06/02/3-page/720172-news.html

Guard Agri launches trials of new 'Super Hybrid Rice' variety

ZAHID BAIG

LAHORE: Guard Agricultural Research & Services (Pvt) Limited has launched the trials of a new "Super Hybrid Rice" variety having potential to produce rice up to 180 maunds per acre.

"We are launching the trials of this variety by sowing it over an area of 100 acres of land in Badin District (Sindh) in the batches of 10 acres to test its potential in Pakistani climate," said Guard Agri's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Shahzad Ali Malik while talking to Business Recorder here on Saturday.

Guard Agri, having achieved full technology transfer in hybrid rice seed is by far the market leader in the seed market with 74.2% share, reflecting the strength of the company as a research oriented organization.

Last year, the company tested another Hybrid variety called 403, developed by the Longping Company of China, in the same area, which produced remarkable results and given yield even more than what it given in China. That Hybrid rice produced 135-140 maunds per acre of production in

Pakistan. The new variety being put in to trial this year is also developed by the same Chinese Company which is also working in agricultural research in collaboration with Guard Agri in Pakistan.

Malik said that after success of the new variety, which is yet to be named for Pakistan, Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) will conduct two years trial of it and then with the approval of Variety Evaluation Committee, it can be offered for commercial sowing.

He claimed that Guard Agri is the only company in Pakistan doing basic research and development in new Basmati and non Basmati Rice varieties. Guard Agri has a nationwide seed distribution network backed by full technical support services to the farmer.

He hoped that the hybrid rice seed coverage from the present 25-30% to over 50% in the next three years. He said that with the success of different hybrid rice a big boost is expected in the production which is at present is around 4.5 million tons per annum.

It may be mentioned here that in hybrid rice, around 90% of the area planted with the long-grain seed lies in Sindh while the remaining 10% is cultivated in south Punjab.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/06/03/5-page/720393-news.html

Govt to work for agri-sector's growth

By APP

Published: June 3, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research has developed comprehensive policy measures to work for the growth of agriculture sector under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The objective is to boost exports of agricultural products, enhance per-acre yield of major crops and produce high value-added products of international standards.

The measures are part of the first National Food Security Policy, announced by the ministry this week. Under the policy measures, the ministry will prepare feasibility reports of tradable commodities for each sub-zone along the corridor, conduct tests of rural businesses for identified commodities and coordinate for the development of business zones along the corridor. The government will also arrange a series of training programmes for capacity building of rural entrepreneurs and agricultural service providers.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 3rd, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1726319/2-govt-work-agri-sectors-growth/

July 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 23RD TO JULY 29TH 2018

Cotton sowing misses target on short supply of water
RECORDER REPORT | JUL 24TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Cotton sowing missed the desired target due to short supply of irrigation water, particularly in Sindh till June 29, dealers said on the cotton market on Monday. The official spot rate shed Rs 100 to Rs 9300, they added. Prices of seed cotton in Sindh were at Rs 4200-4500 and in the Punjab, rates fell by Rs 100 to Rs 3700-4400, they said.

In ready session, over 4000 bales of cotton finalised within the range of Rs 9350-9450, they said. According to the market sources, government has failed in achieving the cotton sowing target. According to the government's estimate sowing in Punjab estimated around 99 percent and 66 percent in Sindh against the last year.

Prices weakened as ginners and growers stopped demanding higher prices for the fine quality. Cotton analyst, Naseem Usman said that as a result of less supply of irrigation water, arrivals of seed cotton slowed down, causing the rates hitting the roof.

Besides, 7 or 8 ginning factories have started operation in Balochistan, so, seed cotton prices were at Rs 4400-4500 and cotton rates at Rs 9,500 per maund, he added. Cotton prices in the global markets softened in the process of trading, they said. Following deals reported: 400 bales of cotton from Sanghar at Rs 9350-9450, 2000 bales from Tando Adam at Rs 9400-9450, 1000 bales from Shahdadpur at Rs 9350-9450, 200 bales from Kotri at Rs 9350, 200 bales from Gojra at Rs 9425, 200 bales from Burewala at Rs 9425 and 100 bales from Samandri at Rs 9450, they added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180724393411/

Fertiliser sales drop 39% in June
By Our Correspondent

Published: July 25, 2018

KARACHI: Sales of fertiliser declined 39% year-on-year in June owing to lower dispatch of urea.

However, the lower sales are due to the high base effect as urea sales were abnormally higher in June 2017, said Saqib Hussain, research analyst at Sherman Securities.

"Last year, dealers piled up fertiliser in their warehouses, ahead of the budget announcement, as there was anticipation that the government might withdraw subsidy," Hussain told The Express Tribune.

As per data released by the National Development Fertilizer Centre (NDFC), fertiliser sales nose-dived 39% year-on-year to 0.88 million tons owing to significant decline in urea dispatches, which touched a 43% low at 0.61 million tons.

However, total dispatches in the first half of the calendar year 2018 showed only a negligible decline of 1.3% to 4.08 million tons.

Meeting shortfall: Plan to import fertiliser irks local industry

According to Taurus Securities, higher seasonal demand pushed urea dispatches by 23% in June as compared to dispatches in May. Cumulative sales of urea posted a negligible growth of 1% in the first half of 2018.

Meanwhile, DAP dispatches surged by 70% year-on-year and 3.23 times on a month-on-month basis to 0.19 million tons.

Cumulative sales for the first half of 2018 have been recorded at 0.68 million tons, showing a 16% year-on-year increase against 0.59 million tons recorded for the same period last year.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 25th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1765830/2-fertiliser-sales-drop-39-june/

Monsoon rains to have positive impact on Kharif crops
FAZAL SHER & TAHIR AMIN | JUL 29TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The current monsoon rains would have a positive impact over major kharif crops' production including sugarcane, rice and cotton. A senior official of Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNS&R) told Business Recorder that ongoing rains would have a positive impact on both high delta kharif crops including sugarcane, rice and maize and low delta kharif notably cotton. Heavy rains have not been reported in the cotton belt of the country, and hence so far the crop has not been damaged.

The official pointed out that if heavy rains occur in the cotton belt it would have a negative impact on its output as rain causes various diseases in cotton crop. Large standing water for more than 24 hours was not beneficial for the cotton crop, he said.

The government had set 14.37 million bales of cotton production target from an area of 7.3 million acres for 2018-19, but due to shortfall in sowing, officials are pessimistic about achievement of the production target.

The country missed cotton production target of 14.04 million bales as well as revised target of 12.6 million bales set for 2017-18 by around 7 percent as production was recorded at 11.5 million bales.

According to weather advisory issued for farmers by the Pakistan Meteorological Department's National Agromet Centre (NAC), farmers are advised to take necessary measures to protect the standing crops and vegetables from damaging effects of varying weather patterns due to monsoon systems.

PMD also advised cotton growers to take necessary measures as accumulation of stagnant water in the fields due to heavy rains is fatal for standing crops like cotton. Farmers of rain-fed areas were also advised to take measures to preserve rain water for crops and livestock.

The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) for Kharif season 2018-19 had fixed sugarcane production target for year 2018-19 at 68.157 million tons from an area of 2.37 million acres; and fixed paddy production target at 7 million tons from an area of 6.4 million acres.

Rice is a major kharif crop and it's sowing has just begun this month, which requires good water supply. Water supply improved with the current monsoon spell and would help achieve the production target of 7.2 million tons.

Rice is an important food as well as cash crop. After wheat, it is the second main staple food crop and the second major exportable commodity, contributing 3.1 percent of value added to agriculture and 0.6 percent to GDP.

Maize is the third most important cereal crop, contributing 2.2 percent to the value added in agriculture and 0.4 percent to GDP. Maize production target has been fixed at 5.301 million tons for kharif 2018-19, and good water supply would have a positive impact on the crop output.

According to the weather forecast issued by PMD for the next 24 hours rain-thundershowers with gusty winds are expected at scattered places in Malakand, Hazara, Bannu, D I khan, Kohat, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sargodha, Faislabad divisions and Islamabad and at isolated places in Peshawar, Zhob, D G khan divisions, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir. Hot and humid weather is expected elsewhere in the country.

During the last 24 hours, rain occurred in Joarabad 103 mm, Okara 58mm, Kamra 47 mm, Rawalpindi (Chaklala 44 mm, Shamsabad 03 mm), Sahiwal 39 mm, Noor.pur Thal 33 mm, Islamabad (Saidpur 33 mm, Bokra 26 mm, Golra 10 mm), Jhang 29 mm, M.B din 19 mm, Sargodha 14 mm, Mangla 11 mm, Jhelum 07 mm, Faislabad 01 mm, Risalpur 36 mm, Lower Dir 35 mm, Kakul 21 mm, Kohat 20 mm, Peshawar 17 mm, Malamjabba 13 mm, Kalam 09 mm, Dir 03 mm, Balakot 02 mm, Saidu Sharif 01 mm, Bagrot 12 mm, Gilgit, Bunji 07 mm, Chillas 04 mm, Gupis 03 mm, Astore 01 mm, Barkhan 11 mm, and Muzaffarabad 01 mm.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180729394646/

Cultivation of biotech crops enables farmers to cut use of pesticides
RECORDER REPORT | JUL 27TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

Pakistan is achieving multiple objectives through cultivation of biotech crops using agricultural biotechnology which has enabled the farmers to reduce use of pesticides and help them to produce more food without increasing arable land.
Experts told Business Recorder here on Thursday that 0. Biotech crops have helped reduce the use of pesticides for several economically important crops, contributing to reductions in fuel, water and packaging that are eliminated from the manufacturing, distribution and application processes.
Biotech crops assist in bringing higher yields per hectare, making farming more efficient and productive on limited land area. Habitat destruction is the biggest single threat to biodiversity. Higher yields mean farmers can produce increasing amounts of food without increasing arable land and this has a major impact on protecting wildlife habitats.

Agricultural biotechnology has been described as a tsunami washing over agriculture, with fundamental impacts on how we grow and market our food and fiber. Modern biotechnology involves genetic manipulations of transferring DNA from one organism to another. Therefore, unlike conventional plant or animal breeding, most biotechnology products are not something that could occur “naturally”.

For many, these unique attributes of agricultural biotechnology are cause for concern. While often these concerns involve the concentration of ownership of agricultural assets, food safety issues, there are also concerns about biotechnology products’ impacts on the environment.

There are at least four areas of potential biotechnology contributions which include gains in yields through new plants resistant to environmental stresses, lower costs of labor and agriculture inputs (including irrigation water), higher-quality food and value-added products, and environmentally benign methods of managing weeds and insect pests, they said.

Experts highlighted that many of these potential contributions are environmental. For example, the new transgenic crops could reduce the use of chemical pesticides. There may also be savings in energy and air emissions from more efficient transport of less perishable products. Drought resistant transgenic plants help in yield losses be minimized.

Referring to a study, experts said that the herbicide tolerant crops are great enablers of zero-tillage agriculture, a substantial contributor to sustainable agriculture. Zero-tillage means sowing seed directly into the field, without first ploughing to remove weeds. By leaving the soil undisturbed, more moisture is retained, which is good for water conservation. Other indirect benefits of zero-tillage are improved conservation of beneficial soil insects and earth worms. Through use of fewer fuel powered agricultural machines, carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere are decreased and fossil fuels are conserved. Less tractor traffic also causes indirect benefits to soil quality, and hence a reduced contribution towards global warming.

Experts added that there are different methods of risk assessment before a Genetically Modified crops introduced in the market. It goes through a series of steps before it is approved to be used in the environment. All the possible environmental hazards are taken into account by the professionals. Pakistan has Department of Environment Protection Agency (Pak EPA) entrusted with this job. Pak EPA works under bio-safety regulations to ensure that safe and sound products are released in our environment for improved agriculture that can benefit our farmers and also meet our food and feed needs of future.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180727394056/
Cotton market: Improved arrivals of seed cotton push rates lower
RECORDER REPORT | JUL 29TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Improved inflows of phutti pushed rates down on the cotton market on Saturday in the process of improved trading activity, dealers said. The official spot rate was unchanged at Rs 9200, they added. Prices of seed cotton in Sindh were lower by Rs 300 to Rs 3800-4000 in the Punjab, rate of low type stayed put at Rs 3600 while the fine quality lost Rs 250 to Rs 4000, they said. In Balochistan, cotton prices were at Rs 9000 and seed cotton prices were at Rs 4100-4200, they said.

In ready session, around 10,000 bales of cotton finalised within the range of Rs 9250-9450, they said. According to the market sources mills and spinners showed improved interest in fresh buying of lint cotton. Whereas, the ginners were keen to sell as much as they can, because arrivals of seed cotton improved during the week, they said.

Cotton analyst, Naseem Usman said that prices eased on the easy supply of seed cotton. Improved flow of irrigation water after the recent rains in parts of country have brightened prospects of good cotton crop in the Punjab and upper Sindh, other brokers said. Commenting on the present trend in the market, they said that a kind of anxiety among the traders and it may persist till the formation of new government, they observed.

Traders pinned high hope of a new economically powerful Pakistan and said that the business community welcomes the victory of PTI and hopes that now uncertainty is ending and stability will come which is vital for economic growth, they added.

Cotton prices were higher in the global markets in the process of trading, they said.

Following deals reported: 5000 bales of cotton from Tando Adam at Rs 9250/9450, 1000 bales from Shahdadpur at Rs 9250/9400, 1000 bales from Sanghar at Rs 9250/9400, 1000 bales from Hyderabad at Rs 9300/9400, 800 bales from Kotri at Rs 9275/9400, 600 bales from Moro at Rs 9300 and 200 bales from Vehari at Rs 9325, they added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180729394800/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 16TH TO JULY 22ND 2018
Uncertainties take a toll on cost of agricultural inputs
Mohiuddin Aazim July 16, 2018

The cost of agricultural inputs showed a rising trend during the last fiscal year, reflecting the impact of a weaker rupee and higher fuel prices.

The overvalued rupee lost 16 per cent worth against the dollar between July 2017 and June 2018. Meanwhile, domestic prices of petrol and high-speed diesel increased more than 26pc and 29pc, respectively, during this period. Whereas the rupee-dollar parity during the first two weeks of the current fiscal year has remained almost intact, prices of petrol, diesel and other fuels have risen even further, creating inflationary pressures.

This twin menace continues to take a toll on agricultural input prices, making life difficult for growers, especially food crop producers. Unlike cotton producers, food crop growers cannot immediately pass on the additional cost to buyers.

Farmers' lobbies are complaining about a sharp increase in fertiliser prices within a year and are accusing manufacturers of resorting to profiteering. But manufacturers hold erratic gas supplies to production plants responsible for the higher cost of production and, thus, higher prices.

Changes in the gas pricing mechanism made towards the end of the PML-N government along with the rupee depreciation and higher fuel prices have also led to the higher cost of fertiliser production, industry officials say. An upward trend in international fertiliser prices seen in recent months has added fuel to the fire, they insist.

Retail prices of domestically produced fertilisers have witnessed 10-20pc increase in the last year

Depending upon the type and brands, retail prices of domestically produced fertilisers have witnessed 10-20pc increase in the last one year, according to officials of the Farmers Association of Pakistan (FAP). Manufacturers say, however, that ex-factory prices have seen a much smaller increase — 5-10pc maximum — adding that the claim of FAP is based on excessive rates charged by some unscrupulous fertiliser distributors at certain places.

Prices of imported crop seeds and insecticides and pesticides have risen chiefly due to 16pc depreciation in the last fiscal year. But inflationary trends — and more so general inflationary expectations — rekindled by a weaker rupee and higher fuel prices have also pushed up the cost of domestically produced seeds and insect and pest killers.

Growers' lobbies claim that prices of seed bags of major and minor food crops, like wheat, paddy, maize, pulses, potatoes, onion and garlic, have gone up by 15-25pc in Punjab and Sindh. Rice growers say acute water shortages in paddy-growing areas amid a rising cost of inputs may result in higher domestic prices of exportable rice in the next season beginning October. They say that 20-kg bags of Basmati and non-Basmati paddy seed varieties that were available at around Rs2,000 and Rs1,200 per bag during the last season are selling for as high as Rs2,500 and Rs1,500 during this season.

Whereas enhanced prices of seeds, fertilisers, insecticides and pesticides boost the cost of crop production immediately, pricier agricultural machinery and implements have a similar cost-push effect with a time lag. And whereas the falling rupee increases the cost of imported farm machinery and implements in real time, it also pushes up prices of domestically produced machinery and implements after a while.

Add to this the elements of obsolete methods of obtaining seeds from standing crops and improper storage facilities, wheeling and dealing in the fertiliser distribution system and charging premium on subsidised farm machinery by politically connected dealers, and you can see why the cost of agricultural inputs in Pakistan remains high.

Quite naturally, farmers are not able to pass on the additional cost of inputs to consumers as they don't directly deal with them. There are many intermediaries, including traditional arhtis or money-lenders-cum-brokers, provincial food departments and federal agencies dealing with agriculture like the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco).

The end result is that whenever factors contributing to a higher cost of agricultural inputs come into play, farmers' profit margins slip and consumers ultimately have to pay a higher price. This is exactly what is happening after the recent rupee depreciation and the increase in fuel prices. Serious media outlets occasionally report about higher prices of agricultural inputs and food items. But those reports do not convey the full impact of the miseries of consumers or growers as the baskets of goods and services used in the indices for measuring inflation are less representative and the price collection mechanism lacks transparency.

The decision of the caretaker government to launch a study on data reporting gaps is a welcome move. It would be great if the study can also examine our inflation indices and recommend ways for removing data reporting gaps in industrial and agricultural outputs and their price collection for those indices.

According to a Dawn report, the study to be undertaken by our Planning Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has three key objectives: to examine whether data is available; to examine the level of disaggregation of the available data; and to develop a fact sheet for each indicator at the disaggregated level.

We in Pakistan certainly need a fact sheet on almost every key economic indicator but more so on inflation, keeping in view not only its huge importance but its vulnerability to manipulations by the government of the day for political gains.

Coming back to the issue of the rising cost of agricultural inputs, apart from making every possible effort to keep this cost under check, policymakers also need to introduce the concept of economisation of these inputs.

With greater use of technology, a larger area of cropped land can be fertilised and a smaller amount of seeds sprayed in fields with mechanised spreaders can produce bigger and fatter crops.

Besides, the issues of the fertiliser industry need to be addressed to boost their output and cut imports. This has become all the more necessary as the country is currently facing a severe balance-of-payments problem and every dollar saved through import substitution matters.

In the first 11 months of the last fiscal year, Pakistan's import bill of manufactured fertilisers increased 36pc year-on-year to $782 million, data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed. In terms of volumes, imports rose 34pc year-on-year to 2m tonnes during this period. An 8pc decline in the local manufacturing of fertilisers — in the first 10 months of the last fiscal year — explains the need for larger imports. But should this have happened?

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 16th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1420209/uncertainties-take-a-toll-on-cost-of-agricultural-inputs

Urea makers raise price for second time this month
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated July 18, 2018

KARACHI: Fertiliser manufacturers have raised urea price by another Rs50 to Rs1,650-1,670 per 50kg bag due to declining urea inventory.

This is the second hike during the current month taking cumulative increase to Rs100 per bag.

So far in the calendar year 2018 urea price at retail level has increased by Rs250/bag while retention price of urea manufacturers increased by Rs270-280/bag as earlier they were giving discounts, Saqib Hussain of Sherman Securities said.

Considering the fact that local prices are 22 per cent lower than international urea prices, manufacturers have enough room to pass on cost pressures, he added.

According to Syed Khurram Mohiuddin of BMA Capital Management domestic producers have increased urea prices by Rs50/bag to Rs1,571/bag which is third increase in prices since the beginning of CY18 taking total increase in market price to 15pc (Rs200/bag).

Devaluation and emerging supply deficit scenario have driven the recent price rise. Urea inventory levels are expected to clock in at the lowest level of 200,000 tonnes since August 2015. Urea inventory levels have averaged 450,000 tonnes during the past six years in the month of June.

Despite the recent price increase, domestic urea prices are currently trading at a discount of 29pc to international urea prices as free fall of the rupee against the greenback nullified impact of price hike, Khurram said.

Published in Dawn, July 18th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1420808/urea-makers-raise-price-for-second-time-this-month

Pulses import plunge in India to ripple across Canadian, Australian farms
Reuters Staff

* India slaps import tax on pulses, limits overseas buying

* Imports at 1.2 mln T in 2018/19 vs 5.6 mln T yr ago

* Canadian, Australian suppliers look for alternate markets

By Rajendra Jadhav

MUMBAI, July 18 (Reuters) – Pulses imports to India, the world’s biggest buyer, may fall to their lowest in nearly two decades after the government raised import taxes and restricted overseas purchases to bolster prices, impacting the plans of its global suppliers.

The reduction in imports illustrates the government’s steps to raise the prices of pulses, like peas and lentils, to reduce the payouts to farmers under its food subsidy scheme. Farmers in Canada, Australia and Russia that rely on Indian demand will likely intensify their cutbacks in pulses cultivation and continue to seek other markets in response to the curbs.

India’s pulses imports could fall nearly 80 percent to 1.2 million tonnes during the financial year of 2018/19 that started in April, the lowest since 2000/01, Bimal Kothari, Vice Chairman, Indian Pulses and Grains Association, told Reuters.

“Quantitative restrictions and higher import tax are effectively restricting inflows from overseas,” Kothari said.

India has raised the import tax on some pulses to as high as 50 percent and fixed quotas for others like yellow peas, green gram and chickpeas.

The country imported 5.68 million tonnes of pulses worth $3 billion in the 2017/18 financial year, down 15 percent from a year ago, but up from just 350,000 tonnes in 2000/01, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Pulses imports have surged at the same time local production climbed. India produced 24.51 million tonnes of pulses in the 2017/18 crop year that ended in June, nearly double from a decade ago.

The oversupply caused prices to drop with yellow peas, which make up more than one-third of India’s pulses imports, falling to $285 per tonne on a cost and freight basis currently from $330 a year ago and $475 in 2016, said three pulses dealers.

In local markets, pulses are trading as much as 30 percent below the government-fixed minimum support price (MSP), forcing the government to procure them from farmers, said Nitin Kalantri, a pulses miller in the state of Maharashtra, India’s biggest producer of summer-sown pulses.

“By arresting imports the government is trying to lift prices near MSP level. It will help in minimising expensive government purchases,” Kalantri said.

India does not break down spending on individual crops but food subsidy spending for all crops for the 2018/19 financial year will be 1.69 trillion rupees ($24.65 billion).

The government’s priority is to dispose of pulses stockpiles bought last year, which is not possible if cheaper imports continue, said a government official, who asked to remain unidentified because they are not allowed to speak to the media.

Government agencies bought about 2 million tonnes of pulses last year, said the official, adding “we need space to buy new season crop.”

EXPORTERS SCRAMBLE
Record Indian pulses imports of 6.6 million tonnes in the 2016/17 financial year prompted Canadian and Australian farmers to expand their pulses cultivation but the contraction in imports in the past year has reversed that.

Farmers in Canada, India’s biggest supplier of pulses, have slashed lentil cultivation by 14.5 percent and peas by 12 percent in 2018, according to Statistics Canada.

Canadian exporters are shipping more peas and other legumes to China, which uses them as an alternative to soymeal for pig feed after imposing higher tariffs on soybeans from the United States.

Canadian peas are also heading to the United States and lentils are finding their way into Mexico, said Chuck Penner, analyst at LeftField Commodity Research.

Australian suppliers are not anticipating a quick rebound in Indian demand and are trying to ship more to other Asian and Middle East countries.

Buying from Pakistan, Bangladesh and other markets where vegetarian diets are becoming increasingly fashionable will support Australian suppliers, said Rob Brealey, a Brisbane-based pulses trader at COFCO International.

“We are unlikely to see India return as a buyer to the global market until sometime in 2019,” said Brealey.

($1 = 68.58 Indian rupees)

Reporting by Rajendra Jadhav; Additional reporting by Colin Packham in SYDNEY and Rod Nickel in WINNIPEG; Editing by Christian Schmollinger

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-economy-consumers-insight/mortgage-groupon-and-card-debt-how-the-bottom-half-bolsters-u-s-economy-idUSKBN1KD0EM

Rs 30 billion interest-free loan disbursed among farmers via e-data
RECORDER REPORT | JUL 19TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The registration of 350,000 farmer’s data in Aarazi Centres is helping in loan disbursement through 125,000 smartphones equipped with 10 apps for farmers provided by PITB. This was stated by Dr Umar Saif, Chairman Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), while briefing the Punjab’s caretaker Minister for Energy and Local Government Zafar Mahmood during his visit to PITB here Wednesday.

He informed that by detecting the farmer from data centres the interest-free loan was disbursed through easy paisa in simple, speedy and transparent manner without involving the middle man and involving NRSP, Akhuwat, Telenor Microfinance Bank, National Bank and ZTBL, so far Rs 30 billion interest-free loan has been disbursed.

Dr Saif added that the device with inbuilt 10 apps provided data and access to subsidy, identify crops reporting, detection and yield, advice market crop price, order fertilizers, seeds and pesticides from government’s authorized dealers to deliver the requested service at their doorstep. This system has helped to identify that instead of importing canola oil, first time the Canola crop has been sown on 350,000 acres area across the Punjab, he said.

He stated that earlier the subsidy for farmers was given through the fertilizer companies, which touched to the tune of Rs 57 billion and now it has fallen to Rs 1.8 billion after introducing bag coupon enabling the farmer to get direct subsidy resulting an increase of 15 percent to the farmers. The direct subsidy to the farmer was started for Potash, which was being extended for DAP, Oil seed and cotton seed, he informed.

The Chairman also informed that European Satellite Agency (ESA) has made a Hyper Spectral Imagery and made it freely available to use. With this technology PITB has ensured the detection of 26 crops in 10-meter resolution with 93 percent accuracy in yield prediction and new data of crops was being collected in data centres through artificial intelligence, which helped in yielding and geo-tagging the crops.

He informed that smart monitoring of education and health projects have brought remarkable achievements as there was no ghost school or admissions in the province of the Punjab while it has improved the attendance in real time while vaccination project initiated in October 2014 improved the geographic coverage from 14 percent to 88 percent through 3,751 vaccinators. The automation of 713 police stations across the Punjab has recorded 2.7 million complaints while 1.8 million FIRs registered, computerized 26 registers and digitized 57,3531 finger prints of 36 CR offices, he said.

Elucidating the salient features of the flagship project e-stamping, Dr Saif informed that it has stopped the fiscal pilferage of the past used to committed through fake and under value Stamp Papers, while the electronic stamping has noted a significant increase of Rs 16 billion in revenue as compare to the previous year.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180719392094/

Punjab plans to use fruit, corn waste as animal feed
By Shahram Haq
Published: July 20, 2018

LAHORE: As fodder supply in Pakistan is rapidly getting scarce, the Punjab Livestock and Dairy Development Board (PLDDB) has come up with a plan to utilise fruit and corn waste for providing an alternative solution and meeting growing demand.

Initially, the PLDDB is working on silage and hay production as well as crop and fruit leftovers as part of its nutritious resource management programme.

“Utilisation of crop and fruit waste as feed resources is an area mostly overshadowed in the dairy sector due to multiple reasons,” Dr Masood Parvez, a PLDDB consultant, told The Express Tribune.

Relief measures for agriculture continue

He was of the view that mango seed meal and allied products had significance in diversifying sources of cattle feed. “It is available in fairly abundant quantity throughout the country.”

Mango waste could not be collected from households as it was a cumbersome process. Instead, processing units could be the main source of mango waste for producing animal feed, he added.

The quantity of mango used in pulp production stood at 320,000 tons in Punjab alone and almost 50% of the fruit comprised pulp and the remaining was peel and stone, Parvez said. Increasing livestock numbers and decreasing animal feed resources demand alternative means of animal feed. Corporate entities primarily involved in milk production and processing are continuously complaining about fodder shortage, especially in rainy season, which reduces milk production.

According to PLDDB Senior Manager Dr Wasi Muhammad, there is severe shortage of fodder in the country. “In order to meet this challenge, the PLDDB is working on silage production through fruit waste. We also use maize cob, which is a by-product of the high-yielding cereal crop worldwide,” he added. He said maize was an important crop in Pakistan and was ranked third as a major cereal crop.

"Currently, we are destroying this dynamic natural resource; mostly maize cob is being used in brick kilns that cause environmental pollution. About six million tons of cobs are available in Pakistan for the production of maize cob meal, which is a sustainable and cost-effective feed resource."

Published in The Express Tribune, July 20th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1762058/2-punjab-plans-use-fruit-corn-waste-animal-feed/

Govt asked to withdraw cotton import duties
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 21, 2018

KARACHI: The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) has asked the government to withdraw duty and taxes on cotton imports because of expected short crop which will leave a huge gap of around four million bales between demand and supply.

The caretaker government had imposed a 3 per cent customs duty, 2pc additional customs duty, 5pc sales tax and 1pc income tax on import of cotton from July 15. In support of their demand, the KCA pointed out that after the payment of heavy duties and taxes, the cotton import would become costlier and push up prices of end products like value-added textile goods.

This would further cause setback to country's exports which are already under stress owing to high cost of doing business and tough competition from regional countries.

Published in Dawn, July 21st, 2018
https://www.dawn.com/news/1421489/govt-asked-to-withdraw-cotton-import-duties

SBP asks PODB to frame oilseeds policy for reducing import bill
RIZWAN BHATTI | JUL 21ST, 2018 | KARACHI

The State Bank of Pakistan has suggested that Pakistan Oilseed Development Board needs to develop an Oilseeds Policy for promotion of oilseeds in the country, in collaboration with all stakeholders including farmers; solvent extractors and poultry feed manufacturers and get it approved by the government at the earliest.

SBP also proposed that pricing support or subsidy may be provided to oilseed growers in order to bring their profitability at par with crops, such as wheat. It said that three policy actions, including Oilseed Policy, production of quality seeds and development of hybrid seeds and Incentives for farmers are required to enhance the domestic oilseed production.

According to a SBP report, for Rabi crop FY18, the government of Punjab has announced a cash payment of Rs 5000 per acre for up to two acres for sowing of canola and sunflower crops. As a result, the area and production under these crops increased, thereby indicating the significance of maintaining incentives in boosting oilseeds production, it mentioned.

The report said Oilseed Policy and support price for Oilseeds would help reduce imports and enhance the domestic crops. It noted that the country's current account deficit already reached all time high level of $18 billion at the end of last fiscal year (FY18) followed by massive surge in goods imports. Import supportive policies and free trade agreements have reduced incentives for oilseed production in the country. Oilseed cultivation is further disadvantaged by absence of adequate machinery and high yielding seed varieties. In FY08, 1.1 million acres area under sunflower was with production of 643,000 tons. In FY17, the area reduced to 0.2 million acres and production to 104,000 tons

The SBP report said several projects are already underway to develop quality oilseeds. In this regard, Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) has developed a hybrid canola seed variety and planted the same in Northern Punjab and KPK. Furthermore, the olive plantations have been initiated in the Potohar valley. Despite this, more focus is still required on production of quality hybrid seeds locally, mainly to reduce input costs of ultimate beneficiaries, it suggested.

As per SBP report, in spite of being an agrarian economy, Pakistan had to import 2.7 million metric tons of edible oils (soybean and palm oil) worth $2.0 billion in FY17 and 2.2 million metric tons worth $1.7 billion in Jul-Mar FY18 to fulfill the domestic edible oil industry needs. These imports have a share of 88 percent of total edible oil supplies.

According to the report, major oilseed imports, consist of soybean, sunflower and canola seed; imports stood at $0.8 billion in Jul-Mar FY18 compared to $0.6 billion in the same period in FY17.

The SBP report asserted that the country is capable of producing sizeable quantities of oilseeds that would reduce the import bill mostly for oilseeds and partly for edible oil. Presently, major oilseed crops in the country are cottonseed, sunflower, rapeseed/mustard and canola. Local oil production on average remained 0.6 million tons during FY08-FY17, whereas the total edible oil availability stood at 3.2 million tons, indicating low quantity produced domestically. It further said that various policies have led to lower oilseed production besides heavy reliance on imports. Supportive pricing policies for wheat and sugarcane have had a distortional impact on oilseed production as evident from decline in area under oilseeds, it noted.

The report pointed out that import supportive policies and free trade agreements for oil imports reduce incentives for local oilseed production. In July 2015, custom duty on soybean seed was reduced to 3 percent compared to 10 percent on soymeal imports (used in poultry feed), hence resulting in increase in imports of soybean seed compared to soymeal.

Furthermore, at the start of July 2014, the sales tax on soybean was reduced to 6 percent compared to 16 percent on canola or sunflower for solvent extractors, resultantly the import of soybean for solvent extraction went up from a mere 50,000 tons in FY15 to 640,000 tons in FY17.

The SBP said that glut of wheat and sugar in the market provides opportunity for oilseed crop promotion to shift farmers' focus away from surplus-producing crops. Sugarcane was planted on an area of 1.3 million hectares, with cane production of 81.1 million tons in FY18. This will produce about 6.3 million ton sugar, whereas the country's requirement is around 3.4 million ton (16.3 kg per capita consumption). This means 0.6 million hectares is cropped extra than required which can be used for oilseed cultivation, it said, citing Pakistan Oilseeds Development Board as a source of information.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180721392624/

Wheat export target missed
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated July 22, 2018

KARACHI: Pakistan missed the export target of two million tonnes for wheat and wheat products despite achieving record exports in the country's history in FY18.

Around 21 per cent rupee devaluation against the dollar since December 2017 to date, coupled with world's prices and attractive subsidy, boosted wheat exports to a new peak of 1.189m tonnes fetching $236m in FY18, versus 3,937 tonnes earning just $1m in FY17.

The average per tonne price stood at $198 in 2017-18 against $263 per tonne earned in the same period of FY17, stated figures released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The government in December 2017 had allowed exports of 2m tonnes of wheat and wheat products before June 30 to clear carry-over stocks as new crop finds way into the market. It has also been providing an export subsidy of $120 per tonne by land and $169 per tonne for sea routes. Out of the 2m tonnes, exports from Punjab were planned at 1.5m tonnes with the remaining 500,000 tonnes from Sindh.

Market players were quite optimistic of achieving wheat target of 1.4 million tonnes by sea route but exports in June fell to 69,299 tonnes from 326,133 tonnes in May.

All Pakistan Flour Mills Association Central Chairman Chaudhry Ansar Jawed said export of wheat products remained disappointing despite the subsidy and rupee devaluation as Afghanistan's market was captured by cheap wheat products from Central Asian States.

He said the government should consider suspending further exports from surplus stocks of last year in view of the water shortage which may hamper wheat production.

Sugar exports surge

Sugar exports hit record 1.469m tonnes earning $508m in FY18, as compared to 307,348 tonnes fetching $161m in FY17.

The average per tonne price of sugar stood at $345.8 in FY18 as against $523 per tonne in FY17.

Sugar production in the last season was 7.5m tonnes – well above the requirement of 5-6m tonnes, leaving extra stocks of 1.5m tonnes.

The government allowed sugar exports at a subsidy of Rs20 per kg, with Rs10.70 per kg federal share and Rs9.30 per kg by the Sindh government.

According to the figures of Large Scale Manufacturing, Pakistan's sugar production fell by 7pc in July-May 2017-18 to 6.55m tonnes from 7.044m tonnes in the same period of 2016-17. In the last one year, sugar's retail price hovered between Rs50-55 per kg.

Published in Dawn, July 22nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1421678/wheat-export-target-missed

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 9TH TO JULY 15TH 2018
Farmers' perspective
Amjad Mahmood | MHK July 09, 2018

UNLIKE developed nations where manifestos of political parties are taken as their respective agendas after coming to power, local farmers are not upbeat about the agriculture plans being presented by various political entities during the ongoing election season.

In view of the parties' past performance during their respective tenures in power, the farming community considers the manifestos "purposeless" documents meant only for discussion amongst political competitors and for making "false" promises with the electorate.

Ebadur Rehman Khan, a senior member of the Farmers Associates Pakistan (FAP), which represents big landlords, declares the manifestos as each other's copies. "If you mask the logos and some specific terms used by the parties you cannot differentiate which plan has been given by which party. And this makes one believe that the parties are giving future agendas only as a formality with neither being aware of, or clear about, issues."

All three major political parties — the PML-N, PTI and PPP — are talking of value addition in agriculture, improving productivity and reforming the irrigation system by introducing drip irrigation and other water conservation steps.

But despite remaining in power at least in provinces during the last five years none of them worked out the quantity of water each crop needs and how the inputs required for it could be subsidised, or if it's feasible to replace this crop with the other in the specific environment, bemoans Mr Khan.

Chaudhry Nisar, president of the Kisan Board Pakistan, which represents small landholders, regrets that no revolutionary announcement like providing free electricity to agriculture sector, as in India, has been promised by any political party. He points out that livestock, a major sub-sector of the agriculture sector, has been ignored by all political players.

He rejects the Kisan Card Scheme as a waste of public money in the name of farmers for it doesn't benefit the small growers.

Chiding the price support mechanism promised by the PPP, he recalls that sugarcane growers have been the worst hit in Sindh, the province governed by the party during the last 10 years.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where PTI was in power, both sugarcane growers and tobacco growers have been facing exploitation at the hands of the related industries.

He regrets that the PTI didn't bother to fulfil the formality of giving an agriculture sector plan in the 2013 manifesto though the three big names in the sector — most senior FAP leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi, known progressive farmer Jehangir Tareen, and Asad Umar, one of the top personalities in agribusiness — have been and are senior party leaders and part of its decision-making body.

Sindh Abadgar Board Vice President Syed Mahmood Nawaz Shah believes that the agriculture sector has recorded a negative growth in the last five years.

According to him the agrarian economy has badly suffered due to missing political will, and he regrets that the sector has not yet been linked with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He also notes that for almost a decade now the agriculture sector has been a devolved subject, in provincial control and should be managed with proper stakeholder input; yet apparently farmers' suggestions, sought by the government, remain unimplemented.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 9th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1418782/farmers-perspective

Withdrawal of duty exemption on cotton slammed

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 10, 2018

KARACHI: All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) on Monday condemned the withdrawal of customs duty exemption on cotton imports.

The association feared that this development would result in closure of more spinning units, adding that around 140 units have already closed their operations.

Aptma Senior Vice-Chairman Zahid Mazhar in a statement recalled that even in the past customs duty was imposed on cotton imports which resulted in higher imports of yarn at the cost of domestic spinning industry.

Earlier this year, the government exempted cotton imports from 3 per cent customs duty and 3pc additional customs duty but the caretaker government has re-imposed the duties from July 15, he said.

Mr Mazhar feared this would badly hurt the textile industry which is already operating under great stress and would further render millions jobless. Already around one million workers have lost their jobs after the closure of 140 textile mills, he claimed.

He drew the attention of the authorities toward the fact that for the last three consecutive cotton seasons crop size remained much below the target and failed to meet the demand of textile industry.

The Aptma office bearer further rejected the Cotton Commissioner's claim that the country on an average produces 13 million bales annually on the basis of which the government has imposed customs duty and additional customs duty on import of cotton.

He further explained that the country produced 11.58m bales (155kg per bale) in the year 2017-18 and 10.73m bales in 2016-17 whereas in 2015-16 only 9.79m bales were produced.

The area under cotton cultivation has witnessed a decline over the last few years since a high percentage of cotton growers shifted to sugarcane cultivation, he added.

Above all, he said, low yield of cotton farming particularly in Punjab needs to be addressed on urgent basis. He added that the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee has already estimated that about 48pc of the area wherein cotton was to be cultivated in Sindh had been missed due to scarcity and poor management of water.

Published in Dawn, July 10th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1419017/withdrawal-of-duty-exemption-on-cotton-slammed

PAD issues advisory for 'fruit fly' control
RECORDER REPORT | JUL 10TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Cleanliness of orchards is mandatory to control fruit fly which is harmful for Guava, Citrus, Mango and orchards of other fruits. This was warned by the Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) in an advisory issued for orchard farmers here on Monday. A spokesman of the department said due to attack of fruit fly our farmers bear larger economical loss.

He said that the experts stress upon cleanliness of orchards to control fruit fly. The sexual traps for monitoring of fruit fly Methyl Eugenol is used to control male fruit fly whereas Pertinacious Bait is used to control female fruit fly. Hoeing should be done four to five times to eliminate the pupae of fruit fly. By placing the affected fruits for 8 to 9 hours at hard surface the larvae and pupa of fruit fly will be eliminate.

Spokesman also disclosed that the elimination of dropped fruits is necessary because fruit fly reproduces inside the fruits can enter in the soil after growing up and remained in the soil in the shape of pupa. After then by uncovering, come outside the soil and male-female complete mating process. After mating, female fruit fly lays eggs inside the fruits and this process continues. The host plants for fruit fly may not be cultivated near the orchards.

Agriculture Department Punjab has started to produce these beneficial insects in laboratories. The larval parasitoid and pupail parasitoid beneficial insects will be provided free of cost to the farmers to control fruit fly.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180710389490/

Aptma demands withdrawal of duty on cotton import
RECORDER REPORT | JUL 10TH, 2018 | KARACHI

All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) has urged the caretaker government to withdraw custom duty and additional custom duty on the import of cotton.

Zahid Mazhar Senior Vice Chairman Aptma commenting on the issuance of S.R.O. 847(I)/2018 dated 4th July 2018 rescinding the exemption of custom duty, additional custom duty and sales tax @ 3 percent, 1 percent and 5 percent, respectively and re-imposing of custom duty and additional custom duty @ 3 percent and 2 percent on import of cotton with effect from July 15, 2018, said that this is the last nail in the coffin of the ailing textile industry.

He said as per final statistics of cotton arrival released by Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association raw cotton crop has been below the target during the last three years. As on 1st May 2018, only 11.58 million bales of 155 kgs of cotton were produced in the year 2017-18 compared to some 10.73 million bales and 9.79 million bales of 155 kgs of cotton were produced in 2016-17 and 2015-16, respectively.

“This contradicts the claim of Cotton Commissioner that Pakistan produces 13 million bales of cotton annually on the basis of which government has re-imposed custom duty and additional custom duty on the import of cotton. This is just an illusion and nothing else,” he maintained.

He said that firstly the area under cotton cultivation has witnessed a decline over the last few years since a high percentage of cotton growers have shifted to sugar cane. Secondly, the crop of cotton has declined due to the lowest yield of cotton farming achieved specially in Punjab which needs to be addressed on urgent basis.

Moreover, as per Pakistan Central Cotton Committee’s Report this year about 48 percent of the area wherein cotton to be cultivated in Sindh was missed due to scarcity and poor management of water, he added.

He further said that due to imposition of Custom Duty and Sales Tax on import of raw cotton, import of finished cotton yarn has witnessed 500 percent increase in 2016-17 as compared to 2011-12. So this policy instead of supporting manufacturing of cotton yarns in Pakistan is rather helping the yarn manufacturing industry of other countries competing with us, Mazhar added.

He said that due to the high cost of doing business and inadequate supply of raw cotton almost 140 textile mills have already closed their operations resulting in a loss of one million jobs. Further around 75 to 80 mills are on the verge of closure which will add another 0.5 million to the unemployment figure.

He pointed out that due to the closure of about 140 mills and the mills operating under capacity, Pakistan’s textile exports is suffering a loss of more than 4 billion US$ per annum which could have been a vital contribution in addressing the problem of the high trade deficit.

Mazhar said that the cotton crop of the country is far behind the consumption requirement of 15 million bales, for the third consecutive year, as a result, the industry is compelled to import cotton from other countries to meet its annual consumption requirement.

He demanded Prime Minster Nasir-ul-Mulk to save the export oriented textile industry and the economy of Pakistan from complete disaster by immediately withdrawing the imposition of Custom and additional custom duty on import of cotton. He has also demanded the government to make serious efforts in increasing the size of the annual cotton crop to 20 million bales following the example of India. This on the one hand will boost the income of the farmers and on the other hand reduce the input costs of all the segments of the textile economy which will facilitate high growth of exports.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180710389449/

High-yield garlic variety introduced

The Newspaper's Reporter July 12, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani scientists have made a breakthrough by developing the highest-yield garlic variety which is suitable for growing in all provinces of the country.

Keeping in view the present demand and yield gap, garlic variety development programme was launched under the vegetable crop research programme at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC).

The new garlic variety, 'NARC-G1' is the highest garlic variety among all the existing garlic variants in the country. The quality was found to be superior with 26 tonnes yield per hectare.

Scientists of the country's apex agricultural research institution said efforts were being made to make available garlic seeds to farmers across the country ahead of its growing season which starts in October.

It has higher nutrient contents and medicinal value with suitability to pharmaceutical, food processing industry and household level. Moreover, farmers' income will increase due to low expenditure on plant protection and higher yield potential, ultimately reducing the import bill.

The newly-developed variety of garlic was presented at the variety evaluation committee of agricultural research scientists from all over the country at a meeting of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council on Wednesday to determine the potential of this new variant.

Currently, Pakistan is spending precious foreign exchange on the import of garlic due to high demand and low yield potential of existing varieties. Latest estimates showed that the country is importing 34,375 tonnes of garlic from China, India and Chile worth Rs66 million.

The total indigenous production of garlic in the country stands at 70,925 tonnes from an area of 7,882 hectares with an average yield of 8.99 tonnes per hectare. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is the major garlic-producing province with 32,205 tonnes, followed by Punjab (24,143 tonnes), Balochistan (7,880 tonnes) and Sindh (6,557 tonnes).

Published in Dawn, July 12th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1419500/high-yield-garlic-variety-introduced

Rice exports post healthy growth in Fiscal Year 2018

RECORDER REPORT | JUL 12TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Rice exports from Pakistan posted a healthy growth of 28 percent to reach two billion dollar mark in the last fiscal year (FY18). According to Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP), Pakistan has exported total 4.023 million metric tons of rice amounting to $ 2 billion during FY18 compared to some 3.44 million metric tons rice amounting to $ 1.6 billion exported in FY17, showing a significant growth of 27.7 percent in terms values and 17 percent in terms of quantity.

Rafique Suleman Senior Vice Chairman has said that this growth was also become possible due to the recent two tenders of Indonesian authority BULOG for total 200,000 metric tons of Pakistani rice, which fetched a remarkable foreign exchange for our country. Although last year REAP has achieved a milestone but this fiscal year exported may face multiple challenges, he added.

He informed that Kenya has been the largest buyer of Pakistani non basmati rice and Pakistan has exported 439,000 metric tons of rice amounting to $ 171 million during the last fiscal year. "Previously, there was a preferential duty in Kenya for Pakistani rice but Kenya has imposed import duty of 35 percent OR $200 (whichever is higher) of which rice exports to Kenya is declining. He requested Ministry of Commerce, to coordinate Kenyan Government for imposition of preferential duty, so that trade balance between both countries should be stable.

China used to be the 2nd largest buyer of non basmati rice; however exports to china are also on decline. Pakistan has exported 272,000 metric tons of rice during FY18 compared to 589,000 metric tons of rice in FY17. "In the context of CPEC, there are billion dollars investment opportunities and there is need that government of Pakistan must initiate talks with China to include Pakistan in the duty regime like ASEAN countries, so that rice exports to China may again increase", he demanded.

Rafique has also shown serious concerns on the recent reports of shortage of water. He said that other countries like Thailand, Vietnam, China etc. avails 2-3 rice crops in a year and their annual rice production is approximately 100 million tons, whereas our annual rice production is hardly 7 million tons, that is why our rice export is stagnant to some 4 million tons since last many years. He said that after the construction of New Dams, Pakistan can preserve the water like other countries and can also get more than one crop of rice per years which will make revolution in our agricultural industry. "We may generate huge quantity of very low cost electricity which will be useful to cover the shortfall of energy crisis of our country. Every province of the country will be able to get additional millions of acre feet water after the construction of new dams", he added.

He was of the view that it's the need of hour that government of Pakistan should allow rice sowing in more lands, so that we can get more rice to export more rice to get more foreign exchange.

He has shown his concern that there is no Research and Development work has been made in rice trade. "Our Research Departments are really sleeping and Pakistani rice exporters are importing hybrid rice seeds from China on self-made basis to get better yield. We are doing the job, which have to be done by the concerned government departments", he added.

Rafique said that Pakistani rice exporters are putting their extra ordinary efforts for fetching valuable foreign exchange for the growth of economy of our beloved country and making huge investment for installing world's latest rice machinery and most modern technology for value addition in rice. REAP has already requested State Bank of Pakistan for allowing Islamic Financing facility for storage of Agricultural produce.

He informed that REAP is continuously sending trade delegation to various countries for the forceful marketing of Pakistani rice. In this regard, a delegation is planned to visit Brazil, Argentine and Chili.

Rafique emphasized that few years back exports of basmati rice were one million tons, whereas in last fiscal year Pakistan has only exported half a million tons basmati rice. One of the largest buyers of Basmati rice was Iran, but due to the non availability of banking channel, Pakistani rice exporters could not export basmati rice to Iran, he mentioned. He also requested the government for appointment of educated and efficient Commercial Secretaries/ Counselors in Pakistani Missions abroad in important rice buying countries. As due to the negligence of some Commercial sections of our missions, Pakistani rice exporters are facing severe hardships in those countries, he added.

On domestic side, these are also multiple challenges. For example, he said, in some cases, exporters have to call back their rice containers return to Pakistan. Unfortunately, Custom department demands overall tax of some 7.5 percent for release of returned commodity container. This is not justified as exporters have already observed huge losses in terms of ports and shipping charges. He appealed the government to waive this huge tax to rice exporters, as despite the 2nd largest export trade this sector has been neglected.

Rafique Suleman Senior Vice Chairman has said that the $2 billion milestone has been achieved by the consistent efforts of Chaudhary Samee Chairman REAP, Hamdullah Khan Tareen Vice Chairman REAP under the leadership and guidance of Abdul Rahim Janoo Former Chairman REAP.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180712390151/

Growers protest closure of canal

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent July 14, 2018

SUKKUR: Hundreds of growers/peasants belonging to different villages of Jacobabad on Friday took out a rally, held a sit-in and burnt tyres on the National Highway adjacent to Begari canal to protest the closure of Noor Wah (canal) through which they irrigate their agricultural land.

The protesters were from villages Ghulam Sabir Khoso, Qalati Khan Khoso, Abdul Majeed Hanbhi, Sohno Khan Lashari, Sojhro Umrani, Mevo Khoso and other villages.

The angry protesters chanted slogans and blocked the National Highway which caused suspension of vehicular traffic towards Balochistan and Punjab.

Growers/peasants of Noor Wah (canal), including Mir Ghulam Sabir Khoso, Lashkar Khan Jamali, Murad Ali Jakhrani, Ghulam Rasool Lashari, Atta Khan Lahar, Mohammad Ali Lashari and others while talking to the media complained that the Begari canal was full of water, however "corrupt" officials of the irrigation department were not releasing water in Noor Wah.

They said that due to non-release of water in Noor Wah by officials of the irrigation department, the agricultural land on several lakh acres had become barren.

They said that they had visited the irrigation department offices several times, but the officials were not ready to listen to them.

They alleged that the “corrupt” officials of the irrigation department after accepting bribe were releasing water towards Garhi Khero and other areas and they strongly condemned this act.

They said that the time of sowing rice paddy was passing speedily but due to non-availability of water in Noor Wah (canal) they could not sow the rice paddy crop so far.

They said that some landlords sowed paddy crop through underground water, but such crops had dried and burnt.

They said that they fully depend upon the earning of rice paddy crop.

They said that the growers irrigating their agricultural land from other canals had sowed the paddy crop, but farmers of Noor Wah were deprived of sowing and nobody was there to extend them help.

They said that district administration and elected public representatives neither took notice of the problems of the growers, nor made efforts for release of water in Noor Wah.

They warned that they would widen their protest, if water was not immediately released in Noor Wah.

Later, engineer of irrigation department Dur Mohammad Behalkani reached the spot of the protest. He assured the protesters of release of water in the canal.

After the assurance, the protest and sit-in was ended and protesters dispersed peacefully.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1419851/growers-protest-closure-of-canal

Punjab government in collaboration with WB planning drip irrigation
RECORDER REPORT | JUN 16TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The Punjab Government in collaboration with the World Bank is encouraging drip irrigation in the province under on-going Punjab Irrigated-Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (PIPIP) to overcome scarcity of water.

Under this project, the provincial agriculture department is installing drip & sprinkler irrigation on subsidy basis in the fields of farmers. Drip irrigation system is suitable for crop cultivation when irrigation water or rainwater is not enough for conventional farming. This technology, so far, has been adopted by many farmers across Punjab owing to acute shortage of river water and limited rains.

A spokesman of the department disclosed here on Friday that keeping in view its high efficiency in conserving water, increasing per acre yield and reducing cost of cultivation, there is a need to create awareness among farmers about the drip irrigation system. With this technology, the farmers can save 60 percent electricity and diesel costs augmenting per acre yield by 100 percent.

The Government is helping farmers adopt this system by providing drip irrigation equipment at subsidized rates and providing 60 percent subsidy on installation of Drip irrigation system. There is 40 percent to 50 percent saving of fertilizer if drip irrigation system is used. Currently, the system is used for small scale cultivation e.g., 12.5 acre of land.

However, other techniques and methods are underway to extend the program for large scale cultivation. Drip irrigation technology is being provided to farmers by government on subsidized cost with financial assistance from the World Bank.

Spokesman further said that it is need of time to move towards modern resource conservation technologies such as drip irrigation to cope with the situation of water scarcity in upcoming years.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180616382474/

Cotton farmers asked to consult department against pests' attack

RECORDER REPORT | JUL 15TH, 2018 | KARACHI

The Met Office (MO) on Saturday asked the farmers to consult the agriculture department to safeguard standing cotton crop against the pests' onslaught. It said that the farmers should follow the advisories to protect cotton from pests' attack that leaves the crop damaged. It also warned the growers of the onset of monsoon season with rains to fall in the upcountry, saying that weather system is now building up.

Karachi is expected to witness a drizzly weather on Sunday and Monday with a maximum temperature ranging between 33 degrees Celsius and 35 degrees Celsius and 80 percent humidity. A scorching and humid weather is expected on Sunday in the most parts of the country with an isolated rain-thundershower and gusty winds in Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sarghodha, Malakand, Hazara, Peshawar, Mardan, Bannu, DI Khan, Zhob and Kalat Divisions, Islamabad and Kashmir.

Most parts of the country simmered during the last 24 hours but isolated rain-thundershower with gusty winds struck Gujranwala, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sarghodha, Peshawar, Zhob and Kalat Divisions, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir.

Lahore received 29mm of rainfall at Airport and PBO 9mm, Sialkot City 12mm, Airport 11mm, Sarghodha 8mm, Risalpur and Zhob 4mm, each, Rawalakot and Bagrote 3mm, each, Kamra and Kalat and Gujranwala 2mm, each. Maximum temperature of 45 degrees Celsius was recorded in Dalbandin and Chillas, each, Pattan, Dadu and Sibbi 44C°, each. "Seasonal Low lies over North Balochistan with its trough extending south eastward. Weak monsoon currents are penetrating central and eastern parts of the country," the Met said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180715390981/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 2ND TO JULY 8TH 2018
Rice exports hit the $2bn mark again

Mohiuddin Aazim Updated July 02, 2018

THE country recorded around $2 billion worth of rice exports in the fiscal year ending in June after remaining below this level for two years, say senior officials of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

Rice exports had reached $2bn for the first time in fiscal year 2015. Officials of TDAP claim that the country has achieved the target of 4 million tonnes and export earnings of $2bn. But official statistics of exports for the outgoing fiscal year would be out in the third week of July.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Pakistan exported 3.84m tonnes of both basmati and non-basmati rice for $1.89bn from July 2017 to May 2018. Historically, rice exports remain high in volumes in the second half of our fiscal year, ie from January to June, due to the fact that the rice marketing year begins from October.

This trend remained visible in fiscal year 2017-18, too. Export earnings increased accordingly in dollar terms but they meant more for exporters in terms of local currency due to the 10 per cent depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar.

The rupee came down from 110.42 a dollar on Dec 30, 2017 to 121.50 on June 26, 2018 in the interbank market as Pakistan failed to fix its massive current account deficit.

“Unless share of basmati in overall rice export volumes is increased to 20-25pc in coming years, growth in rice exports earnings might remain just moderate despite all aggressive marketing,” fears a top official of TDAP

TDAP officials say that the rupee depreciation and the State Bank of Pakistan’s (SBP) stricter vigil on trade dollar movements also have led to the faster realisation of export proceeds of all items including rice.

They offer this argument to support the claim that rice exports hit $2bn a few days before the end of June from $1.89bn at the end of May, showing a build up of $110m in less than a month. After hitting $2bn in FY15, rice exports had fallen to $1.86bn in FY16 and then to $1.61bn in FY17.

This was due to insufficient exports of high-priced basmati varieties, low average per tonne export price and an inability of the exporters to sustain market share in some key export markets including China, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

High domestic prices of rice during these two years amid tough competition in the international market and consequent decline in export margins had also dampened the spirit of our exporters, especially those engaged in bulk shipments of unpackaged rice.

But in FY18, things improved on almost all fronts. Out of the top 20 export markets, shipments to 14 of them during ten months of FY18 recorded a rising trend. In some cases export earnings more than doubled.

Exports to half a dozen of them, however, showed a declining trend, according to SBP figures. A real achievement would be exports rising beyond $2bn at a double digit rate for years to come, officials of TDAP insist.

Exporters say that for that to happen, milled rice production must also grow to continue to create enough export surplus. Pakistan's milled rice output has been growing but remains below 8m tonnes, a level that the exporters think is crucial given a rising trend in local consumption of rice.

Water shortages, increasing domestic demand for export-crucial basmati varieties, and imports of an inferior quality hybrid paddy seeds amid a lack of large-scale initiatives to promote water-efficient rice cultivation are some key impediments to sustaining growth in exports.

During the outgoing fiscal year, exporters not only fetched huge orders from a number of countries, including even the rice-exporting Indonesia, but also managed to sell rice at a higher value per tonne taking advantage of stable market prices and focusing on exports of branded rice in consumer packaging.

Average per-tonne export price of basmati rice in 11 months of FY18 rose to around $1,040, up from below $950 a year ago, officials say, adding that average export value of non-Basmati varieties also rose to $417 per tonne from $377 per tonne.

This is partially attributable to a rise in international prices fuelled by a higher demand, but also to the fact that several Pakistani rice companies, including Matco Foods, invested in the processing and packaging of rice to fetch high export revenue, market watchers add.

Exporters and officials agree that for sustaining growth in export earnings of rice, increasing the share of higher-priced basmati varieties is a must. Currently, this share is just 12pc and has historically ranged between 10 -15pc.

"Unless share of basmati in overall rice export volumes is increased to 20-25pc in coming years, growth in rice exports earnings might remain just moderate despite all aggressive marketing," fears a top official of TDAP. That is where investment in rice research counts.

But as local consumption of premium rice has also been rising steadily, the pace of growth in production needs to be accelerated further. Officials say that this will not be possible without greater investment in research and collaboration with international rice research agencies.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 2nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1417344/rice-exports-hit-the-2bn-mark-again

'Blue Revolution' to enhance fisheries production

Amin Ahmed Updated July 02, 2018

AS the country's fisheries face challenges and remain below their economic potential, a "Blue Revolution" has been proposed to increase fisheries' production, and improve value-addition to drive both domestic and export-oriented growth.

"The time is right for Pakistan to launch the revolution" suggests the World Bank, stating that such "blue growth" prioritises the sustainable management of natural aquatic resources in the delivery of economic and social benefits.

The approach also aims to help workers in fisheries, aquaculture, and along the seafood value chain to act not only as resource users but to play an active role in managing natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Urgent action to prevent the present damaging levels of overfishing could preserve the productivity of marine resources for future generations. Adoption of a national policy framework could help coordinate development, ensuring that tradeoffs are minimised.

According to the World Bank, the "National Policy and Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in Pakistan" drafted during Musharraf's era remains largely relevant, though it was not adopted at the time due to political transition.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations says that marine fishing is a significant economic activity off the coasts of Sindh and Balochistan. A marine capture fishery comprises a fleet of around 3,600 bottom trawlers from Sindh, 5,550 gillnetters working both the Sindh and Balochistan waters, and a further 20,000 smaller vessels fishing coastal waters, especially the rich Indus Delta and creek area.

World Bank warned that Pakistan's major marine fisheries are either fully or overly exploited

Fisheries currently contribute only 0.4 per cent to the GDP, and the sector's approximately $350 million of exports appears to be at a standstill. Comparisons to other countries in the region suggest that Pakistan is failing to fully realise the potential of its capture.

The Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-18 estimated that during the first eight months of fiscal year 2017-18, total marine and inland fish production was estimated at 482,000 metric tonnes, out of which 338,000 metric tonnes was from marine waters and the remaining catch came from inland waters.

Whereas the fish production for the same period of fiscal year 2016-17 was estimated to be 477,000 metric tonnes in which 332,000 metric tonnes was from marine and the remaining was produced by inland fishery sector.

During eight months of 2017-18, a total of 108,262 metric tonnes of fish and fishery products were exported. Pakistan's major buyers are China, Thailand, Malaysia, Middle East, Sri Lanka and Japan.

Pakistan earned $264m, while the export for 2016-17 of fish and fishery products was 89,032 metric tonnes which earned $239m. The export of fish and fishery products has increased by 21.6pc in quantity and 10.5pc in value during 2017-18.

The World Bank report "Revitalising Pakistan's Fisheries" says that the European Union countries, Japan, and the United States are the world's biggest export markets for seafood, yet at present, they account for less than 3pc of Pakistan's fisheries export earnings (about $9.3m annually).

Pakistan's fisheries could capture a bigger percentage of these markets. However, to meet EU and US quality standards, processing plants and supply chain management of seafood will need to improve further.

As far as marine capture fisheries are concerned, the World Bank report warned that Pakistan's major marine fisheries are either fully or overexploited. The major commercial fish stocks face considerable overfishing, and in some instances, are already depleted.

Aquaculture is largely concentrated in Punjab, Sindh, and to a lesser extent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan's marine fisheries are diverse, with almost 250 demersal fish species, 50 small pelagic fish species, 15 medium-sized pelagic species, and 20 large pelagic fish species.

Much of the fish landed is intended for domestic consumption, which is highest in coastal towns and cities that have landing sites.The Indus River Delta and its associated ecosystems make the coast of Sindh the most productive region of Pakistan's marine fisheries.

Pakistan now has more than 29,000 marine fishing vessels in total. Pakistan's most valuable demersal fisheries resources have been declining in overall abundance since at least 1984, in some cases by 90pc or more.

In addition, although landings of these species continue, they are of relatively low value, with a very large portion suitable only for fishmeal production. A Fisheries Development Board was recently established to trial new aquaculture approaches in Pakistan. The board works in partnership with the private sector to support the development and expansion of aquaculture by determining locally-appropriate and cost-effective production methods.

Given low per capita consumption of fish at home, exports are an important component of Pakistan's fisheries sector. The most important export product categories are frozen fish excluding fish fillets, which account for 58pc of export value.

Shrimp make up a further 23pc. Exports may increase in the next few years due to the establishment of a new land trading route from Gwadar to Guangdong, China.

Imports are a relatively small but growing component of the Pakistan fisheries sector. The report suggests that Pakistan needs a review of fisheries legislation to inform the legislative and regulatory changes necessary to ensure sustainability.

At present, the fisheries industry is not itself the driving force within the fisheries value chain. Public-sector organisations need to move from being "doers" with a central role in the industry, to facilitators helping modernise a demand-led food system.

Fisheries and aquaculture in Pakistan face specific impacts from climate change. Increased intrusion of saline water in the Indus Delta is already harming fish breeding grounds.

Higher temperatures are reducing river flows, further damaging habitat quality in the delta.

Projected sea level rise and increased cyclonic activity due to higher sea surface temperatures threaten mangrove areas, which are crucial to wild shrimp breeding, one of Pakistan's largest export fisheries.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 2nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1417342/blue-revolution-to-enhance-fisheries-production

Punjab agriculture dept launches e-procurement system

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated July 04, 2018

LAHORE: The agriculture department launched its e-procurement system here on Tuesday for, what the officials say, ensuring 100pc compliance with Punjab Procurement Regularity Authority (PPRA) rules, making monitoring and evaluation more effective while drastically cutting the time required for the procedure.

Sheikh Afzaal Raza, the department's procurement adviser who developed the Procurement Management Information System (PMIS), says the capacity gaps and poor understanding of the PPRA rules have been leading to non-compliance, audit objections and allegations of misappropriation on the part of procuring entities. The PMIS dashboard, templates and controlled data flow would eliminate these complaints and improve monitoring and evaluation of the procurement process, he adds, claiming the user-friendly information and communications technology tool will cut at least 60 work hours consumed in the procurement documentation procedure to less than 30 minutes.

Agriculture Secretary Wasif Khurshid hopes the PMIS will improve financial planning, performance, fairness, transparency, accountability and service delivery in public procurement, making it fully compliant with provincial rules and reducing procurement cycle time and associated administrative costs.

Published in Dawn, July 4th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1417761/punjab-agriculture-dept-launches-e-procurement-system

Pakistan June inflation accelerates on rising food costs
Reuters Staff

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) – Pakistan's annual inflation rate in June spiked to 5.21 percent from 4.19 percent in May – the biggest increase in nearly four years, the Bureau of Statistics said on Wednesday.

The acceleration in price growth from May was the fastest since October 2014, the statistics bureau said.

On a month-on-month basis, the inflation rate was 0.57 percent in June, the bureau said.

Food items such as tomatoes, bananas, potatoes, and onions, as well as bus fares and children's shoes were the main reason behind the increase in month-on-month prices.

Reporting by Saad Sayeed; Editing by Jacqueline Wong

https://in.reuters.com/article/pakistan-economy-inflation/pakistan-june-inflation-accelerates-on-rising-food-costs-idINKBN1JU0ZZ

Duty exemption on cotton import withdrawn

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 06, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue has withdrawn duty exemption on import of cotton.

A notification SRO847 issued on Thursday stated the exemption facility will be ineffective from July 15, 2018.

Since Jan 8, the government has exempted 5pc sales tax and 4pc customs duty on import of cotton through a notification SRO48 of 2018.

The exemption was withdrawn to give benefit to local growers.

Published in Dawn, July 6th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1418290/duty-exemption-on-cotton-import-withdrawn

Cotton prices rise sharply due to tight supply

RECORDER REPORT | JUL 6TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Due to delay and interruption caused by the recent rains, arrivals of new crop (August 2018/July 2019) in Pakistan slowed down over the past week or ten days. Accordingly, cotton prices in the ready market rose sharply by Rs 400 per maund (37.32 Kgs) this week.

Since the beginning of this week, the Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) increased the ex-gin price of grade three cotton by Rs 100 per maund (37.32 Kgs) daily since the past four days consecutively. Even the global cotton markets such as China, India and America have been generally firm recently, though some pressure is reported in American sale due to the tighter dollar.

The outgoing cotton crop in Pakistan (August 2017/July 2018) has now been sold out almost completely with barely 30,000 or 35000 bales left. All attention of the spinners is diverted to the forthcoming crop (August 2018/July 2019).

The seed cotton (Kapas/Phutti) from the new crop (2018/2019) in Sindh is said to be selling at Rs 3800 to Rs 4100 per 40 Kgs, while in the Punjab it is reportedly selling from Rs 3500 to Rs 4100 per 40 Kilogrammes. Lint prices from Sindh are said to be ranging from Rs 8150 to Rs 8200 per maund (37.32 Kgs), while in the Punjab the lint prices were ranging from Rs 8200 to Rs 8250 per maund in a tight market.

There were reports in the market that some cotton crop (2018/2019) from Sanghar and its lower areas were said to less by 400,000 to 500,000 bales from the general expected output of (2) million bales. Extra heat in this area also hit the prospects of a normal output.

However, cotton output in Punjab should be close to normal. Yarn and textile prices are generally doing well. In ready sales reported on Thursday, 200 bales from Tando Adam in Sindh are said to have been sold at Rs 8250 per maund (37.32 Kgs), while 200 bales from Chichawatni in the Punjab reportedly sold at Rs 8300 per maund in a tight market.

On the global economic and financial front, the latest reports indicate that the trade war has not only escalated between America and China, it has become very serious. On the forefront of this trade war, reports indicate that the major warriors in this trade war, normally America and China, are poised to slam new and additional tariffs on each other to the tune of dollars 34 billion against exports from the two respective countries this weekend. Such developments between the economic giants have already flung global trade in jeopardy.

The American camp and its stalwarts under the leadership of President Trump deem the import tariffs as being absolutely necessary to force the Chinese into withdrawing their illegal practices including theft and stealing of American technology.

It may be noted that the trade war has gone viral and has already started to unsettle economies as far as India, South Africa as well as American neighbours like Mexico and Canada. These developments have already hurt the various markets around the world adversely as fears of a global recession continue to rock and roil the global economic edifice which has been carefully put together over the past seven decades or more.

At current reckoning, the rising trade tensions between the two leading antagonists, viz America and China, trade tensions are growing ferociously, not only between the leading contenders, namely America and China, the trade war has already sucked in other countries which are running relatively smaller economies.

In this vicious confrontation between the economic giants America and China, other relatively smaller or secondary entities like the European union and India, Australia, South Korea, Mexico, Argentina, south Africa, Brazil are Russia are likely to be trampled in the not too distant future. With the global trade war expanding exponentially, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) believes that the global economic growth is under threat as the world's super powers "trade tit-for-tat trade sanctions".

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180706388011/

'Data of 8.7m farmers has been computerised'
By APP

Published: July 6, 2018

LAHORE: The provincial livestock and dairy development department has computerised the data of 8.7 million cattle farmers in the province.

This was stated by the Minister Livestock and Dairy Development Provincial Minister Mian Nauman Kabeer while presiding over a departmental meeting.

The department has also extended technical assistance to other provinces as well as countries such as Australia, Japan and South Korea, he added.

During the meeting, the minister was briefed that the livestock centres comprises of 58.3% of the agricultural centre. Further, farmers in more than 26,000 villages across the province are provided awareness and information about the different types of diseases that animals carry.

Deserving females: Cattle distributed among women

The department has also taught farmers the best way to increase milk yield, which has help to make them more independent.

In addition to this, 353 mobile dispensaries, four veterinary laboratories and nine training schools are providing farmers with the necessary assistance.

The department has also established a round-the-clock helpline in order to obtain necessary information and to offer guidance to farmers.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 6th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1750742/1-data-8-7m-farmers-computerised/

Workshop on 'Agro-ecological zones' held at SAU

RECORDER REPORT

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization under the project of Disaster Resilience in Pakistan (BDRP) organized five-day training programme for the demarcation of Agro-Ecological Zones of Sindh.

The training was held at Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam where the experts, researchers, academia, climate change experts, agronomics, soil scientists and engineers and experts of various Geo Information System/Remote Sensing Experts highlighted the various climate change and cropping patterns to cope the challenges of the food security and building disaster resilience area in Sindh.

While speaking on the occasion Prof Dr Mujeebuddin Memon, Vice Chancellor, SAU Tandojam urged the scientists and experts to focus their research into action for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for climate smart agriculture.

He appreciated the efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization for supporting and demarcation of the Agro-Ecological Zones of Sindh. Faheem Ahmed, Project Coordinator, FAO highlighted that many disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures have been piloted in Pakistan but not been assessed or catalogued based on agroecological zone or hazard zone which is important.

Prof Dr Muhammad Ismail Kumbhar, Director UA & FA appreciated the efforts of the FAO or implementing the building disaster resilience in Pakistan which will be helpful for mapping the soil, land and water along with crop yield data from various regions of Sindh province.

He added that these Agro-Ecological zones would be helpful to the improve the existing land use, water, selection of the crop etc by increasing agriculture production ultimately this will be helpful for the farming community for sowing their crops at their field.

Abdul Qadeeer M&E specialist FAO, Dr Muhammad Amin, Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpinding, Dr Naveed, Agriculture University, Faisalabad, Jameela Nawaz, DRR, Specialist , Mumtaz Mangi and others also spoke on the occasion.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/07/08/17-page/726654-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 25TH TO JULY 1ST 2018
Unchecked GM seed imports could hurt rice exports
Ahmad Fraz Khan Updated June 25, 2018

AS officials and traders rejoice in the rice crop's success, rice production and its exports —which stand second only to cotton exports — are already in jeopardy.

Reports of genetically modified rice seed invading the market, and thus affecting production, have generated fears in the industry regarding exports.

According to the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan's (REAP) data, the country now produces 7.4 million tonnes of rice — a record unto itself. Production swelled by 8.7 per cent from 6.8m tonnes last year.

The Department of Plant Protection detained the consignments of around 1,800 tonnes of hybrid rice seed suspecting them to be genetically modified

As per the economic survey of 2017-18, the area cultivated under rice crop increased by 6.4pc from 6.72m acres in 2016-17 to 7.14m acres this year. Therefore, exports registered a 29pc increase in the first three quarters (July-March) of the current fiscal as compared to the corresponding period last year.

The income from exports grew from $1.17 billion to $1.49bn this year. This success has a context. The Ministry of Food Security and Research took an initiative in 2015 for improving yield and trade surpluses; they involved the Chinese government and companies in rice production and started importing a better quality hybrid rice seed.

For the next two years, both sides were sending and receiving a number of delegations, with Chinese and Pakistani rice experts frequenting each others' fields and markets. This resulted in producing better varieties of hybrid seeds, with the addition to yield outpacing the increase in area under production.

The average yield has jumped from 825 kilogramme per acre in 2010-11 to over 1,000kg/acre this year. These statistics have generated optimism and rightly so. However, this success came after a massive trade in imported seeds from China, ranging from 7,000 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes.

Pakistan, with few interventions at its ports and in the distribution network, was never expected to keep the supply chain fully clean. During random sample checking at the port early this year, some consignments from China were found to be carrying genetically modified (GM) rice seed and were detained.

The Department of Plant Protection (DPP), which checks for quality and purity, detained the consignments of around 1,800 tonnes of hybrid seed and made them undergo the testing process.

The matter was complicated further when one laboratory in Karachi tested the consignment positive for genetic modification, but another lab in Faisalabad contradicted it. Yet another official lab tested it positive. As the issue snowballed, the Chinese embassy and the Punjab government stepped in.

In a letter to the federal government in April this year, Punjab informed the food ministry that despite a policy of zero tolerance towards import and export of GM rice, consignments with such content are reported every now and then.

REAP has also been reporting rejections of export consignments due to the same reason. It has thus requested to strengthen the inspection process by involving nationally reputed laboratories.

In a similar letter, the Chinese government, which had duly cleared the consignments, also wrote to the food ministry claiming that Pakistan imports 7,000 to 10,000 tonnes of hybrid rice seed from China every year.

China neither allows production nor export of GM rice seed to any of its companies. Citing discrepancies in the testing results, it asked the ministry to intervene and test the consignment in the presence of experts from both sides to resolve the matter.

Beyond this diplomatic row, the industry here needs to be more cautious as its stakes in the crop are even higher now given the recent success of the crop grown with the help of the Chinese.

According to the traders of the seed, with the massive expansion in the seed business, some trading houses, which have neither research nor testing facilities, got involved in the business on either side.

GM rice seed will keep infiltrating the Pakistani market until and unless both sides set up a registration process and a monitoring system to keep the supply chain clean. The food ministry on its part needs to understand that its policy initiative, for which it is claiming credit, could become a national liability if it does not move quickly to plug these holes.

If consignments keep getting stopped or rejected for such reasons, the entire initiative will fizzle out and additional production will remain stuck in the country, leading to economic chaos, as has happened with wheat.

The reports of GM content, which are sporadic so far, should not be allowed to gain any momentum otherwise Pakistan would quickly lose foreign markets, which have no tolerance for such commodities.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, June 25th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1415842/unchecked-gm-seed-imports-could-hurt-rice-exports

‘Agriculture research playing vital role in ensuring food security’
RECORDER REPORT | JUN 26TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Punjab Secretary Agriculture Dr Wasif Khurshid said that agricultural research is playing an important role in ensuring food security of the country. Wasif appreciating work speed and enthusiasm/dedication of agricultural scientists towards completion of their tasks claimed that pro-farmer policies of the government resulted in 3.81 percent growth rate during this year. Similarly, crop sector witnessed 9 percent increase in growth this year.

He added that the department is well aware of issues afflicting the agriculture sector and prosperity of farmers was linked with improved agriculture. Agriculture department is promoting the cultivation of new profitable crops according to climate change, and supports every step for the welfare of farmers, which can increase the income of farmers. Farmers can earn more profits in less time by cultivation of Morinaga and it can also be used as edible oil.

Secretary Agriculture has also directed researchers and experts that to develop varieties that can yield maximum and able to face climatic conditions of agro-ecological zones. Changing climate patterns is now affecting people farming in all ecosystems. Climate smart initiatives can produce tangible benefits to rural communities and the land they depend on, making it more resilient when faced with climate swings. Promising technologies to combat this unpredictable situation include crop varieties adapted to perform well under climate change factors, technology tools, devices for farmers and systems for delivering targeted timing and doses of fertilizer and irrigation.

To mitigate the climate effects, agricultural scientists should focus on areas according to new climate zones. Secretary Agriculture also appreciated field staff of extension workers for helping farmers at their door step. He says that department of the top priority is to serve farming community with heart and soul.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180626384867/

USAID Pakistan launches agriculture technology transfer activity

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 27TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

USAID Pakistan on Tuesday launched “Agricultural Technology Transfer Activity” to boost agriculture productivity through introduction of modern technologies in Pakistan. The four-year project would cost $8.2 million and contribute towards an improved economic status of focus communities by increasing their income. It would improve small farmers' access to markets and their overall development.

The project will train dealers' networks and other demand-side partners through technical assistance to improve their marketing and management practices. The project's activities aim to increase productivity, build resilience to climate change and reduce post-harvest losses. At the end of the project implementation period, the expectation is to enhance the capacity of agricultural technology related businesses to commercialize technologies, modernize management practices while adopting sustainable practices and also to increase the overall adoption of agricultural technologies by small farmers.

The project was launched through collaboration of the USAID and the Ministry of National Foods Security and Research.

Partnering with roughly 30 of the largest private agriculture technology business, the four-year initiative will introduce advanced technologies to an estimated 122,500 farmers, whose agricultural sales are projected to reach $8.58 million.

"This project will help Pakistani farmers realize the full potential of their land and labor," said Mission Director USAID Jerry Bisson.

"Partnership with key private sector players will help connect farmers to one another, new techniques, timely weather data and the supply-chain network – all of which enhance productivity, build resilience to climate change and reduce post-harvest losses.

The technologies of the program which will be introduced to the horticulture industry include integrated pest management, controlled production, improved genetics and post-harvest handling and packaging. The livestock and daily sectors will benefit from nutrition and breed improvement, including artificial insemination and embryo transplants that will offer rapid improvement in livestock genetics.

"Our partnership with the USAID has lasted for decades, but with interventions such as these, the pace of development will increase multifold." We hope to support these initiatives over the project lifespan and beyond," he maintained.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief of party of the project said that the introduction and transfer of technology would help the country enhance productivity through best utilization of resources. The agriculture sector in Pakistan was badly affected due to lack of awareness about latest technologies. The project would help commercialize the use of technology in agriculture sector through coordination between farmers and technology companies. Purpose of the project is to reach about 175,000 stakeholders, he added. Initially the project would be initiated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab and later it would be expanded to Balochistan and Sindh.

Another feature of the project is that it focused on women entrepreneur particularly related to agriculture sector.

"We want to improve investment in private sector through creation of linkages between demand and supply side." Under this project about 500 tools, technologies and practices will be commercialized and 225,000 individuals will receive awareness about improved agriculture technologies. The project will also help 24,500 women stakeholders to benefit from all these activities.

Chairman Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), Dr Yusaf Zafar and officials of Pakistani Agriculture department also addressed the event.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180627385150/

Punjab Food Fortification Strategy 2018 launched

ZAHID BAIG | JUN 28TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The Punjab Food Department, the National Fortification Alliance (NFA) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) launched the Punjab Food Fortification Strategy 2018 on Wednesday to address high rate of micronutrient deficiencies in Punjab, Pakistan's largest province.

Australian government extended the financial support for the strategy formulation and launch. In Punjab, more than 39 percent of children under age five are stunted, 30 percent are underweight, and 14 percent are wasted, according to the National Nutrition Survey 2011. The survey also indicates a high rate of micronutrient deficiencies among children, including anaemia 60%; iron 49%; zinc 38%; vitamin A 51%; and vitamin D 67% – numbers that are internationally categorized as at emergency levels.

"Australia is supporting efforts to improve nutrition in Pakistan. We have committed an additional AUD11 million to WFP to 2020 for nutrition and humanitarian activities, on top of AUD6 million previously committed. Our partnership with WFP takes a policy and evidence-driven approach to improving nutrition programs in Pakistan," said Brek Batley, Deputy Head of Mission, Australian High Commission said.

Food fortification is an established and economical way to reduce micronutrient deficiencies. Fortifying staple foods such as wheat flour, edible oil, ghee and salt with micronutrients is one of the leading ways to overcome deficiencies and improve the nutritional status of a population.

The Government of Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination (MNHSRC), the provincial governments and WFP are working together to reduce micronutrient deficiencies through the establishment of National and Provincial Fortification Alliances.

Food fortification efforts require strong collaboration between the public and private sectors as well as a regulatory environment where appropriate government legislation is enacted, allowing for the work of the Fortification Alliances to be effectively monitored and enforced.

Sardar Tanvir Ilyas, Minister of Planning and Development, Agriculture and Food, Government of the Punjab, and honourable chief guest, expressed appreciation for the efforts of all key stakeholders, reiterating that addressing the problem of malnutrition is and will remain at the top of the province's political agenda.

Shaukat Ali, Secretary of the Punjab Food Department, acknowledged the efforts and technical support of the key stakeholders in completing the strategy document. He also expressed gratitude to the Australian High Commission for its financial and technical support.

Dr Baseer Achakzai, Secretary for the National Fortification Alliance, said that the strategy provides an outline for developing detailed plans to implement comprehensive fortification initiatives. He stated that staple foods must be fortified with key micronutrients for adequate health and proper growth of the population.

“There is a need to enhance availability and access to adequate and balanced diets which meet the nutrition requirement of all members of society with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and new mothers, children, adolescents, and the elderly,” noted Katrien Ghoos, WFP Acting Country Director.

“We are grateful to the Australian Government for its strategic support in finalizing the national fortification strategy, including the establishment of fortification alliances in all the provinces, the successful tax exemption on premixed imports, the harmonization of wheat and oil fortification standards and the Punjab legislation on mandatory fortification, just to mention a few,” Ghoos said.

The Pakistan National Fortification Strategy was launched in March 2017 by the NFA and MNHSRC with the support of WFP and the Australian Government. The objective of the strategy was to create a national framework for sustained wheat flour, oil/ghee and salt fortification programmes implemented by private and public sectors.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180628385447/

Monsoon rains to have positive impact on Kharif crops: ministry

FAZAL SHER | JUL 1ST, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The ongoing monsoon rains would have a positive impact over Kharif crops production including sugarcane, rice and cotton cultivated over large areas of the country. A senior official of Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNS&R) told Business Recorder that the ongoing rains would not only have a positive impact on production of major Kharif crops, including rice, sugarcane, and maize as these crops require more water but also help to improve falling water level in reservoirs.

He further said that the current rains would also have a positive impact on paddy output but if rains continue for a long time it would have a negative impact on the crop.

Dr Khalid Abudullah of MNS&R while talking to Business Recorder concurred and said that current rains would have a positive impact on both high delta Kharif crops including sugarcane, rice and maize and low delta Kharif crops notably cotton. But he pointed out that if rains continue for long or the country receives normal rainfall it would have a negative impact on the crops as rain causes various diseases in cotton crop. The cultivation of cotton has almost been completed while rice is still continuing, he said. The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) for Kharif season 2018-19 had fixed sugarcane production target for year 2018-19 at 68.157 million tons from an area of 1.161 million hectares; and fixed paddy production target at 7 million tons from an area of 2.8 million hectares of land. The FCA had fixed cotton production target for year 2018-19 at 14.370 million bales from an area of 2.955 million hectares.

Ghulam Rasool Director General (DG) Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) stated that the monsoon is expected to be more active in the first half – from July till mid august than during the second half. “Significant rains are expected in the first half of the monsoon and it will improve water level in reservoirs”, he said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/07/20180701386572/

August 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 27TH TO September 2TH 2018

COMMERCIAL FARMERS CONSUME MAJOR CHUNK OF ANIMAL SALES

Ahmad Fraz Khan Updated August 27, 2018

EIDUL Azha provides a natural stimulus to livestock trade in the country, which not only results in massive cash transfers from the urban to the rural economy every year, but also generates huge economic activity in the cities.

Transporters, middlemen, fodder sellers and slaughterers make their share of profits in the run up to, and during, the three-day ritual. The quantum of trade during this one month is so colossal that it helps sustain growth of the sector the whole year round.

The experts think that it was because of this trade that the sector’s annual growth touched a healthy rate of 3.76 per cent this year and livestock’s share in the agriculture economy grew to 58.92pc.

Historically, this trade volume has been undocumented in the country. However, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) made an assessment of the trade last year and maintained that the event generated $3.5 billion in 2016 — including $2.8bn in livestock trade and $700 million in allied activities such as shopping and transportation.

The role of this massive cash transfer is restricted to poor farmers’ temporary and basic poverty alleviation rather than any permanent change in their economic status

According to the FPCCI, 35pc of households sacrificed around eight million animals that year, including four million goats, 2.7m cows, 800,000 lambs and 30,000 camels. Using a conservative average price of Rs60,000 per cow, Rs20,000 per goat or lamb and Rs80,000 per camel, the total cost of animals comes up to $2.8bn.

Furthermore, transporting animals from villages to city markets and to individual houses cost $47m, whereas fodder collectively cost $35m. These figures subsequently became the basis of the first ever study by the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS): “Study of Economic Activity in Lahore Livestock Market during Eidul Azha in 2016.”

The study produced some beneficial empirical data when it maintained that markets were a combination of farmers—36.3pc— and middlemen—63.5pc. Overall sales remained 59.4pc— 29,077 animals were sold out of 48,876 brought to the market. Around 57pc of the people preferred small animals while 34.4pc preferred large ones.

Goats formed 43pc of the sale and cows 34pc, outnumbering all other options such as sheep, buffaloes and camels. A major shift was witnessed towards large animals because of financial reasons.

The role of this massive transfer, according to experts, is, by and large, restricted to temporary and basic poverty alleviation rather than any permanent change in the economic status of farmers in the countryside. The impact of money is lost because of two reasons: pattern of ownership of livestock and the sheer number of farmers involved.

“Over 88pc of livestock farmers are smaller and landless — raising only two, three animals,” says Talat Naseer Pasha, vice chancellor of UVAS and the guardian of the study.

The financial benefit of the trade depends on their share of the market, which remains negligible on an individual level. But they certainly get a premium price during Eid as compared to sales during any other time of the year.

There is another segment within those farmers called middle-class farmers, who are better aware, raise better stock and also bring their animals themselves to the market, bypassing the middleman. They make good money and their lives improve in the process. However, they are certainly smaller in number if not volumes, Mr Pasha maintains.

“Though the money transfer sounds colossal, but the spread is so far and wide that it fails to make any visible impact in rural lives,” says Abad Khan, a farmer from the Central Punjab region. After all, more than eight million families involved in livestock rearing lay claims over the money.

It is also because a major portion of the income goes into reinvestment, which starts within a month of the sale of animals. The earlier they buy, the cheaper those smaller animals are. Thus, farmers immediately begin buying new calves for the next year.

The profits they are left with normally go to meeting social obligations or returning loans that they had taken during the year. Thus, the role of it for a majority of farmers is limited to poverty alleviation only, Khan claims.

“Beyond small and middle farmers is the reality of big farmers, involved in commercial farming and animal fattening,” says Maqsood Jutt from Okara. These three to four per cent of the people are the main beneficiaries of the trade.

They use huge quantities of feed and silage, generating massive economic activity of their own. The requirement for feed is particularly high during the last two to three months of raising animals.

“Of late, the trade has suffered from two limiting factors: ban on export of live animals and skin and hides, says Muhammad Shabir — a skin trader from the city. It has led to massive drop (up to 70pc) of their prices.

The collecting of hides was feeding an elaborate social network of charity, which now faces the risk of reduced business.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, August 27th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1429143/commercial-farmers-consume-major-chunk-of-animal-sales

LAWMAKERS BRIEFED ON LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT PROJECT
The Newspaper's Correspondent August 28, 2018

GWADAR: Member of the National Assembly from Lasbela-Gwadar Muhammad Aslam Bhootani, MPA Mir Hamal Kalmati and a representative of the Mission of International Fund for Agriculture Department were informed about the US-funded Gwadar-Lasbela Livelihood Support Project (GLLSP) at a briefing here.

Covering all 30 rural union councils in Gwadar and Lasbela districts, the project aims to increase income and enhance livelihood of 36,000 poor rural households in the project area.

The lawmakers were informed by officials concerned that the project would be completed at a cost of $35.272 million by March 31 next year.

The lawmakers were further informed that the total cost of the project was $35.272 million and International Fund for Agriculture Development had given a loan of $30 million for the scheme.

The Balochistan government's contribution to the project is $4.72 million while the community contribution stood at $0.544 million.

The lawmakers were further informed that an additional grant of $3 million by the Saudi Development Fund (SFD) which was approved in March 2015 became effective last year to finance the additional infrastructure of the project.

Published in Dawn, August 28th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1429389/lawmakers-briefed-on-livelihood-support-project

PAKISTAN'S EIDUL AZHA ECONOMY WORTH RS 355 BILLION: PBIF
Recorder report Aug 28th, 2018 Karachi

President of Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum (PBIF) Mian Zahid Hussain has said that economic activities related with sacrificial animals amounting Rs 335 billion took place in Eidul Azha. He expressed these views, talking to the business community. Giving breakup, he said, sacrificial animals have been sold at around Rs 298 billion, butchers earned Rs 26 billion and hides and skins of Rs 10 billion have been traded, so far.

He called for ensuring uninterrupted gas and electricity supply to tanneries for timely processing of animal hides and improved exports of leather goods and related items. Mian Zahid congratulated police, rangers, security officials for no incident of terror and insecurity in any part of the country during Eidul Azha.

He said that Eidul Azha is celebrated to commemorate the sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and his son Hazrat Ismail but it is also an important and unique occasion of economic activities, which benefits many sectors economically in addition to the accomplishment of religious obligation.

“This year, 8 million animals have been sacrificed by Muslims which benefited livestock Handsome amount was earned by selling fodder,” he said, adding that the transport business also increased due to commutation of sacrificial animals alongside those working on daily wages and butchers who earned demanded money.

PBIF president said that the ongoing economic crisis in the country is a big challenge for the newly-elected government. He urged that all stakeholders should work together with the elected members to overcome crisis. He cited that in July 2018, $3 billion trade deficit has been reported while the current account deficit has reportedly been more than $2 billion for the same period. He stressed that to curb deficits, exports and revenue needed to be increased while expenses must be controlled. He said policies of Prime Minister Imran Khan based on modesty ought to be followed widely so that the expenses could be reduced. “Expected arrival of Indian delegation to present their stand on two hydro-power projects being built on river Chenab is a good sign,” he said, expressing hope it would help in improving bilateral relations of the two neighbouring countries.

Mian Zahid said that peaceful and strengthened relation and close trade ties are in favor of both countries and their people. He asked government to build strong friendly relationships with all neighboring countries. He urged the cabinets of federal and provincial governments to work for building the nation and prosperity of the country by utilizing their best capabilities.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180828402495/

UREA INVENTORY HITS RECORD LOW IN AUGUST
By Our Correspondent

Published: August 28, 2018

Lahore:The inventory of urea fertiliser has hit a record low, showing a shortfall in August, 2018.

According to data compiled by the National Fertilizer Development Centre (NFDC), the opening inventory of urea in August was estimated at 0.087 million tons, which is the lowest during Kharif 2018. With local production at 0.46 million tons, the total availability of urea in August stood at 0.547 million tons against offtake of 0.62 million tons in the same month of the previous year, a shortfall of 0.073 million tons.

According to an assessment, a minimum 0.2 to 0.3 million tons of urea should be with manufacturers in order to cover the shortage.

August 2018 will be the first month in the last several years when availability of urea has seen a steep decline and recorded a deficit. The current level of urea availability does not bode well as far as supply is concerned in the upcoming Rabi season, starting from October.

The important wheat crop is sown in the Rabi season and the application of urea used to be at the highest level during that period. However, it is now feared that shortage of this crucial input could lead to a price hike and supply issues, resulting in a dent in the production of wheat.

An official of NFDC, on the condition of anonymity, said that urea shortage has become a reality and the only solution is to start providing gas to local urea manufacturing plants. “Otherwise, we will see declining production, leading to price increase and lower supply,” he added.

Commenting on the situation, an industry insider said the latest official report showed that urea stock ending July 2018 registered at 0.087 million tons and there is negative stock in the month of August, which is very troublesome.

He added that the country’s urea stock reached its five-year low level. Citing an estimate, he said urea inventory with producers presently stands at less than 0.08 to 0.09 million tons which is lowest in the last five years.

The previous recorded lowest inventory with the manufacturers had been in August 2013, which was around 0.1 million tons.

The authorities are doing little to address the urea shortage by utilising the available idle plant capacity. Subsequently, it is a field day for dealers and traders who mint money by hoarding and black marketing fertiliser.

Provinces are also not playing their due role in pushing the government to raise supply through increased production. They are relying on registering FIRs against dealers, which does not address the core issue of shortage.

Ministry of Industries, under the Fertilizer Review Committee (FRC), formed a subcommittee, which gave its report recommending the functioning of closed urea plants, terming it a more economical and viable option than imports. Presently, the decision in this regard is pending with the ministry for final approval.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 28th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1789300/2-urea-inventory-hits-record-low-august/

1M MT OF PULSES LIKELY TO BE IMPORTED
Recorder report

KARACHI: Pakistan is likely to import more pulses up to 1 million metric tons in coming months to meet the high local demand in the wake of low production in the country, traders said on Monday.

In July 2018, the country imported $55.889 million of pulses, which is higher by 8 percent or $4.137 million, from $51.752 million in July 2017, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says. “More pulses import is on way to the local markets,” pulses trader, Haroon Agar told Business Recorder.

The global market is nearing to the price stability after a plunge to $600 a ton from $1800 last year, mainly from bumper pulses crop in India to a surplus level to its domestic demand. “After India placed a 40 percent regulatory duty on pulses import, the global market nosedived to $600 a ton," he said, adding that about 1 million tons of pulses are being imported in upcoming months.

The country made 66,190 metric tons of pulses in July 2018 comparing to their import of 56,962 metric tons in July 2017, higher 16.20 percent or 9228 metric tons, the statistics shows. "Pakistan's local pulses production is 400, 000 metric tons against the local demand of 1.4 million metric tons for all kind of pulses, therefore, the gap between consumption and production forces the country to import more pulses," Agar said.

Pakistan, he said, is faced with severe water shortage that scales back the pulses production every year. "Pakistan imports pulses from Tanzania, Russia, India, Argentina, Australia, the US, Canada, Ethiopia, Burma and Brazil to meet the local demand," he said that channa is wholesaled for Rs80-90 a kilogram, masoor for Rs50, black channa Rs80, white channa between Rs70 and Rs100.

http://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/08/28/7-page/735566-news.html

COTTON CROP'S YIELD MAY CROSS 14.23 MILLION BALES
Recorder report | Aug 29th, 2018 | Islamabad

Cotton crop output during the current season was expected to cross 14.23 million bales as the area under crop cultivation had witnessed over 2 percent increase during the period under review as compared the same period of last year. Due to favourable weather conditions, suitable climate position for crop, better management and low intensity of pest attack in the Punjab and Sindh province as compared the last year were indicating significant growth in output, said Cotton Commissioner Dr Khalid Abdullah.

Talking to APP here on Tuesday, he said that white fly attacks on cotton crop in the Punjab had been reduced from 17 percent to 12 percent, where as jassid 13 percent against 15 percent of the last year.

The pest attack including cotton mealy bugs, pink ball worm also reduced and it was reported at 23 percent as compared the 27 percent of same period of last year, he observed.

However, he said that the cotton crop in the Sindh had remained under water stress due to bellow normal rain falls in crop growing areas of the province, where as the water situation remained satisfactory in Punjab, which had supplemented the over all output for the season.

Dr Abdullah further informed that due to water stress, the overall 5-10 percent yield in Sindh was expected to reduce, adding that prices of local produces was remained stable and encouraging the growers.

The prices of above mentioned commodity in the international markets were recorded at 91 Cents, where as in local markets it was sold at Rs4,000 per 40 kg, Cotton Commissioner added.

It may be recalled that cotton crop had been sown over 2.69 million hectares of land as against the fixed targets of 2.95 million hectares in order to produce over 14.37 million cotton bales during the crop season 2018-19.

The crop cultivation targets, which fixed for the current sowing season were achieved by over 91 percent as it went up by 2 percent as compared with the area under cotton crop cultivation during same period of last year.

Over all cotton sowing in the Province of Punjab registered about 11 percent growth as it had cultivated the crop over 2.29 million hectares of land as against the set targets of 2.31 million hectares for the period under review.

However, crop sowing in the Sindh Province was decreased by 31percent and attributed the low sowing trend with dry weather during the crop sowing time as well as shortage of water for crop irrigation.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180829402829/

COTTON SOWING TARGET MISSED BY OVER EIGHT PERCENT: SENATE BODY INFORMED
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 30TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The country has missed cotton sowing target by over 8 percent due to extraordinary shortage of water and is unlikely to achieve production target of 14.37 million bales set for the year 2018. This was revealed in the Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security which met here with Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah in the chair on Wednesday.

Sindh province produced around 32 mounds seed cotton per acre compared to 21 mounds in Punjab, but due to water shortage, Sindh missed the sowing target by around 31-35 percent. The committee was informed that the target for cotton seed sowing for 2018-19 in Punjab was 2.31 million hectares and the sowing was done on area of 2.29 million hectares while in Sindh the sowing was done on 0.42 million hectares against the target of 0.62 million hectares. The overall sowing area in Pakistan was told to be 2.71 million hectares against the target of 2.95 million hectares. The targets in Punjab saw a positive percentage increase of 11.5 percent and in Sindh there were a negative percentage of 31.

Extraordinary shortage of water during the current Kharif Season has badly affected the cotton sowing in early season. However, in Punjab, 99% of sowing target was achieved, whereas in Sindh, only 68% of the target area could be sown.

On the basis of last year's yields and the area sown, it is expected that shortfall in sowing will be compensated by increase in the sowing area in Punjab to some extent; production of little over 14 million bales are expected from the current sowing of cotton in Punjab and Sindh. The committee decided to call IRSA chairman to the next meeting to take update on water availability for the upcoming sowing season.

The committee was also told in detail about the wheat exports statistics over the years. The allocation of wheat export for 2017-18 was termed to be 2,500,000 tons while the exported wheat amounted to 1,761,870 tons. The members sought details as to how much raw wheat is exported and what percentage of the export is in form of wheat products and also decided to give recommendations to the provincial governments regarding the same. The committee was informed that ECC of the Cabinet on 22-12-2017 had decided to allow 1.5 and 0.5 million tons of wheat from Punjab and Sindh respectively. Seventy percent of the aforesaid quantity (for each province) was allowed to be exported through sea route at rebate of US $ 159 per ton, whereas remaining 30% export through land route at rebate of US $ 120 per ton; the freight rebate amount would be equally shared by the federal government and the respective provincial governments. The export of wheat and wheat products should be completed before 30th June, 2018, while the export process should be completed up to 31st July 2018 in order to facilitate the exporters for completing their codal formalities.

Lately, the ECC of the Cabinet on 26-04-2018 approved the proposal of MNFS&R for export of 0.5 million tons of wheat and wheat products by the PASSCO at freight rebate of US $ 155 per ton. The export period was allowed up to 30th June, 2018. The ECC in the meeting held on 30-05-2018 extended the deadline up to 31st August 2018 and completion of export process by 30th September 2018 to facilitate the export of 500,000 tons of wheat and wheat products through sea route on the same terms and conditions, as allowed by ECC of the Cabinet in its earlier decision made on 26-04-2018.

Out of the 2.0 million tons of wheat allowed to be exported, so far Punjab has made agreements for 1.21 million tons through sea and land routes, whereas Sindh has exported the entire quantity of 0.5 million tons through sea and land routes.

The committee asked the Ministry of National Food Security & Research to hold a brainstorming session with all relevant stakeholders and present before the committee way forward to bring international companies like Monsanto, Bayer and ICI to Pakistan for hybrid seed production technology after successful passage of Plant Breeders Rights Act.

The committee expressed concern on continuous absence of chairman PARC from the meetings and asked for provision of details of his frequency of visits abroad.

The committee meeting was attended among others by Senator Imammuddin Shouqeen, Dr Ashok Kumar, Gul Bashra, Prof Sajid Mir, Secretary National Food Security Fazal Abbas, Managing Director PASSCO Muhammad Khan, Dr Munir Ahmed from PARC and other officials.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180830403111/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 20TH TO AUGUST 26TH 2018

AUSTRALIA RAMPS UP AID TO FARMERS AS DROUGHT BITES

AFP August 20, 2018

SYDNEY: Financial aid for drought-stricken Australian farmers will be increased to Aus$1.8 billion (US$1.3 billion) as they endure the driest conditions in half a century, the prime minister said on Sunday. Farmers in eastern states are struggling with extreme aridity that has turned green pastures into dust, with the economies of local towns also suffering.

“I want to say to our farmers, we have your back. There is no set-and-forget,” Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull told reporters in the New South Wales town of Forbes.

Graziers in Forbes, some 390 kilometres west of Sydney, are among those battling the lack of rain.

"We are constantly working to ensure that you get every support you can, and of course let's all pray for rain," Turnbull added.

While droughts are not uncommon in Australia, the length and severity of the dry conditions have depleted farmers' food stocks. With grass unable to grow, some graziers have had to hand-feed their cattle and sheep, sell off stock to keep going, or even shoot their animals as they do not want them to suffer or cannot afford to feed them.

There has been an outpouring of support from other parts of the vast continent. On Friday, a convoy of 23 trucks carrying 2,300 bales of hay for over 200 farmers arrived in NSW from Western Australia state more than 3,500 kilometres away.

Published in Dawn, August 20th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1428135/australia-ramps-up-aid-to-farmers-as-drought-bites

MPA MOVES RESOLUTION AGAINST INJUSTICE TO SUGARCANE FARMERS
The Newspaper's Correspondent August 20, 2018

JHANG: MPA Faisal Hayat Jaboana during the first session of the Punjab Assembly on Sunday submitted a resolution against sugar mills of Jhang for making lives of farmers miserable by deduction in weight of sugarcane crop, delay in payments and giving less rate of the crop.

According to the contents of his resolution, submitted to the assembly office for discussion, Mr Jaboana stated the Punjab government had notified sugarcane rate at Rs180 per 40kg and the millers had purchased the crop from farmers on credit.

He pointed out that the mills owners, backed by government functionaries, not only deducted the extra weight but they had also blocked payments for the last year.

The MPA said management of three sugar mills of the district were still looting farmers by releasing payment at the rate of Rs150 to160 instead of Rs180. The maximum payments had been released in the favour of the middlemen who had business deals with some mills officials.

Mr Jaboana alleged the poor growers had no money to bear the expenditures for the cultivation of the next crop. The farmers of the district had moved from pillar to post to get their own money but no one was ready to take action against the influential millers, he said.

It is worth mentioning that Faisal Hayat Jaboana was elected from PP-125 as an independent candidate and later joined the PTI unconditionally. He told Dawn that the said resolution had been received by the secretary of the assembly and it would be taken up in the next session.

Published in Dawn, August 20th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1428063/mpa-moves-resolution-against-injustice-to-sugarcane-farmers

MOOT SLAMS POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS PARTIES' SILENCE OVER PEASANTS' PLIGHT
The Newspaper's Correspondent August 20, 2018

BADIN: A peasant conference held in Mahao Bheel village in Mithi district on Saturday lashed out at silence of political and religious parties over virtual slavery of peasants and farm workers.

Speakers at the conference, which was jointly organised by National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and Sindh Agricultural General Workers Union (SAGWU) and largely attended by peasants and farm workers, demanded labour rights for peasants as ordained in Sindh Industrial Relations Act, 2013 (SIRA).

They called for giving representation to farm workers in assemblies as per their proportion in population, elimination of feudal system through land reforms and preference to locals in jobs in Thar coalfield projects.

They said that agricultural and fisheries workers were not recognised as legal workers under SIRA for five years and were deprived of their legal right to form unions and CBAs and not paid social security, pension, grants and welfare schemes in agriculture and fisheries sectors.

They criticised the Sindh government for inordinate delay in formulating SIRA which resulted in depriving millions of workers in both the sectors of their legal and constitutional rights. Today, they said, feudal lords, landowners and so called religious leaders had created their fiefdoms in Sindh on the pattern of slave states.

They expressed resentment over silence of political and religious parties over their failure to raise voice against the virtual slavery of farm workers, who faced kidnappings, forced marriages and conversion of their daughters.

The speakers drew attention of authorities concerned to prolonged drought in Thar region, which faced famine like conditions and demanded the area be declared as calamity-hit.

They said that presently, there was manmade shortage of irrigation water in Sindh where influential landowners and feudal lords had monopolised the distribution of water.

They demanded making a mechanism for fixing rates of crops in consultation with representatives of peasants and small growers who were left at the mercy of market mafia.

They called for granting legal and constitutional rights to peasants, providing them education and healthcare facilities at their doorstep and ending discrimination and harassment of peasant women and their children.

NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor, Sindh Agriculture General Workers Union president Ali Ahmed Panhwar, Mustahque Ali Shah, Moti Ram Bheel and others also spoke on the occasion.

Published in Dawn, August 20th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1428144/moot-slams-political-religious-parties-silence-over-peasants-plight

DESPITE HIGHER CREDIT FLOW, AGRI-SECTOR ENCOUNTERS BIG CHALLENGES

By Salman Siddiqui

Published: August 20, 2018

KARACHI:The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has set a credit disbursement target of Rs1.25 trillion for the agricultural sector, which is around 20% higher than the country's public sector development budget of Rs1.03 trillion for fiscal year 2018-19.

This is not for the first time that the central bank has set an ambitious credit flow target for the agronomy. The target was fixed at Rs500 billion for fiscal year 2015, Rs600 billion for FY16, Rs700 billion for FY17 and Rs1 trillion for FY18.

However, the massive increase in disbursement targets could not help achieve broader objectives in the agricultural sector whose share stands at one-fifth in the $313 billion worth of gross domestic product (GDP) – the size of national economy in FY18.

Farm output per hectare has dropped to one of the lowest in the world instead of going up, agricultural research institutes have broadly failed to introduce new seed varieties, mainly for export commodities like rice and orange, and living standard of most of the farmers remains low.

Apart from these, water scarcity and climate change have emerged as latest challenges for the agricultural sector.

According to a recent report drafted by the Pakistan Business Council, the low crop yield has not got any better for a long time and now it has sunk to one of the lowest in the world.

Pakistan produces 3.1 tons of wheat per hectare, which is just 38% of the 8.1 tons produced in France – the world's best productivity.

Similarly, Pakistan produces 2.5 tons of cotton per hectare, which is 52% of the 4.8 tons produced in China.

Sugarcane yield stands at 63.4 tons per hectare, which is 51% of the 125.1 tons Egypt produces while maize productivity is estimated at 4.6 tons per hectare, 41% of the 11.1 tons France is producing.

In rice crop, Pakistan produces 2.7 tons from every hectare, which is merely 29% of the 9.2 tons produced in the US.

Lacking capacity

On the other hand, most of the agricultural institutes are sitting idle and lack the capacity to come up with solutions to the pressing challenges.

A rice miller complained that research institutes were getting hefty annual budgets, but were incapable of addressing the problems emerging from time to time like climate change.

The time for sowing different crops in Pakistan is changing gradually every year because of the impact of climate change, but relevant research institutes do not give any meaningful guidelines how to cope with the situation.

Besides, the living standard of farmers has continued to remain poor. Most of the time they fail to get justified prices for their produce like sugarcane, cotton and rice.

This comes despite the announcement of minimum support prices for some major crops by the government. And if they manage to sell their harvest, the buyers, mostly millers, do not pay the price on time.

Agriculturists have described higher credit disbursement a good job on the part of the central bank, but the credit flow does not appear enough to fight against odds and the challenges faced by the sector.

Therefore, the government and private sector need to join hands for building the capacity of research institutes, help farmers increase crop productivity and form a hassle-free payment system for the growers.

Sindh Abadgar Board Vice President Syed Mehmood Nawaz Shah praised the central bank for ensuring a smooth credit flow, but said the allocated funds were still insignificant in relation to farmers' demand.

Foreign exchange: SBP's reserves drop by another $53m, stand at $9.01b

"These funds do not reach all the needy farmers, especially small growers," he said.

Shah revealed that though Sindh's share in the total agricultural produce stood at 23%, the province got less than 5% of the credit disbursement.

"The Sindh government has to wake up…play an active role in getting due share in total credit disbursement for the province's farmers," he emphasised.

Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) Senior Vice Chairman Rafique Suleman suggested that the new government should explore new markets for rice exports, introduce new paddy seeds to increase production, reduce the cost of manufacturing for exports, provide suitable land for establishing industries and do necessary research and development work.

the writer is a staff correspondent

Published in The Express Tribune, August 20th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1784868/2-despite-higher-credit-flow-agri-sector-encounters-big-challenges/

INDIA ARRESTS NINE PAKISTANI FISHERMEN, SEIZES BOAT
Shazia Hasan Updated August 21, 2018

KARACHI: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has arrested nine Pakistani fishermen for having crossed over to Indian waters along with confiscating their fishing boat.

All the fishermen hail from Ali Akbar Shah Goth of Karachi's Ibrahim Hyderi. The incident took place late on Saturday night.

According to information reaching here from Gujarat, all the nine crew members of the boat, Al Ayesha, were escorted to Okha port before being handed over to the local marine police for investigation.

The Hindu reported on its website on Sunday night that the ICG ship Meera Behn, had noticed a Pakistani fishing boat in Indian waters while patrolling close to the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

Al Ayesha was then chased and boarded by Meera Behn's crew following which the fisherman were arrested for fishing illegally in Indian waters.

The Indian Express also reported on its website on Sunday that the incident occurred on Saturday at about 6.55pm Indian Standard Time, which corresponds to 6.25pm Pakistan Standard Time.

Only recently, as a goodwill gesture on the occasion of independence days of both India and Pakistan, the two countries had released fishermen arrested at sea and serving months or years-long sentences in the prisons of both countries.

India released 14 Pakistani fishermen, including three minor boys, on Aug 7 and handed them over to Pakistani authorities at the Wagah Border. And Pakistan released 26 Indian fishermen from Malir Jail on Aug 12, who were also handed over to Indian authorities at the Wagah Border.

Despite the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea being against the arrest of fishermen at sea, both India and Pakistan have been arresting fishermen belonging to either country for the violation of territorial limits.

Pakistani fishermen were often arrested by the ICG at Sir Creek — a disputed territory between the two countries. The fishermen, meanwhile, say that they can never tell if they are within their territory or have moved past it as there is no demarcation in the sea.

Ali Akbar Shah Goth, where the men arrested on Saturday hailed from, is predominately a Rohingya community area. The Burmese settled there also call themselves Bengalis. But the problem for many living there is that they cannot prove their nationality as they don't have a national database and registration authority identity card made as yet.

When the Indian government is not sure of their nationality, it won't know where to deport them after they have served their sentence until Pakistan recognises them as its own. Most such fishermen from Pakistan languish in Indian jails even years after serving their sentence until their identity and nationality is confirmed.

Then even after being released from jails the fishermen, be they Indian or Pakistani, never again get to see their boats, which they build themselves and which are worth hundreds of thousands of rupees.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1428325/india-arrests-nine-pakistani-fishermen-seizes-boat

STUDY FINDS LENTILS, POTATOES, CHICKEN MEAT CONTAMINATED
Faiza Ilyas August 22, 2018

KARACHI: While the Sindh government is yet to wake up to the growing threat of contaminated food chain, a local study has shown that commonly consumed food items, such as chicken meat, lentils and even potatoes, both in raw and cooked form, are tainted with metals known for causing human poisoning.

Titled An experimental study of arsenic and lead concentration in common food sources, the study has recently been published in the International Journal of Community Health Sciences.

The Department of Community Health Sciences of Aga Khan University has collaborated with the Department of Environmental and Preventive Medicine of Jichi Medical University in Japan for the study, which was conducted by Dr Abdul Ghani, Dr Ambreen Sahito, Dr Shahla Naeem, Dr Zafar Fatmi and Dr Fujio Kayama.

Samples of lentils, potatoes and chicken meat were brought from the open market in Karachi. They were washed and cooked for 20 minutes in tap water in utensils made of aluminium, iron, stainless steel and black-coated non-stick cookware.

Levels of arsenic and lead were assessed both in raw and cooked form of these food items.

None of them is found free of lead, arsenic

The study's findings showed that none of the food items were free of lead and arsenic. The concentration of lead and arsenic in tap water was 1.3ng/g and 2.5ng/g, respectively.

Uncooked potato had 10.3ng/g of lead and 3.5ng/g arsenic. The concentration of lead in chicken and potato cooked in iron cookware was 23ng/g and 13.4ng/g, respectively.

Lentils cooked in aluminium and steel cookware had high concentration of lead (55.1 and 34.6ng/gm, respectively). The arsenic level was high in cooked chicken muscle meat regardless of type of cooking utensils and ranged from 41.3ng/g to 47.7ng/g compared to other food items.

“The chicken meat was uniformly contaminated with high arsenic levels irrespective of the utensil material used for cooking. Thus, chicken meat could be potentially contaminated from external environment (mostly likely during poultry raising). Aluminium or steel utensils have particular interaction with lentils and cause leaching of lead during cooking,” it says.

‘Safe levels’

According to the study, the provisional tolerable weekly intake (PTWI) for arsenic was withdrawn by Joint Food and Agricultural Organisation/World Health Organisation's Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) in 2011 because of the uncertainty regarding its safety for human health.

Reports suggest that lower levels of arsenic below PTWI levels were also associated with lung cancers. Exposure to 0.01–0.04 mg/kg/day arsenic is reported to increase the risk for several internal cancers and adverse health outcomes.

Lead exposure, according to the WHO, is preventable but there is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe.

"Lead in the body is distributed to the brain, liver, kidney and bones. It is stored in the teeth and bones, where it accumulates over time. Human exposure is usually assessed through the measurement of lead in blood.

"Lead can have serious consequences for the health of children. At high levels of exposure, lead attacks the brain and central nervous system to cause coma, convulsions and even death. Children who survive severe lead poisoning may be left with mental retardation and behavioural disorders," the WHO says.

Sources of contamination

The study also points to the possible sources of lead contamination and says that despite control of lead in petrol since 2001, studies have reported high blood lead levels in Pakistan. Exposure still occurs through secondary sources (mainly food) due to its widespread contamination of the general environment.

The groundwater in Indus river, it says, is contaminated with arsenic and approximately 13 million people are potentially exposed in Pakistan. Also, several food items including vegetables, grains and fish have been reported to be contaminated with arsenic, mainly by groundwater.

"The experiment was a part of larger observational study conducted in urban and rural Sindh which was conducted to determine lead and arsenic exposure to pregnant women, newborns and children. It was found that the weekly arsenic intake by young children through food was high (188 µg/kg bw) and around 14pc of the children's weekly arsenic intake was exceeding the provisional tolerable weekly intake (PTWI) level.

"The logical next step was to identify the main sources of food commonly contributing to high level of exposure among the vulnerable population. This study confirms that the common food items consumed by the population including lentils, potato and chicken were contaminated with lead and arsenic," it says.

It suggests investigation into poultry vaccination and feed in Pakistan where chicken feed is mostly prepared from small-sized sea and freshwater fish, waste materials of animals (blood and non-consumable parts) and low-quality grains.

It cites another study which reported that chicken feed in poultry farms may contain arsenic as high as 43.7µg/g (43700ppb). Findings also showed direct strong relationship of the accumulation of arsenic in different tissues of broiler chicken and amount of arsenic in feed.

Studies have also shown that arsenic is excreted by chickens in their manure and remains in the environment for longer time.

These excretory products are used as fertilisers in agricultural fields, elevating soil arsenic loads and leading to expanded chain of human arsenical exposure.

It recommends researching other food items especially those for children, the junk foods which are being frequently consumed, for analysing concentration of arsenic and lead.

“Chronic exposure to lead and arsenic have potential for increasing the risk for cancerous and non-cancerous disease burden. Therefore, strict enforcement of regulation regarding prevention of contamination, during raising of chickens, processing and packaging of food items is required. Exposure from lead and arsenic can be reduced by regulating food items and quality of cooking utensils,” it suggests.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1428486/study-finds-lentils-potatoes-chicken-meat-contaminated

ANIMALS’ HIDE PRICES FALL ON HIGH PRODUCTION
Aamir Shafaat Khan Updated August 25, 2018

KARACHI: The price of hides has dropped by an average 10 per cent, but the slaughtering of animals (cows, buffalo, sheep, goats, camels etc) increased by 5-10pc this Eidul Azha, compared to 7.5 million animals sacrificed last year.

The price of cow hide, which was Rs1,700-1,900 last year, now hovers around Rs1,400-1,600 while buffalo hide costs between Rs500-700 as against Rs700-900 last year. Goat skin price ranges between Rs200-225 versus Rs225-250 the year before while sheep skin rate has dropped from Rs125-150 to Rs75-100.

“The total value of hides and skins this year is estimated at Rs5.5 billion – more or less unchanged from 2017, depending on the volume of sacrificial animals, their weight and skin prices,” Pakistan Tanners Association (PTA) Central Chairman Amanullah Aftab told Dawn on Friday.

He said a 5-10pc volume increase in sacrificial animals all over the country is based on the arrival of hides and skins at the tanneries during the first two days of Eidul Azha, while the third day figures are still being counted.

Non-professional butchers have destroyed the hides and skins by putting extra cuts on the skins. These seasonal butchers are higher in numbers in Karachi than any other parts of the country. For the last three years, Eid has also been falling during the summers, which also affects the quality of skin in case salt is not applied on time.

"The overall damage and waste of hides and skins in the country stands at 10-20 pc of the total collection and needs to be controlled," Amanullah said.

Tanners lift hides and skins from religious institutions, mosques and welfare organisations through auction process.

Explaining this year's shortage of animals at the main Maweshi Mandi Super Highway, he said the cattle traders from Punjab did not arrive in large numbers due to fear of rains which had caused huge losses the year before. As a result, most of the animals were sold out, creating problems for the latecomers. He said the cattle traders had diverted their animals to different parts of the country and most of the animals in Karachi came from interior Sindh.

PTA chief said the exports of leather goods are facing stiff competition in the world market owing to high cost of doing business in Pakistan which includes soaring electricity and gas charges, unnecessary taxes/hurdles on export and imports, substantial pending claims for duty drawback, sales tax refund, income tax refund and DLTL claims.

These receivables, valuing in millions of rupees, are stuck at State Bank of Pakistan – in particular the DLTL claims of 2.5pc effective from July 2017, irrespective of the 10pc incremental exports.

Published in Dawn, August 25th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1428778/animals-hide-prices-fall-on-high-production

SEAFOOD EXPORT SLUMPS BY OVER 7PC IN FIRST MONTH FY19
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: After touching $450 million record mark last fiscal year, the country's seafood export slumped by over 7 percent in the first month of new fiscal year 2018-19, as traders linked the fall to 'under-invoicing and fish smuggling'.

Traders at the country's largest fisheries harbour told Business Recorder that the annual ban for two months (June and July) is anticipated to pay off with a 'good' catch arrival during the next month, as about 600 big boats hunting deep sea, are likely to reach in a couple of weeks. However, small boats voyaging for two to three days are also showing up a 'good' sign about the catch.

Pakistan's seafood export in July 2018, which is the first month of new fiscal year 2018-19, indicated a decline of 7.35 percent or $0.939 million to $11.837 million comparing to the fisheries export of $12.776 million in July 2017 (last fiscal year 2017-18), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics say. However, traders contradict the PBS for a huge amount of fisheries are smuggled or exported with under-invoices does become record of the official figures.

In term of volume, the country's seafood export registered the first decline of 3 percent or 161 metric tons to 5,452 metric tons in July 2018 comparing to the fisheries export of 5,613 metric tons in July 2017. "The exact figures are not registered to the PBS due to the unknown but huge amount of fish smuggling through backdoors and their export with under-invoicing," President, Sindh Trawlers Owners and Fishermen Association, (Stofa), Habibullah Khan Niazi said.

If under-invoicing export of fish and their smuggling are not carried out, he said, the “margin of profit then shrinks” with a stiff competition on the local market. “Those traders buy fish for export on a credit account get fish at higher rates than normal as a majority of them operate through credit accounts and pay off latter on to their creditors,” he said, calling the entire fisheries business system ‘incorrect’ with no proper mechanism or checks by the government.

He hoped the new fishing season that started from Aug 1 will bring about a ‘healthy’ growth in the entire sector with more export to the world markets. “This season will go good,” he added. But, he voiced concern on the unbridled fishing through deadliest techniques in creeks, asking the government to step up to help the country’s marine life survive for their biological period. “Bengalis brought this perilous method to fishing sector, which let no species reach their biological age,” he said.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/08/26/3-page/735183-news.html

GLOBAL WHEAT SUPPLY TO CRISIS LEVELS; BIG CHINA STOCKS WON’T PROVIDE RELIEF
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 26TH, 2018 | LONDON

A scorching hot, dry summer has ended five years of plenty in many wheat producing countries and drawn down the reserves of major exporters to their lowest level since 2007/08, when low grain stocks contributed to food riots across Africa and Asia.

Although global stocks are expected to hit an all-time high of 273 million tonnes at the start of the 2018/19 grain marketing season, according to US Department of Agriculture estimates, the problem is nearly half of it is in China, which is not likely to release any onto global markets.

Experts predict that by the end of the season, the eight major exporters will be left with 20 percent of world stocks – just 26 days of cover – down from one-third a decade ago. The USDA estimates that China, which consumes 16 percent of the world’s wheat, will hold 46 percent of its stocks at the beginning of the season, which starts around now, and more than half by the end.

The 126.8 million tonnes China is estimated to hold is up 135 percent from 54 million five years earlier.

“People need to get rid of China stocks (in their calculations) … if you do that, it’s just exceptionally tight,” said Dan Basse, president of AgResource Co in Chicago. A repeat of the 2007/2008 crisis, which forced many countries to limit or ban exports, is unlikely in the absence of other drivers at the time, including $150-per-barrel crude oil.

The recent three-year high for wheat prices of $5.93 a bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade pales in comparison to the high of $13.34-1/2 a bushel in February 2008. Importers in North Africa also appear to be better placed this time, with higher stocks of their own.

“It could have an impact on food inflation but in North African countries they have a good crop this year, fortunately, so their reliance is not as big as in the past years,” said Abdolreza Abbassian, chief economist at the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

“I don’t think we want to be alarmist in terms of consequences,” he added. China started stockpiling wheat in 2006, setting a guaranteed floor price to ensure food security and stability. At around $9.75 a bushel as of last week, Chinese prices are now so high that they cannot sell internationally without incurring a major loss.

Rabobank analyst Charles Clack said he expected China to continue to build stocks into next year but in the long-term it would look to reduce reserves by curbing domestic production, reducing imports or conducting internal auctions.

“It will be a slow process … I wouldn’t expect exports to come flying out anytime soon,” he said. Government wheat reserves now total nearly 74 million tonnes, according to Shanghai JC Intelligence Co Ltd, most of it from 2014-2017 but a small amount as old as 2013. Sylvia Shi, analyst at JC Intelligence, said China would continue to import wheat it cannot produce in sufficient volumes to help meet a growing appetite for high-protein varieties for products like bread and other baked products as diets become Westernised.

The wheat crop in several of the world’s biggest exporters – Argentina, Australia, Canada, the European Union, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and the United States – has suffered this year. A spring drought in the Black Sea bread baskets Russia and Ukraine was swiftly followed by a summer heatwave in the European Union. Dry weather now also threatens crops in another important exporter, Australia.

Evidence of the serious harm done has grown as harvesting progresses. Forecasts for the 28-member European Union have repeatedly been cut, with Germany set for its lowest grain harvest in 24 years after crops wilted under the highest summer temperatures since records began in 1881. Russia’s agriculture ministry held a meeting with grain traders on Friday to discuss export volumes. The ministry denied export limits were discussed but traders, some of whom were at the meeting, said curbs might be imposed later in the season following complaints from domestic meat producers about the rising cost of animal feed.

The United States is best placed to capitalise on a shortfall in global supply, with much higher stocks than rival exporters and rising production. The outlook provides a much-needed boost for US farmers caught in the crossfire of a trade war with China, a huge importer of US soybeans and corn, as well as Mexico and Japan, two of the top buyers of US wheat. “The winner in the long term is the US as they should get some demand flow back to them. It has been several years since we have seen the US be in a position to get demand,” said Matt Ammermann, a commodity risk manager with INTL FCStone.

The Black Sea and Europe look set to lose market share, Ammermann said. Canada, one of the world’s biggest high-quality wheat exporters, is expected to enjoy bigger yields than last year, according to a recent crop tour. But patchy rains have left crops highly variable across the western provinces. “We don’t have a bin-buster coming. I just don’t see how we can push exports too much higher,” said Paterson Grain trader Rhyl Doyle.

The two major wheat exporters in the southern hemisphere, Argentina and Australia, are still months away from harvest. A record crop is forecast in Argentina but production in Australia is expected to fall to the lowest level in more than a decade due to drought across the east coast. Francisco Abello, who manages 7,000 hectares of land in western and north-central Buenos Aires province, said he and other growers are out to take advantage of high prices by investing in fertilizers to increase yields.

“We are having a great start to the season,” Abello said. “The ground was moist at planting time. Then it was cold and dry, which are the best conditions for the early wheat growing season.” The Buenos Aires Grains Exchange has a preliminary wheat harvest estimate of 19 million tonnes, above what it says is the current record of 17.75 million tonnes.

In Australia, the outlook is less rosy. Analysts said production could fall below 20 million tonnes for the first time since 2008, although it is still likely to be well in excess of that year’s crop of just 13 million tonnes. “The west of the country is looking good so the largest producing region could produce a crop in excess of 9 million tonnes alone. That may keep the headline number up,” said Phin Ziebell, an agribusiness economist at the National Australia Bank. “But with dry weather reducing output on the east, it could reduce exports nationally.”

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180826401917/

CROP DAMAGE MOUNTS FOR EU FARMERS AFTER TORRID SUMMER
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 26TH, 2018 | PARIS

European farmers are counting the cost of a summer heatwave that has shrunk cereal harvests and shrivelled pastures, leaving some farms struggling to survive and shutting the EU out of lucrative export markets. The severe weather in Europe has coincided with adverse growing conditions in other major grain producing zones such as Russia and Australia, raising the risk that supplies in exporting countries will be eroded to their smallest in years.

The latest harvest estimates have underlined the impact of drought and heatwaves in northern Europe. Germany’s farmers’ association DBV on Wednesday forecast a 22 percent plunge in grain production this year in the European Union’s second-largest cereal grower.

Germany endured its highest summer temperatures in over a century as extreme weather gripped northern Europe from Britain to the Baltic states. The combination of poor harvest yields and shrivelled grassland has led to spiralling costs for animal feed, putting pressure on livestock farms. German Agriculture Minister Julia Kloeckner said the government would launch a special aid programme for farmers worth up to 340 million euros following the drought damage. The DBV had called for around 1 billion euros ($1.1 billion) in aid.

In Denmark, drought is expected to lead to losses of around 6 billion Danish crowns ($920 million), research institute SEGES, part of the Danish Agriculture & Food Council lobby group said, adding that low pork prices could bring farm losses to almost 8 billion crowns this year.

Danish farm bankruptcies in 2018 have almost reached the level for all of last year. At the EU level, the European Commission has offered earlier than usual payments of annual subsidies and will allow fallow land to be used to feed livestock. A sharp drop in the EU’s wheat harvest will also limit exports from the bloc, adding to nervousness about global supply given weather issues elsewhere, including in top wheat exporter Russia.

Consultancy Agritel on Wednesday said it projected EU wheat exports, including durum, to fall to a seven-year low of around 21 million tonnes in 2018/19 as the bloc was set to see all-wheat production drop by some 15 million tonnes from last year.

France should fare better than other EU exporting countries, but yield losses related to heavy spring rain could cap its wheat exports outside the EU at around last season's disappointing level, Agritel said. The lower EU supply comes as weather-hit output in Russia is expected to push its exports down to 31.5 million tonnes from a record 42 million last season, it forecast.

"If Russia exports 10 million tonnes less this season, who is going to supply the world market?," Alexandre Boy of Agritel, said in a presentation to journalists. "It's not the EU that is going to make up for the drop in Russian supply." Ukraine, another major grain supplier via the Black Sea, is meanwhile facing lower crop quality this year, traders said, which could limit its exports of milling wheat.

Analysts see the onus on the United States to make up for reduced availabilities in other exporting countries, given relatively high US stocks, and to a lesser extent Argentina after a successful sowing campaign there. The weather woes in northern Europe and speculation about possible Russian government restrictions on grain exports have contributed to renewed price volatility on international markets. Euronext wheat futures struck five-year highs earlier this month, although prices have fallen sharply this week after Russia cooled talk about curbs on its exports.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180826401921/

WATER SCARCITY LIKELY TO BITE RICE OUTPUT IN SINDH
Shahid Shah

August 26, 2018

KARACHI: Rice output in Sindh is feared to decline this year as farmers reduced the crop sowing area due to water shortage, agriculture experts said on Saturday.

Muhammad Ismail Kumbhar, professor at Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam said there was late sowing in the province due to water shortage and around 30 to 40 percent acreage has been left out of the paddy sowing.

"Yield will also remain low," Kumbhar said.

Pakistan produces around 6.5 million to seven million tons of rice, including Basmati every year; of which, around four million tons are produced in Sindh that mostly grows non-basmati varieties, including IRRI and some hybrid varieties. Major portion of non-basmati comes from Sindh.

Usually, paddy seedling starts in June and July, which was delayed by one to two months this time around. Some growers started sowing in early August.

"Due to late sowing, crop has also become vulnerable to pest attack under cloudy season," Kumbhar said.

He said it is alarming that farmers and land workers are migrating to big cities, as major crops of Kharif (summer), including cotton, are badly affected.

He added that fodder prices also increased this season.

Badin, Sujawal and Thatta districts usually grow paddy in lower Sindh, while Dadu, Larkana, Shikarpur, Qamber-Shahdadkot and Shikarpur are famous for paddy in upper parts of the province.

“These all areas remained vulnerable to water shortage,” Kumbhar said. “Some growers at the head of the canals in the banned areas were also involved in paddy sowing, which was dangerous, and affected the crop in tail-end areas.” Several growers have sown hybrid seeds this year, which need proper water and weather, “which was not available”.

Mehmood Nawaz Shah, secretary general of Sindh Abadgar Board, agreed that sowing in several areas did not come under cultivation because of water scarcity.

“This is first time in Kharif that severe water shortage has been noted,” Shah said. “In some areas, sowing starts in May while water reached to lands in August.”

He said the loss was not uniform for all the growers.

“Some might have not sown crop on 80 percent of their lands while some might have completed sowing,” he added. “Sowing at the heads of canals might have been better along with sowing on perennial canals.”

Shah the damage was done to the crop in any case, as harvesting season started.

Rafique Suleman, senior vice chairman Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, said crop size has been low by this time. “Usually, rice arrivals remained high at this period, but this time it is too slow,” he said.

Suleman hoped that rice crop would reach at the previous year’s level of around 6.5 million tons to seven million tons in the country.

He said Sindh government banned paddy sowing in some areas of the province, which affected production of around 0.3 million tons. “This is an agriculture country and any ban on rice growing will affect the economy,” he added.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/359313-water-scarcity-likely-to-bite-rice-output-in-sindh

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 13TH TO AUGUST 19TH 2018
FISH PRODUCTION REGISTERS 60,193 TONS INCREASE IN TWO DECADES: EXPERT
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 13TH, 2018 | PESHAWAR

Fish production during last two decade has increased in Pakistan starting from 22,255 tons in 1991 and reaching up to 82,448 tons in 2010. Talking to this scribe, an expert on fisheries sector and environment, Omar Hayat said that during this period highest production, 93,820 tons, was observed in 1994.

Both the fish commodities, dried, salted or smoked and frozen excluding fillets and meat, also have increased in their production; however the production of latter commodity surpassed during the last five years.

Export in terms of quantity and value of the former fish commodity declined while the latter commodity increased during the same period. Import figures have shown that there is an increasing trend in the import of the latter fish commodity reflecting its potential demand in Pakistan. However, by paying more attention to fisheries sector, the country's production and export of fish and fishery products can be increased, and the country's economy as a whole can be boosted.

Fishery management represents an organization consist of resources, industry market which are the basic pillars of fishery sector maintenance and these factors are interconnected with each other. If there is any irregularity to manage fish resources and their management, Government has been enforced to mediate, rightly or wrongly, to fill this space.

He said that economically, balanced fishery management requires the revolution of common property through a restricted entry system intended to raise net benefits from the fishery. Management planning holds goals and policy objectives and the expansion of strategies to attain policy targets. If we study current condition of Pakistan's fishing industry it determines the ecological environment of Pakistan's fisheries and explain current developments in technology and their effect on the fish catch.

The factors contributing to growth involve government efforts, fleet expansion and development of export markets. In order to develop fisheries Pakistan should require balanced resource management. The expert asked the government should focus on new policy which should maintain satisfactory management for the regulation of the Pakistan's fish industry for inland fisheries and coastal and deep water fisheries.

He said that fishing in Pakistan is a main source of export earnings and plays an essential role to develop national economy. Pakistan with a coast line of 814 km still has many fish species which are not used to promote fish industry at national and international market. The contribution of aquaculture is too meager as compared to fisheries. Other neighboring countries which have focused on aquaculture have taken leap forward in exports, employment generation as well income for rural communities.

According Economic Survey of Pakistan total fish catch during 2013-2014 increased slightly ie 725,000 tonnes-730,000 tonnes. More than 100,400 tonnes fish were exported in the same period. The volume of fish exports during 2013-2014 was 140,000-150,000 tonnes this was mainly due to reopening of EU market and high demand of Pakistani fish mainly in China and Vietnam. This need for Pakistani fish has boosted fishing industry.

The decline in the marine fishery is basically due to over fishing and growing human population is the main cause. With the increasing shortage of fish resources, fisheries management becomes more critical. Fish habitats have been badly affected by industrial waste overuse of reef area and sea visitors.

The current information which focuses on modeling and technical work out in other countries to fishery management tools which is supposed to be a legal approach are not being used in our country. These new modeling tools and technical innovation is required to be implemented in our country.

The existing laws on fisheries and aquaculture need to be revisited and appropriate changes made on pragmatic and implement able approach for the betterment of rural communities and conservation of the renewable fish and related consumable resources of the country.

He said fishery management laws should be of good policy and result oriented quality. Fishery laws should deal among development of fishing size, quality, banned over fishing and establish more national master management plans for off-shore fisheries and to promote coastal resources.

The inland fisheries has a great potential also which is often overlooked and of low priority by the policy makers. If Aquaculture is developed in warm waters and cold water regions it can boost exports and foreign exchange for the exchequer.

The potential of only one type of fish ie Trout is more than 50000-100000 metric tons per cycle worth more than half a billion dollars revenue and creating employment for the rural youth in the remote hilly rural regions of the country. Similar is the position of warm water fisheries potential of production throughout Pakistan which can also provide off farm employment and income for the rural population as well as export earnings for the country.

Pakistan economy is rural based where 70 percent of the work force is engaged in different agricultural activities. Fish Farming is a new addition of recent past of 30 to 35 years to diversification of agricultural farm activities. The growth of fish farms in Pakistan is slow as compared to the benefits which it creates in the private sector. Each Fish Farm provides employment to the house hold for different period of time with income on harvest of fish as well for family consumption.

Rural development and, in particular, a prosperous smallholder agricultural economy, is widely regarded as the cornerstone in a multi-pronged strategy aimed at reducing poverty and hunger and ensuring food security for all. Furthermore, he said that agriculture is the foundation of rural development and the most important provider of gainful employment in rural areas.

Omar Hayat, who is served as Director Fisheries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa termed poverty a highly complex phenomenon, which cannot be understood in purely sectoral terms. Aquaculture should not be viewed as separate technology in Agriculture sector but should be considered as one part of agricultural activities.

The agriculture with aquaculture needs: intensification, diversification, increased asset base, increased off farm income, and exit from agriculture. Diversification, which includes aquaculture, which can be considered to be the single most promising source of farm poverty reduction in the coming years in Pakistan.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180813399114/

AGRICULTURE PROJECT WORTH RS8.87B FAILS TO ACHIEVE TARGETS
By Abdul Razzak Abro

KARACHI: The government has not been able to achieve the targets of the World Bank-funded Sindh Agricultural Growth Project worth Rs8.87 billion due to which the relevant departments are considering to amend the PC-1 of the project and expand its tenure.

According to sources privy to the project, governance issues of the agriculture and livestock departments were the primary reason behind not achieving the set targets. The two departments were given the task to execute the project that was supposed to end during the fiscal year 2018-19. However, as the targets have not been met, the project is likely to be extended.

The project aimed to boost agricultural and dairy products in the province. Its targets included increasing the production of red chilies, onions, dates and rice by 20% and milk by 4%.

The project's director, Hidayatullah Chhajro told The Express Tribune, that World Bank was considering extending the project by one year. According to Agriculture Secretary Shafiq Mahesar, there is a need for extending the project's tenure as its implementation was delayed.

In the meantime, representatives of growers have blamed the agriculture and livestock departments for not achieving the set targets because of their maladministaration.

Syed Mehmood Shah, a representative of the Sindh Abadgar Board, a farmers' lobbying group, explained that the project could have made significant impact on the agricultural output of the project but it could not be executed properly due to the administrative issues of the government departments. Shah, who is also a member of the steering committee of the project, claimed that the project was delayed initially as its directors were repeatedly changed.

According to Shah, procurement of required machinery for the project was also delayed. He went on to claim that no session of the steering committee was called since one-and-a-half year.

Despite investment of billions of rupees, no significant development can be seen on ground except for a few steps such as establishment of training schools, Shah said.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) Senior Vice-President Nabi Bux Sathio blamed poor governance of the livestock department for failure of the project so far. Sathio did not object to increasing the project's tenure, however, he called for making people know that additional loan would have to be taken in order to exceed the duration of the project.

The SCA office bearer demanded that a progress report of the project be issued every six months in order to inform people how much expenditure was incurred and what progress was achieved. It must be known where and when farmers received benefits of the project. Sathio said.

Of the Rs8.87 billion funds provided by the World Bank, Rs6.24 billion were given to the agriculture department and Rs2.63 billion to the livestock department. It is a matter of concern that the funds were utilised in various heads including salaries of the staff concerned but no progress was achieved to meet targets.

According to the project's PC-I, an amount of Rs970 million was allocated for the operational expenditure of both the departments. Of this amount, Rs500 million were allocated for the salaries and allowances of officers and staff of both the departments and the remaining amount was spent on the purchase of new vehicles, air conditioners, furniture and other office accessories. A hefty sum of Rs361.04 million was spent only on the employees of the agriculture department.

The director-generals of the projects of the two departments received monthly remuneration of Rs250,000 each. They were also entitled to facilities worth hundreds of thousands of rupees.

Targets

The project had aimed to curtail losses incurred by crops of rice, date and spices by 20%. According to the documents of the project, there is a loss of 25% in the yield of these crops while 30% is the loss in milk production.

The project also intended to raise the income of small farmers by 50%. According to the targets, the production of red chili was to increase from 2.6 tons per acre to 3.27 tons. Similarly, the production of onions was to increase from 12 tons per acre to 20 tons. The production of dates was to similarly increase from 8.15 tons per acre to 9 tons, whereas, the production of rice was to scale up from 3.3 tons per acre to 4.5 tons.

A total of 112,000 farmers were to benefit from the project, including 40,000 rice cultivators, 31,000 red chili growers, 33,000 onion growers and 8,000 date farmers. However, no farmer has reportedly reaped the benefits of the project.

In order to improve milk production, the project targeted to install 153 milk chillers in 765 villages with each chiller having the capacity of storing 1,000 litres of milk. However, the chillers have yet to be provided in most of the villages and in a few places where they have been provided, they have yet to be made operational.

As a part of the project, the livestock department was supposed to train 3,000 dairy farmers but this was allegedly done on paper in some places. Similarly, the project called for taking steps to keep 30,600 cattle healthy in nine districts of the province but it was allegedly done also on paper.

The livestock department was also to ensure that 121 veterinary hospitals and laboratories are functional across the province.

It may be noted that crops such as onion, chili and dates are cultivated by farmers who own smaller area of land than the farmers of major crops such as wheat, sugar cane, rice and cotton. The subsidy worth millions of rupees mostly benefits the farmers of these major crops.

The agriculture growth project focused primarily on minor crops so that small scale farmers, who also include many women, could benefit. According to the agriculture department statistics, 92% of red chilies in Pakistan are grown in Sindh, which also produces 33% and 50% of onions and dates in the country respectively.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1779411/1-agriculture-project-worth-rs8-87b-fails-achieve-targets/

FARMERS’ GROUP PROPOSES TAX ON SEEDS, FERTILISER TO RAISE FUNDS
By Our Correspondent

Published: August 14, 2018

HYDERABAD: In a first, one of the leading farmers' lobbying groups in the province, Sindh Abadgar Ittehad, has proposed taxing agricultural inputs to raise funds for the construction of Diamer-Basha and Mohmand dams. The group has suggested that a tax of Rs10 per item be levied on seeds, fertiliser, pesticides and other agricultural inputs to generate funds for the dams.

"We support the initiative of Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar for the construction of dams and we [farmers] want to contribute through tax for the funds," said Nawaz Zubair Talpur, the group's president at a meeting in Hyderabad.

Talpur asked the federal government to charge Rs10 tax per bag of seeds and fertiliser as well as on other items which are a part of agricultural inputs. He said the tax should be only used for construction of the two dams.

"The industries producing agricultural inputs should also be levied a similar tax," he suggested. The Sindh Abadgar Ittehad president went on to recommend replacement of Neelum Jhelum dam tax, being collected through electricity bills, with the tax for the two proposed dams.

However, while expressing his support for the two dams, Talpur reiterated opposition to construction of the controversial Kalabagh dam, pointing out that the apprehensions of the smaller provinces still existed. "We won't support the controversial dam. The provincial assemblies of Sindh, Balochistan and KPK [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] have rejected this dam."

Other influential farmers' lobbying groups like the Sindh Abadgar Board and Sindh Chamber of Agriculture have yet to declare their support or objection to the proposal of the Sindh Abadgar Ittehad.

During a hearing in the Supreme Court last month, the Chief Justice of Pakistan asserted that judiciary would ensure that the funds collected for the dams are not misused.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1780129/1-farmers-group-proposes-tax-seeds-fertiliser-raise-funds/

AGRICULTURE CREDIT DISBURSEMENT
It is good to see that agriculture credit continues to grow sharply. According to the latest data released by the State Bank, banks' lending to the agriculture sector soared to Rs 972.6 billion in FY18 as compared to Rs 704.5 billion last year, showing a hefty increase of 38.1 percent over the year. Further, the agricultural outstanding portfolio increased to Rs 469.4 billion at the close of June, 2018, registering a growth of 16 percent over last year's position of Rs 405.8 billion. The agricultural credit outreach has also expanded to 3.72 million farmers from 3.27 million farmers last year, recording a growth of 14 percent. The analysis for agriculture credit disbursement revealed that five major banks of the country collectively disbursed agricultural loans of Rs 523.9 billion or 101 percent of their annual target of Rs 516 billion which was also much higher than Rs 342.6 billion disbursed last year. Under specialised banks' category, ZTBL disbursed Rs 83.2 billion or 66.6 percent of its annual target of Rs 125 billion, while PPCBL disbursed only Rs 10.7 billion or 71 percent of its target of Rs 15 billion during 2017-18. Fifteen domestic banks as a group achieved 92 percent of their target of Rs 200 billion and five Islamic banks disbursed 82 percent of their total target of Rs 20 billion. Both microfinance banks and microfinance institutions surpassed their annual targets by disbursing Rs

124.8 billion and Rs 28.7 billion, respectively. However, total disbursements during the year were Rs 27.4 billion shorter than the target set by the SBP for FY18.

Such a sharp growth in the agriculture credit disbursement is indeed very welcome and highlights a vast potential for banks to penetrate the sector further. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the economy and, as such, requires encouragement and incentives, including a higher level of bank financing to farmers. It does not only generate almost one-fourth of the GDP but is labour-intensive and a big source of employment generation and poverty reduction, particularly in the rural areas of the country. Agriculture, because of its background and forward linkages, also has a strong impact on other sectors of the economy. However, while appreciating the performance of the banking sector, it may be pointed out that achievement of agriculture credit disbursement target was a challenging task, especially in the backdrop of water shortages, price volatility of agri-products, high cost of production and the difficulties usually faced by banks in recoveries of agri-loans. However, SBP has made concerted efforts to increase the flow of agriculture credit. These efforts include provision of enabling regulatory environment, sensitizing banks to adopt agri-financing as a viable business proposition, value chain financing, digitalising of credit, warehouse receipts financing and implementation of credit guarantee scheme for small and marginalised farmers. Allocation of regional targets, recruitment of ACOs and farmers' awareness programmes at grass root level have also helped in increasing credit disbursement in underserved areas.

It may be highlighted, nonetheless, that too much emphasis on banking finance for agriculture sector could have certain problems which cannot be easily ignored. Obviously, increased level of agricultural lending alone cannot raise the farm productivity if bottlenecks like water scarcity, land record management, proper marketing and storage, adoption of modern techniques of farming and efficient use of extension services are not properly addressed. Besides, if agriculture sector is given a priority status in bank financing, other sectors like export finance, SMEs, youth employment schemes and some other basic industries could also demand such a status. Excessive demand from various competing sectors can lead to higher monetary expansion which would exert inflationary pressures in the economy and cause depreciation of the rupee.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/08/15/14-page/733580-news.html

COTTON SPOT RATES DECLINE BY RS400
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated August 16, 2018

Multan: Cotton prices remained under pressure on Wednesday in line with world cotton markets while Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) decreased spot rates by Rs400 to Rs8300.

Yarn market also suffered due to decreasing trend in the cotton prices. Fall of Rs5 to Rs8 was recorded in prices of all types of yarn.

Cotton experts are of the view that prices will remain under pressure for few more days; however they will not fall rapidly due to demand and supply gap.

"Majority of the spinning mills have yet to fill their stocks, so there are very rare chances of sharp decline in prices in Pakistani market as compared to international markets including Indian cotton market," said Syed Muddabir Shah, a cotton broker from Multan.

He said the farmers are resisting this declining trend in Phutti prices which can be seen from sizable fall in Phutti arrivals.

“Farmers have stopped the picking process which has been checking the sharp decline in cotton prices in Pakistan,” he said.

He said that cotton picking will slowdown further in the coming days as rain spell is expected in cotton growing areas of Punjab from next week onwards.

He said that about 100 cotton ginning factories are currently functional in Punjab and 300 more are expected to come online after Eid.

“Similarly, about 120 cotton factories are functional in Sindh and it is being expected that number of functional factories will increase to 200 after Eid. As many as 18 new factories have also been established in Sindh,” he said.

He said the cotton factories from Sindh never purchased Phutti from Punjab during peak cotton season — July to September — rather factories from Punjab would buy crops from Sindh during these three months. However, for the first time, the factories in Sindh are looking to purchase the commodity from Punjab as brokers from Sindh have started to visit Punjab.

“This is another indicator that the prices will not decrease in Pakistani cotton market in coming days,” he added.

He said that decline of Rs400 in KCA spot rate is the highest during the last three to four years.

He said that the yarn market almost crashed on Wednesday and trading activities almost halted following the steep fall in prices.

Phutti prices were quoted within the range of Rs3,700 to Rs4,200.

The following deals were reported to have changed hands on ready counter: 1,800 bales, Tando Adam, at Rs8,250/8,400; 1,400 bales, Shahdadpur, at Rs8,250/8,400; 600 bales, Mirpur Khas, at Rs8,200/8,350; 1,200 bales, Sanghar, at Rs8,200/8,400; 600 bales, Shahpur Chakar, at Rs8,300/8,400; 800 bales, Hyderabad, at Rs8,200/8,400; 400 bales, Khadro, at Rs8,350/8,400; 400 bales, Nawab Shah, at Rs8,400; 400 bales, Masoodo Rind, at Rs8,300/8,400; 400 bales, Burewala, at Rs8,790/8,900; 600 bales, Chichawatni, at Rs8,675/8,900; 400 bales, Gojra, at Rs8,690/8,900; 200 bales, Hasilpur, at Rs8,800; 600 bales, Haroonabad, at Rs8,500/8,700; 400 bales, Sahiwal, at Rs8,500; 200 bales, Samandari, at Rs8,900 and 200 bales, Vehari, at Rs8,700.

Published in Dawn, August 16th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1427308/cotton-spot-rates-decline-by-rs400

MANGO EXPORT TO CHINA MAY EXCEED 10,000 TONS
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 16TH, 2018 | BEIJING

The export of Pakistan's mango is expected to exceed 10,000 tons this year, Chinese media quoting Zhao Lijian, Minister Counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan reported on Wednesday. The senior Chinese diplomat said on social media Twitter (Twitter) that Pakistani mango has been deeply loved by Chinese consumers.

It is reported that Pakistan is the fifth largest mango producing country in the world, with an average annual output of 1.8 million tons. The varieties mainly include Chaunsa and Sindhri. Among them, Chaunsa mango is a fine variety of late-maturing varieties. The fruit is medium to large and has a unique aroma. The people are very incomparable; Sindhri mango is distinguished by its colour and shape. After ripening, the fruit becomes bright yellow, and the taste is not inferior, according to Ifeng.com, a Chinese Edition. At present, Pakistani mangoes are mainly produced in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. The season is mainly concentrated in May from early September to early September, and neighbouring India is the largest competitor.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180816399805/

MODEL CHICKEN MARKET OPENS
Bureau Report August 17, 2018

PESHAWAR: The poultry traders have established 70 model chicken shops at Bacha Khan Chowk here to provide quality chicken meat to the consumers following instructions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority.

According to a statement issued here on Thursday, over 300 shops were situated in Chargano Chowk supplying chicken throughout Peshawar.

It was stated that Muttahida Poultry Association took the initiative by establishing at least 70 model chicken shops. Deputy director (operations) Shahana Shakir told mediapersons that the project was the result of an understanding between the authority and poultry association.

She said that all other food outlets should adopt the trend and establish model hotels and restaurants across the province.

The poultry association's general secretary Hazrat Gul said that they would establish model chicken shops in the whole market because they had noticed a handsome increase in their sales.

Published in Dawn, August 17th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1427465/model-chicken-market-opens

SCIENTISTS DETAIL FULL GENOME OF WHEAT FOR FIRST TIME
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 17TH, 2018 | WASHINGTON

In a breakthrough that experts say will help feed the growing global population in the coming decades, scientists Thursday revealed they have cracked the full genome of wheat for the first time. Wheat feeds more than a third of the global human population, providing more protein than meat in the human diet and making about one-fifth of calories consumed by people.

But it is harder to grow in hot, dry weather, and these challenging conditions are expected to intensify as the planet warms due to climate change.

Experts say the world needs more disease-resistant varieties and breeds that can grow with less water in a warmer environment. “This will greatly speed up our efforts on identification of agriculturally important wheat genes, including those that would help to combat major fungal diseases,” said Kostya Kanyuka a functional genomics scientist at Rothamsted Research.

The type of wheat detailed by 200 scientists from 20 countries is Chinese Spring (Triticum aestivum) a variety of bread wheat which is the world’s most widely cultivated crop, said the study led by the International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium (IWGSC).

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180817400124/

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING TO AGRICULTURE?

By Dr Pervez Tahir

Published: August 17, 2018

Pakistan’s agriculture received a boost in the 1960s when it posted a growth rate of 5.1%. Improved varieties, steady access to water due to incentivisation of tube wells and heavy public investment in irrigation canals and storages contributed to this growth. An effective extension service made no mean contribution. All this has changed since, and for the worse. Land distribution constrains the agricultural growth more than ever before. From 27.08% in FY2000, the share of agriculture in GDP has gone down to 18.86% in FY18. Historically, as economies progress towards greater industrialisation, the share of agriculture becomes smaller and smaller. Industry produces rapid growth and its share in GDP keeps on rising. Industrial growth rate is above agriculture, but it does not mean agriculture stagnates. In a healthy economy, agriculture becomes more intensive and produces larger amounts of output due to greater productivity.

The fall in the share of agriculture since 1999-2000 was 8.22 percentage points. However, the increase in the share of industry from 19.31 % to 20.91% implied an increase of only 1.6 percentage points. This means that the major share of the decline in the share of agriculture was gained by the services sector, as it rose by 6.62 percentage points from 53.61 to 60.23%. So the classical path of agriculture giving way to industrialisation turns on its head. In this period, industrial growth was 5.03% per annum, but the agricultural growth was close behind at 4.87%. At 5.18%, the services sector recorded the highest annual average growth. Overall GDP growth was 4.49%. This is where the first part of the problem lies. Industry was supposed to take Pakistan into the high growth league of Asian Tigers. It has been the darling of the policymakers. Import tariffs, taxes, subsidies, public spending, regulatory framework and credit policies have all been geared to nurture the industrial class. What we have, however, is a Statutory Regulatory Order class, taking rent seeking to ever greater heights, yet grumbling all the time that the government is not doing enough.

What this class is doing in return is a pathetic story told by every edition of the Labour Force Survey. According to the last available edition, the industrial sector provided 23.5% of the employment in 2014-15, up from 21% in 2001-02. The economy needs a double-digit growth for a decade to fully absorb the ever-expanding army of the unemployed. Industry has failed to demonstrate the potential to be the major contributor to this growth. The second part of the problem is that whatever growth this sector achieves, its job creation capability, measured by the so-called employment elasticity, is the lowest.

Services, the largest sector, have a low elasticity of employment. While the share of the sector increased from 54.96 to 58.61% between 2001-02 and 2014-15, the share in employment declined from 38 to 34 %. Agriculture remained the largest employer, with its share increasing from 41.4 to 42.47 %, despite a low average annual growth of 2.63%. Agricultural growth has been stunted by relegation of the sector to a residual in official policy. As a result, Pakistan has become a net importer of food as well as agricultural products. More than the industrial zones, the growth potential of the CPEC connectivity is likely to be maximised by the recognition of agriculture as the lead industry. Indications of a food and agriculture deficit are writ large on the face of the region.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 17th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1782479/6-what-has-been-happening-to-agriculture/

WIDESPREAD RAINS IN THAR, OTHER AREAS REVIVE HOPES OF WATER-STARVED FARMERS
Dawn Report August 18, 2018

MITHI: Widespread rains lashed parts of lower Sindh, from Thar desert to Khirthar range, on Friday reviving hopes among Tharis that the showers will help forestall a much-feared drought in the arid zone by recharging aquifers and sending a wave of joy through farmers in the areas which had been facing acute shortage of water for months.

Almost all parts of Thar, including hilly areas of Nagarparkar, Islamkot and Chhachhro, received light to moderate rain along with thunderstorm.

Thari villagers told this reporter that they were overjoyed to have the much-awaited rains and said that although season of cultivation of traditional crops was almost over current showers would greatly help in recharging water table and wells and revive withering grass, which was fast drying up for lack of water for over a month. If it rained abundantly they would be able to store rainwater in natural ponds for use in future, they said.

BADIN: The district saw light to moderate rain coupled with thunderstorm, including the towns of Badin, Matli, Kario Ghanwar, Tando Ghulam Ali, Tando Bago, Talhar, Pangrio, Kadhan and the coastal belt. As soon as it started raining power supply went off in most parts of the district.

MIRPURKHAS: Rain with windstorm and thunderstorm hit the city and its outskirts decreasing temperatures and inundating low-lying areas, main roads and bazaars. Strong winds uprooted many signboards and trees in different areas.

Growers expressed joy over the rainfall and said that faced with acute shortage of irrigation water they were in dire need of rainfall at this time to help their standing cotton crop mature and sow chilli, onion, tomato, sunflower and other crops.

It continued to rain intermittently in the city and adjoining areas of Mirwah Gorchani, Digri, Tando Jan Mohammad, Jhuddo, Naokot, Kot Ghulam Mohammad, Jhilori, Sindhri and Khaan.

DADU: Rainwater in Nai Gaaj Nullah, a natural storm-water drain, rose to 15 feet after heavy rains in Khirthar range of mountains, which disconnected road communication between 60 big and small villages of Wahi Pandhi and Johi towns in Dadu district. A number of mud-thatched houses on the drain's banks and bed came under floodwater.

Residents of the area expressed the fear if it continued to rain heavily in the mountainous area, Nai Gaaj might overflow its banks and cause shortage of food and water in marooned villages.

They said the district administration and irrigation department had not taken any measures to protect lives and properties of people in the event of floods.

SANGHAR: It rained heavily in Achhro Thar, an extension of Thar desert, which was facing drought-like conditions for several months forcing people to migrate to irrigated areas.

Sanghar, Khipro, Sinjhoro, Shahdadpur and their adjoining areas also received light to moderate rain, which cooled down temperatures and made the weather pleasant. The rain led to power breakdown and flooded low-lying areas.

HYDERABAD: The city and its adjoining areas received light to moderate rainfall on Friday night, ending long dry spell. It started raining at 8.45pm and continued till 10.15pm. Power went off in several parts of the city with the first drop of rain.

Published in Dawn, August 18th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1427657/widespread-rains-in-thar-other-areas-revive-hopes-of-water-starved-farmers

TALKS UNDERWAY TO EXPORT SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS TO SAUDI ARABIA

By Sehrish Wasif

Published: August 19, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is looking forward to export sacrificial animals every year ahead of Eidul Azha primarily to facilitate the demand of a huge number of Pakistani pilgrims.

An official privy to the development told The Express Tribune that talks are underway between Pakistani and Saudi governments for exporting sacrificial animals to Saudi Arabia ahead of Eidul Azha.

He said the issue was also discussed at the Hajj advisory committee meeting held in Makkah recently, considering the increase in the demand for sacrificial animals in Saudi Arabia both for the pilgrims and the Saudis.

This year, 1.6 million Muslims from across the globe would be performing Hajj out of which, 184,210 are Pakistani pilgrims — including those from the government Hajj scheme and private Hajj scheme.

“There is no doubt that it is a huge number, therefore, the demand of the sacrificial animals automatically increases in Saudi Arabia ahead of Eidul Azha and sometimes it becomes difficult to meet the demand,” said the official.

The official shared the latest Hajj updates and said that so far 183,970 Pakistani pilgrims have reached Saudi Arabia out of which 107,351 are under the government Hajj scheme and the remaining are under the private tour operators.

“On August 18, intending pilgrims will start their journey towards Mina,” he said, adding that this time the majority of Pakistani pilgrims would be provided bunk beds at Mina.

The official claimed that this year, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony is making all-out efforts for providing comfortable accommodations, transportation facilities having wi-fi and three times quality food to the Pakistani pilgrims.

“This year efforts have been made to address all the shortcomings and issues which were faced by the pilgrims last year,” he said.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1784213/1-talks-underway-export-sacrificial-animals-saudi-arabia/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 6TH TO AUGUST 12TH 2018
TEA IMPORTS WITNESS 5.36PC GROWTH DURING FY17-18
ISLAMABAD: The imports of tea into the country witnessed growth of 5.36 percent during the fiscal year 2017-18 as compared to the last financial year (2016-17), according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Pakistan imported tea worth $551.881 million during the fiscal year under review against the imports of $523.790 million, the PBS data revealed. In terms of quantity, the tea imports into the country however decreased by 5.91 percent by declining from imports of 194,833 metric tons last year to 183,321 metric tons during the fiscal year 2017-18.

The overall food imports into the country during the period under review increased by 0.68 percent by going up from $6143.435 million during 2016-17 to $6185.369 in 2017-18.Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the tea imports during June 2018 witnessed negative growth of 15.37 percent as compared to the imports of June 2017. The tea imports in June 2018 were recorded at $27.879 million against the imports of $32.942 million. On month-on-month basis, the tea imports into the country decreased by 10.17 percent during June 2018 when compared to the imports of $31.036 million in May 2018, the data revealed.

It is pertinent to mention here that the overall merchandise imports into the country during the fiscal year 2017-18 increased by 15.10 percent by going up from $52.910 billion in FY 2016-17 to $60.898 billion. On the other hand, the exports from the country surged by 13.74 percent from $20.422 billion to $23.228 billion.

Based on the figures, the external trade deficit during the outgoing fiscal year 2017-18 increased by 15.95 compared to last year. The trade deficit during FY 2017-18 was recorded at $37.670 billion against the deficit of $32.488 billion in FY 2016-17.—APP

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/08/06/5-page/731872-news.html

RICE CROP IN DANGER DUE TO WATER SHORTAGE
By Hafeez Tunio

Published: August 6, 2018

KARACHI / LARKANA: Severe water shortage for rice crop in upper Sindh has been troubling farmers as it has delayed the sowing of the crop. Farmers are not even certain whether they will be able to harvest the crop.

They have been waiting for water to sow rice in the thousands of acres of paddy fields in Larkana, Dadu, Khairpur, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Kashmore and Jacobabad districts. The crop requires an extensive amount of water and without abundant supply of water, its cultivation cannot be started.

The paddy farmers have been protesting against the shortage of water, however, their hue and cry is apparently not affecting the authorities. The protesting farmers have staged sit-ins and observed hunger strikes in the last few weeks but the ongoing political wrangling due to the elections has become so all-encompassing that the authorities concerned have turned a blind eye to the issue.

According to the paddy farmers, the acute water shortage is not only feared to hit the rice crop but it has also translated into water disputes among different communities.

"Paddy sowing has been delayed. Normally, we get the water in mid-May and finish the sowing by July. More than 70% people have not sown their crop," said Mohammad Mosa, a farmer who lives near Kamber taluka.

Mosa and dozens of other farmers blocked the National Highway on Friday to divert the authorities' attention towards their plight but they were dispersed by the police with teargas. "We are now planning to observe hunger strikes in Larkana city," he said.

Ameer Ali Mugheri, the chairman of a union council, Lalu Raunk, in Kamber-Shahdadkot told The Express Tribune that many people who sowed the paddy sapling had not lost hopes of harvesting the crop.

"We spend all night monitoring the water, but all canals are dried up. Not a single drop can be found here. Irrigation officials are saying there is no water in the Indus River. They are telling us to wait for rains," Mugheri said

"I personally have sown paddy in around 200 acres, but all saplings have been gasping," he said decrying that he had lost the hope that he could harvest the crop this year.

In Larkana division, the Rice Canal is a major source of water for crops but it is completely dry at present. People from Naudero and Rato Dero from where Pakistan Peoples Party Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has recently won the elections protested in Larkana city.

"This is the peak season and every year we would see abundant water in the Rice Canal, which is now shriveled," explained Jamal Daudpota, a local journalist. He added that peasants and farmers were staging protests every day but they were not being reported in the media as the media was only focusing on the post-elections political scenario.

The water shortage has also reportedly hit the paddy crop in lower Sindh were it is cultivated in Thatta, Badin, Mirpurkhas and Sanghar districts.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Sindh Abadgar Board's Abdul Majeed Nizamani said around 2.2 million acres of paddy crop was yearly harvested in upper and lower Sindh, however, a major part of the crop would be affected this year due to water scarcity.

Nizamani added that Sukkur and Kotri barrages were major sources of irrigation in the province from where various canals, including Phuleli, Old Phuleli, KB Feeder, Rice and Dadu canals, would carry water to different districts of Sindh. "The water situation in all the canals is alarming because of shortage of water in the Indus," he said.

"We have approached the irrigation secretary and the [relevant] minister but all in vain," Nizamani lamented, adding that loss of paddy crop would be an economic blow for the province this year.

Criticising the government policies, he said growers and famers were vulnerable because they did not get any relief from elected governments. "In India, the price of urea fertiliser stands at six dollars per bag, but here we have to pay 15 to 16 dollars," he claimed, adding that despite the fact Pakistan was an agrarian country, all successive governments had ignored the agricultural economy.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1774142/1-rice-crop-danger-due-water-shortage/

PTI GOVERNMENT EXPECTED TO DECLARE AGRICULTURE EMERGENCY
FAZAL SHER | AUG 7TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

Farmer associations are expecting the government in waiting of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to declare agriculture emergency to enhance sector's contribution to the economy and ensure food security in the country. As part of the agriculture emergency, representatives of leading farmers associations have proposed that the country's farm sector be provided incentives comparable to those available in regional countries.

President Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) Khalid Mehmood Khokhar while talking to Business Recorder said that the PKI has proposed different measures to strengthen the sector that remained almost neglected during the tenure of the previous government.

He said, "We have suggested that agriculture emergency be announced to boost our economy; and a level playing field with neighboring countries like India be the over arching objective envisaging cheap electricity, diesel, fertilizer, seed, agriculture machinery and support price for crops."

Khalid said that the PKI has also suggested better use of available water with better management through changing crop patterns as well as zero agriculture trade with India till a level playing field is provided to local farmers.

Eliminating the middle man and bringing down the cost of production was proposed by the PKI to the incoming government, and the need to accord agriculture equal priority with trade and industry was suggested. Loans should be given to the farm sector according to land value and not on basis of cost of crops.

The PKI president said that other measures including introduction of new agro marketing system be developed to take care of producers and consumers like in the West. Food security and cheap raw materials for industry can only be managed by reducing cost of production, encouraging small businesses, and developing entrepreneurship in agriculture and livestock sector through cooperative societies.

He said that commercial attaches should be appointed on merit and be made more efficient and effective to boost exports. President Sindh Abadkar Ittehad (SAI) Nawaaz Zubair Talpur said that keeping in view reputation of PTI chief Imran Khan, farmers in Sindh are expecting that the government in waiting will introduce farmer friendly policies to boost agriculture sector. “The PTI chief visited Hyderabad three months before the election and we informed him about major problems being faced by farmers,” he said, adding that the main issues include support price of sugarcane, shortage of water, distribution of bardana and increasing role of middle man.

Talpur said that the upcoming government must ensure judicious distribution of water among provinces. He said that the new government should devise a plan to end role of middle man and provide direct market access to farmers. “SAI has also suggested to provide subsidies to farmers like in India as currently per bag price of urea in India is Rs 470 while its price in Pakistan is Rs 1550 per bag.

Arbab Jamil, President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Itteha-e-Zamindaran (KIZ), said that the incoming government should take effective measures for reducing cost of production and eliminate role of middle man to provide maximum return to farmers. “Main cash crops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are sugarcane and tobacco and PIT government must fix support price of main cash crops like in India”, he said.

According to the PTI’s manifesto, it will increase farmer’s profitability and boost growth. It will optimize existing subsidy programmes, reduce input costs, transform agriculture produce markets, improve access to finance, champion mechanization and incentivize value-addition for exports.

The PTI plans to expand existing warehouses and create new ones along with a grading system in key locations across Pakistan under public-private partnership. The PTI has also promised to further deregulate the seed market apart from few commercially important seeds.

The party intends to encourage private banks to roll out digital loans for quick access with easier terms of repayment and take the already working warehouse receipt financing system to a new level. The PTI also promised that it will boost the livestock sector and make Pakistan self-sufficient in milk and milk-based products, expand meat production for domestic consumption and exports and ensure that small livestock farmers are the primary beneficiaries. As per PTI’s manifesto, it will build dams and solve the country’s water crisis with immediate steps to conserve and improve management of water.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180807397354/

ANP CONCERNED OVER EXPLOITATION OF TOBACCO GROWERS

RECORDER REPORT | AUG 7TH, 2018 | PESHAWAR

Provincial general secretary ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Hussain Babak has expressed concern over the exploitation of the tobacco growers in the province.

In a statement, he has said that producers of the world best quality tobacco crop have been left at the mercy of the two tobacco companies, due to which they cannot sell their product in open market. He said that beside other natural resources, the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also produced best world quality Virginia tobacco, but unfortunately the growers of the crop have been put at the mercy of only two companies, which purchase their crop on their own low rates.

Sardar Hussain Babak said that the cartel of these companies has continued the exploitation of tobacco growers. However, he said that ANP will continuously raise voice for the fulfillment of this long standing demand of the growers on all forums. He said that instead of making tall claims, the government should stop the exploitation of the producers of the top world quality Virginia tobacco crop. Sardar Hussain Babak said that Punjab, the big province of the country produced sufficient cotton and wheat and various companies are buying their products at domestic and international levels and they are selling their products on the rates of their choice.

He said that tobacco is the product of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, our hands and feet have been tied and only two companies had established their monopoly on the tobacco crop. He said that despite increase in the price of tobacco in international market, their crop is being sold at cheap price to force them on stopping the production.

The ANP stalwart demanded the liberation of the tobacco farmers from the slavery of the specific lobby to allow them for selling their crop in open market to provide new opportunities to tobacco growers.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180807397374/

'PUNJAB GOVERNMENT, WB ENCOURAGING DRIP IRRIGATION'

RECORDER REPORT | AUG 7TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Malik Muhammad Akram DG Agriculture (Water Management) has said that Government of Punjab in collaboration with World Bank is encouraging drip irrigation under on-going Punjab Irrigated-Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (PIPIP) to overcome scarcity of water. Under this project, Agriculture Department is installing drip & sprinkler irrigation on subsidy basis in the fields of farmers. Drip irrigation system is suitable for crop cultivation when irrigation water or rainwater is not enough for conventional farming. This technology, so far, has been adopted by many farmers across Punjab owing to acute shortage of river water and limited rains.

DG further disclosed that keeping in view its high efficiency in conserving water, increasing per acre yield and reducing cost of cultivation, there is a need to create awareness among farmers about the drip irrigation system. With this technology, the farmers could save 60 percent electricity and diesel costs augmenting per acre yield by 100 percent. Government is helping farmers adopt this system by providing drip irrigation equipment at subsidized rates and providing 60 percent subsidy on installation of Drip irrigation system. There is 40percent to 50percent saving of fertilizer if drip irrigation system is used.

Currently, the system is used for small scale cultivation e.g., 12.5 acre of land. However, other techniques and methods are underway to extend the program for large scale cultivation. Drip irrigation technology is being provided to farmers by government on subsidized cost with financial assistance from the World Bank.

Akram further said that it is need of time to move towards modern resource conservation technologies such as drip irrigation to cope with the situation of water scarcity in upcoming years. DG Agriculture Punjab also said that need of time is to start water saving awareness campaign.

Water saving is need of time as next century, wars will be fought over water. Drip irrigation installation can help a lot in saving available water.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180807397384/

US, STAKEHOLDERS WORKING TO INCREASE MANGO EXPORTS FROM PAKISTAN
A Reporter Updated August 08, 2018

ISLAMABAD: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) held a mango gala on Tuesday to ensure that Pakistani exports — especially vegetables and fruits — are competitive in the international market.

USAID is helping local mango sector exports in new markets while ensuring compliance with international grading standards and export protocols.

Addressing the mango sector stakeholders at the annual gala here on Tuesday, USAID Mission Director, Jerry Bisson was confident that by facilitating infrastructure upgrades, introducing new technologies and promoting market opportunities, “we will increase exports to high-end markets, improving revenue for Pakistani mango farmers and exporters”.

The mango gala brought together stakeholders from the public and private sectors to investigate trends and opportunities, recognise local farmers’ innovations in, and reaffirm USAID’s commitment towards uplifting Pakistan’s mango production sector.

Under the project’s grant programme, USAID has provided 13 state-of-the-art mango graders which became operational in 2017 and will be utilised during the 2018 production season to grade export quality mangoes.

USAID launched the US-Pakistan Partnership for Agricultural Market Development in February 2015 to improve the marketing capacity of four Pakistani value chains; meat, high value and off-season vegetables, mangoes, and citrus.

Published in Dawn, August 8th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1425679/us-stakeholders-working-to-increase-mango-exports-from-pakistan

THOUSANDS OF INDIAN TEA WORKERS STRIKE FOR 50 CENT PAY RISE

AFP

August 8, 2018

KOLKATA: Hundreds of thousands of tea plantation workers in eastern India went on a three-day strike on Tuesday demanding a 50 cent increase in their daily wage from the government and estate owners.

The strike in the Himalayan foothills of West Bengal state, close to the picturesque Darjeeling hill station, stopped work at most tea estates in the region.

“More than 400,000 workers from around 370 tea gardens are participating in the three-day strike,” Aloke Chakraborty, president of the central committee of united union of plantation workers, told AFP.

“The minimum daily wage for a worker at the plantation is 169 rupees ($2.46). We have demanded a 20 percent raise to 203 rupees ($2.96),” he added. The striking workers have so far not disrupted work at the Darjeeling plantations, famed for their eponymous tea which is exported across the world.

Media reports said the strike was being supported by around two dozen local labour unions. The unions hope to exert maximum pressure as disruption of work around the ongoing Indian monsoon — when production peaks — means bigger financial losses for the owners.

“We are sympathetic to the issue and are trying to find a solution to the long-standing demand of raising the minimum wages of tea workers,” regional minister Gautam Dev told journalists.

A vestige of British-ruled India, the tea plantations in parts of eastern and northeastern India often make national headlines over wage disputes and poor working conditions for the workers.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/352353-thousands-of-indian-tea-workers-strike-for-50-cent-pay-rise

DRIVE TO CREATE AWARENSS ABOUT HAZARDS OF MALNUTRITION LAUNCHED
M RAFIQUE GORAYA | AUG 8TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Punjab Planning & Development Department in collaboration with Nutrition Section/SUN Secretariat Ministry of Planning Development & Reform and Human Development Foundation jointly organized Provincial Launch (Punjab) of a Mass Awareness Campaign “Umeed Say Aagay” (Promoting Mother and Child Wellness in the First Thousand Days & Beyond) here on Tuesday as more than 400,000 mothers and children die each year due to malnutrition in the country.

Addressing the launching ceremony, Provincial Secretary P&D Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said that Punjab Government remains committed towards making nutrition a priority in the province.

All provincial governments as well as the Federal Government have been making efforts in devising adequate measures to overcome the nutrition based hurdles.

Saleem Masih Chief Health & Nutrition/ SUN Focal Person Punjab, said that nutrition has been a priority agenda item for the Punjab Government and the mutli-sectoral nutrition center had been established to ensure that all nutrition related interventions stay on track to end the prevailing endemic of malnutrition in the province. Malnutrition is a multi-faceted issue, contributed by a number of factors, including health, education, water, sanitation, hygiene, population planning, and food intake. He admitted that the health status of the population is low in Punjab, particularly among women and children, with half of the children aged between 12-23 months still not fully immunized.

Aslam Shaheen Chief Nutrition/ SUN Focal Person thanked the HDF and SUN Movement collective efforts to improve nutrition situation. He hoped that the awareness campaign will go a long way to overcoming malnutrition in Pakistan and saving huge losses in the economy due to malnutrition.

Saeed Ul Hassan, Executive Director HDF said the objective of the campaign is to create mass awareness in Pakistan about the importance of healthy nutrition practices for mother and children in the first 1000 days through youth led social movement and to promote early initiation and exclusive breast feeding up to six months and continued breast feeding up to two years in addition to age appropriate complementary feeding to achieve optimal growth, cognitive development and health for young children.

Dr. Rameeza Kalim, Head of Preventive Pediatrics, Fatima Jinnah Medical University & Cecilia Garzon, Head of Nutrition, World Food Programme talked about the importance of the First 1000 days of the new born and how focusing on these days can prevent a child from a stunted life which has life lasting consequences including poor cognitive ability, poor school performance, low productivity as adults and hence low future earnings.

Large number of government officials, development partners, civil society representative, academia, and media personnel from Punjab and Islamabad attended the ceremony.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180808397728/

SCIENTISTS URGED TO PROMOTE MODERN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES
KHALID ABBAS SAIF | AUG 9TH, 2018 | FAISALABAD

Caretaker Punjab Agriculture Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas on Wednesday urged the agricultural scientists to enhance their role for the promotion of latest agricultural practices and to increase per acre production. He was addressing UAF deans and directors meeting and inaugural ceremony of multi-authored books developed by Endowment Fund Secretariat at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

Addressing on the occasion, he said that tangible researches based on problems of farming community and agricultural sector were the need of the hour. He stressed upon to take measures in order to ensure quality education and research work that will ultimately improve the position in the international ranking. He said mechanized agriculture coupled with reversed engineering as per domestic needs was vital to feed the ever increasing population. He said the country was blessed with the talented people. There is a need to sharpen their skills so that the challenges of modern era can be met effectively. He hoped time will come when we will be able to attract international students from developed nations in our universities particularly UAF. He said that agriculture was the backbone of our economy and contributing 20 percent to Gross Domestic Product.

Giving briefing, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences Dean Prof Dr Zafar Iqbal Randhawa said agriculture sector was facing the different challenges including depleting water resources, low per acre agricultural yields, climate changes, lack of awareness about latest agriculture tools and others. He said that the UAF was only institution in the country which is ranked among top 100 universities of the globe. He said that the university was offering courses in 175 disciplines and had produced manpower more than 75,000 graduates so far. He said that the UAF was running research projects worth Rs 2.5 billion with the special focus on the issues of agriculture and rural development. He said that university had developed relations across the globe and domestically. It has inked 150 Memorandum of Understanding.

Former Vice Chancellor and Director Center for Advanced Studies (Agricultrue and Food Security) Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan said they had achieved another milestone by writing 25 books based on agriculture in which 262 UAF scientists and 66 foreign experts had penned down the articles. He said that only in the period of six months, it has gained many 34000 downloads globally. Its popularity is gaining momentum with each passing day. He said that the project was funded by Endowment Fund Secretariat. He added that such initiatives would open up new avenues of progress and prosperity for the country. He said that e-books are being published in paper version so that students and readers can get benefit from it in the paper form also. It is ever first project at this massive level by any university in the country .He added that we cannot ensure food and nutrition security without adopting new methods and techniques.

Registrar Muhammad Hussain, Treasurer Tariq Saeed, Endowment Fund Secretariat Executive Director Dr Jaffar Jaskani and Director Research Dr Zahir Ahmad Zahir also spoke. They also visited the different labs.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180809398010/

AGRICULTURE CREDIT RISES BY 38PC TO RS 972 BN
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated August 10, 2018

KARACHI: Credit to agriculture sector increased by over 38 per cent during 2017-18, inching closer to Rs1 trillion mark.

The double-digit growth during the fiscal year highlights vast potential for banks to penetrate further into the sector.

According to the data released by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Thursday, the banks lending to the agriculture sector soared to Rs972.6 billion in FY18, an increase of 38.1pc over last year's Rs704.5bn.

The central bank noted that the achievement of agriculture credit disbursement was a challenging task in the backdrop of various real side challenges such as water shortage, low production of maize and wheat, price volatility and high cost of production.

Furthermore, outstanding portfolio in agriculture sector also increased by 15.6pc to Rs469.4bn during the 2017-18.

The SBP said agricultural credit outreach also widened to 3.7m farmers during the year, up 13.8pc from last year's 3.2m.

The analysis of agriculture credit disbursement reveals that five major banks collectively disbursed Rs523.9bn (or 101.5pc of their FY18 target of Rs516bn) up 52.9pc from Rs342.6bn disbursed in the preceding year.

Under specialised banks category, Zarai Taraqiati Bank disbursed Rs83.2bn, achieving 66.6pc of its annual target of Rs125bn while Punjab Provincial Cooperative Bank Ltd disbursed Rs10.7bn by achieving 71.5pc against its target of Rs15bn during the year.

Fifteen domestic private banks in total achieved 92.4pc of their Rs200bn target and five Islamic banks achieved 82pc of their cumulative target of Rs20bn.

Additionaly, the performance of Microfinance Banks and Microfinance Institutions was visibly encouraging which collectively surpassed their annual targets by disbursing Rs124.8bn and Rs28.7bn respectively to small farmers in 2017-18.

The SBP said that it has made concerted efforts towards achieving the agriculture credit disbursement target and implementing various budgetary initiatives set by the government.

Some of these efforts, which were highlighted in the SBP report included; provision of enabling regulatory environment for agriculture lending institutions; sensitising banks to adopt agriculture financing as a viable business proposition; exploring new avenues of financing; value chain financing; digitalisation of credit; warehouse receipt financing; and implementation of credit guarantee scheme for small and marginalised farmers etc.

Published in Dawn, August 10th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1426117/agriculture-credit-rises-by-38pc-to-rs972bn

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 30TH TO AUGUST 5TH 2018
COTTON CULTIVATED OVER 2.69MN HECTARES DURING CURRENT SEASON: COTTON COMMISSIONER
FAWAD MAQSOOD JUL 29TH, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Cotton crop had been cultivated over 2.69 million hectares of land across the crop producing areas of the country to produce 14 million cotton bales fixed during the current sowing season to fulfill the domestic requirements as well as for exporting.

The crop sowing had registered about 1 percent increase across the crop producing areas of the country as compared the cultivation of corresponding period of last season, said Cotton Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Dr Khalid Abdullah.

Talking to APP, here he said that cotton sowing targets were fixed at 2.95 million hectares in order to produce over 14 million cotton bales during the crop season 2018-19 in order to fulfill the domestic requirements as well as for exporting.

He informed that the crop cultivation targets, which fixed for the current sowing season were achieved by over 91 percent as it went up by 1.0 percent as compared with the area under cotton crop cultivation during same period of last year.

He said that overall cotton sowing in the Province of Punjab registered about 11 percent growth as it had cultivated the crop over 2.29 million hectares of land as against the set targets of 2.31 million hectares for the period under review.

However, he informed that crop sowing in the Sindh Province was decreased by 40 percent and attributed the low sowing trend with dry weather during the crop sowing time as well as shortage of water for crop irrigation.

The province, he said could achieve the sowing targets by 66 percent and cultivated the crop over 0.41 million hectares as against the targets of 0.62 million hectares fixed for current sowing season. Meanwhile, he said that Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces were assigned a task to cultivated the crop over 0.1 million hectares.

Dr Abdullah said that due to recent rains the water availability for crop irrigation would strengthened, which would help in further boosting the area under cotton growing as well as enhance the output.

He said that prices in the local markets had observed stable, which was an encouraging sign for local farmers to grow more crop for maximizing their profit.

Besides, he informed that the federal government has imposed import duty on cotton, which would also help in price stabilization in the local markets.

Meanwhile, the exports of raw cotton from the country during l2 months of last financial year ended on June 30, 2018 had registered over 33.65 percent growth as compared the exports of the corresponding period of last year as about 35,347 metric tons of the above mentioned commodity wroth US$ 58.227 million exported, which stood at 25,462 metric tons valuing US$ 43.567 million of same period last year.

During the period under review , about 521,959 metric tons of cotton yarn worth US$ 1.371 billion was also exported as compared the 458,074 metric tons valuing US$ 1.243 billion of the same period last year, according the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

During the period from July-June, 2017-18, the exports of the cotton yarn grew by 10.30 percent as compared the corresponding period of last year, where as the exports of yarn other than the cotton yarn grew by 38.85 percent, it added.

About 11,690 metric tons of yarn other than cotton yarn worth US$ 33.411 million exported as against the 2,519 metric tons valuing US$ 24.063 million of same period of last year, it added.

https://www.brecorder.com/2018/07/29/430925/cotton-cultivated-over-2-69mn-hectares-during-current-season-cotton-commissioner/

WATER SHORTAGE
By Our Correspondent

HYDERABAD

Farmers ask govt to fix rate of paddy crop at Rs 1,500 per 40kg Bribes by large land owners deprive the small farmers from water.

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA), a fanners' lobbying organisation, has asked the provincial government to fix the rate of the paddy crop at Rs1,500 per 40 kilogrammes. In a meeting on Sunday, the SCA deplored the shortage of water for irrigation that exists despite the fact that abundant water supply is available from the Indus River and its canals. Chairing the meeting, SCA President Qabool Muhammad Khatian blarned the irrigation officials for taking bribes from the large land holders and depriving the small farmers of their share of water. Khatian and other members of the chamber asked the interim government to immediately conduct an inquiry and take action. They pointed out that all the canals springing from Sukkur and Kotri barrages flowed at considerably high levels, but there still persisted a shortage of water for irrigation water. Last year, in 2017, the paddy crop was grown over 745,000 hectares in the province and the rate varied from as low as Rs750 per 40 kg to Rs1,250. However, during the winter season, rice exports picked up and the high-end variety like super basmati fetched up to Rs1,500 per 40 kg. Thus, the farmers demanded that the government fix the support price so that those who suffered during the early harvest season would be protected.

The meeting also complained that the rates of diesel fuel and fertilizer have been spiraling unchecked and asked the government to control their rates as well.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201807300075&EN_ID=11201807300024&EMID=11201807300011

GROWERS PERTURBED OVER DECLINE IN VARIOUS CROPS' YIELDS
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 2ND, 2018 | PESHAWAR

Growers have expressed serious concern over the decreasing yield of various crops and vegetables in Peshawar and urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership to pay special attention on improvement of agriculture otherwise farmers will start protest demonstrations.

Talking to media persons a number of farmers led by Rashid Mehmood Khan here on Wednesday said that growers were being faced with multiple problems which had caused decrease in yield of various crops and vegetables.

He said over 70 percent population of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was depending on agriculture and if government failed to provide sufficient incentives to the farmers the poverty would increase and the worst affected would be the agriculturists.

Rashid Khan recalled that the previous provincial government of PTI had announced Insaf Food Programme with the claim to give incentives to the growers in order to increase produce of different crops in the province but it failed to materialize its plan.

“We are going to organize farmers conference in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein the participants will discuss their problems and devise strategy to raise their genuine demands at the provincial and federal level otherwise the agriculture produce will not increase,” he said.

Rashid Khan, who belongs to Pakistan Muslim League-N, claimed that it was his party’s previous government which gave incentives to the farmers and resolved farmers’ maximum issues.

About the problems being faced by the growers, he said that shortage of irrigation water was one of the main problems as water supply in the main canals had been stopped on name of desilting and the supply was yet to start despite passage of many months.

Besides, he said the increasing prices of fertilizers, seeds and pesticides was another serious issue because most of the farmers belonged to humble family background and could not afford to purchase such items before marketing their crops/ vegetables.

The government, he said should provide interest-free agriculture loans on easy instalments so that the growers could play vital role in increasing the production of crops, different kinds of vegetables and fruits in respective areas.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180802395740/

HIGH-YIELDING HYBRID BASMATI SEED DEVELOPED
By Shahram Haq

Published: August 2, 2018

LAHORE: With the development of a high-yielding fine rice seed, the commercialisation of hybrid basmati is expected to be achieved by 2019-20, announced Guard Agricultural Research and Services (Guard Agri) Chief Executive Officer Shahzad Ali Malik.

Talking to a group of journalists, Malik pointed out that the development of an ideal hybrid basmati seed was a cumbersome process. “It is not a simple job, we have been working on introducing the seed for the past several years,” he said.

India strikes river, rice deals with China as relations thaw

“After going through a tedious process, our scientists, with the help of Chinese experts, have reached advanced stage of carrying out the seed’s trial.” According to Malik, seven to eight years are at least required to introduce a new seed variety. “We are facing a few challenges in developing the hybrid basmati variety, which are being addressed by breeders this year.”

Malik, who have launched high-yielding coarse hybrid rice seed varieties in the country, said farmers planting fine rice varieties would also be able to earn a significantly higher income with the cultivation of hybrid basmati rice.

With the marketing of hybrid seeds for coarse rice varieties, many farmers in Sindh and Balochistan have been able to double per-acre yield, which has also brought down the cost of production and increased their income significantly.

In a first, Pakistan to export white rice to Indonesia

At the national level, a quantum jump in rice production has led to export surplus and a tremendous rise in export earnings. "We are hopeful of increasing the hybrid basmati rice yield to around 70 to 80 maunds per acre, which is almost double the present average yield. The new hybrid variety will be an extra-long grain that elongates after cooking," he said.

The company expects to keep some aroma in the hybrid basmati variety, though it is not among primary features of new varieties being developed in other countries. The hybrid basmati available in world markets nowadays did not have much aroma, so it was no more a primary characteristic of the rice variety, he noted.

Malik was of the view that the competitive edge enjoyed by Pakistan's basmati exporters would widen with more exportable surplus in the next couple of years, which may lead to a jump of $1 billion in rice exports. Pakistan's rice shipments have gone up rapidly in recent years. With Chinese assistance, new varieties of hybrid seeds have enhanced productivity, profitability and exports.

It is a win-win situation for all stakeholders that will play a role in building the national economy. With the addition of new hybrid basmati varieties, Punjab farmers will be able to raise production manifold and exports to traditional markets will increase.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 2nd, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1771392/2-high-yielding-hybrid-basmati-seed-developed/
UREA PRICE RISES AS SOME PLANTS CLOSE DOWN
By Our Correspondent

Published: August 3, 2018

LAHORE: The price of urea is constantly on the rise as demand and supply gap widens with each passing day, industry sources say.

The price of 50kg urea bag has swelled to Rs1,800 in different parts of the country against the maximum retail price of Rs1,600. In Punjab and Sindh, urea is being sold for around Rs1,700. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the situation is the worst as the fertiliser is being sold for up to Rs1,800 due to supply slowdown.

Farmers have been left at the mercy of dealers who are allegedly involved in urea hoarding with the support of manufacturers. Dealers are actually increasing market prices on the back of low supply following closure of some manufacturing plants.

After urea price hike, farmers to bear extra Rs30b cost

Since October 2017, according to an estimate, the farmers have incurred an additional cost of about Rs30 billion in the wake of surge in urea prices. In the past nine months, the urea price has increased by Rs450-Rs550 per bag from Rs1,250-Rs1,300 per bag.

The only way to rein in the rising urea prices was to resume production of the commodity at closed plants, said industry circles. A follow-up meeting on provision of mixed local and imported gas to three closed fertiliser plants is expected to be held on Friday with high-ranking officers of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines, which will settle some issues.

All stakeholders including officials of federal ministries, provincial and industry representatives have expressed the resolve to restore about one million tons of idle urea manufacturing capacity by providing subsidised natural gas.

The option of urea import seems unfeasible as it will be expensive and time-consuming as well as consume foreign exchange reserves.

Agri Forum Pakistan Chairman Ibrahim Mughal has criticised the closure of three urea manufacturing plants, saying fertiliser shortage has already hit the farming community hard due to rising cost of production.

Long overdue: Fertiliser industry expects release of subsidy soon

He was of the opinion that priority should have been given to ensuring smooth supply of natural gas to the fertiliser plants at reasonable prices.

He demanded that the government take immediate measures for sustained provision of natural gas for urea manufacturing.

The expected shortfall of about 0.5 million tons in early Rabi 2018-19 season could only be avoided by producing urea domestically, he suggested.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 3rd, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1772162/2-urea-price-rises-plants-close/

September 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 24TH TO SEPTEMBER 30TH 2018

MINI-BUDGET DASHES FARMERS' HOPES

Amjad Mahmood Updated September 24, 2018

Finance Minister Asad Umar's promise of allocating Rs7 billion as subsidy for stabilising Urea fertiliser prices was the only mention of the sector in the budget. The speech failed to appease the farming community, which had been hoping for much more than what the government announced.

In its agriculture policy and manifesto the PTI had promised to optimise existing, and introduce new, subsidy programmes, increase access to credit with easy terms of repayment and share costs of investments required to improve productivity.

The party also pledged to enforce an efficient and transparent market clearing mechanism to get fair market prices for farmers, create new warehouses along with a crop grading system under public-private partnership and reduce import duty on farm machinery.

The speech failed to appease the farming community, which had been hoping for much more than what the government announced

Some farmers claim that Jahangir Tareen, senior PTI leader who was disqualified for holding any public office by the Supreme Court in an offshore company case, had even promised to impose an agriculture emergency in a bid to make the sector profitable.

“Mr Tareen had been promising before the polls that soon after being voted into power the PTI would impose an agriculture emergency and would ensure access to farm loans on easy terms, promote the food processing industry and take other steps as per the party’s agriculture policy,” recalls Khalid Mahmood Khokhar, president of Pakistan Kisan Ittehad, a small landholders’ representative body.

He regretted that Mr Umar hadn’t announced any meaningful steps to this effect and that the Rs7bn relief promised to the fertiliser sector would practically be nullified by the increase in gas tariffs for the fertiliser industry. “The higher gas tariff will lead to an increase of at least Rs123 per bag of urea fertiliser which will be in great demand for the Rabi season that starts within a few weeks.”

Kisan Board Pakistan (KBP), another body of small growers, argues that it’s not just the costlier fertilisers that will hurt the farming community but also the general price hike which shall come about due to the increase in gas tariffs for various sectors.

“The rural community, which comprises of more than 60 per cent of the total population, will be the ultimate loser (because of the increase in gas tariffs announced a day before the mini-

budget) as there will be a subsequent increase in the price of farm nutrients, farm inputs and essential items,” says KBP President Chaudhry Nisar Ahmad Advocate.

He urges the government to raid those who hoard fertiliser in order to protect growers from exploitation and thereby partially offsetting the impact of the gas tariff increase. Mr Ahmad hopes that the government will announce support prices for major crops and help sugarcane growers recover their dues from the millers.

There is also confusion within the sector about the intention behind the fertiliser subsidy allocation; whether it is to be used to import fertilisers and then provide it to farmers on subsidised rates as a relief measure, or to retire a part of the dues owed to the local fertiliser industry from the the government.

Farmers like Mr Khokhar believe that the budgetary allocation is meant for importing at least 100,000 tonnes of fertiliser in order to maintain a balance between supply and demand at the onset of the Rabi season as the local industry has been unable to meet demand.

But a Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council member, who requested not to be named, says that only Rs2bn of the budgetary allocation will go into importing fertilisers while the rest will be given to the industry to retire a portion of the dues worth Rs20bn outstanding against the government for providing the farmers fertilisers on subsidised rates.

He claims that the finance minister had, in a recent meeting with representatives of the fertiliser industry, promised to repay the subsidy amount in instalments. The minister apparently also agreed to share the cost of the LNG to be used by the industry for the manufacture of fertilisers so that three units — Pak Arab (Multan), Fatima Fert (Sheikhupura) and Agrotech (Mianwali) — lying closed for the last year may be revived.

The three plants are capable of producing 87,000 tonnes per month of urea and their closure has caused a loss of 100,000 tonnes in the inventory. The member explains that the industry has been allowed to use a mix of natural gas and LNG at a ratio of 68-32pc to minimise production cost since only using LNG as a raw material is not feasible.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, September 24th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1434621/mini-budget-dashes-farmers-hopes

GOVT TAKES UP RICE SHIPMENT ISSUE WITH KENYA
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated September 25, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce has approached Kenyan authorities for speedy clearance of Pakistani rice containers at its port.

In a statement issued on Monday, Commerce Division spokesperson Muhammad Ashraf said that no shipment from Pakistan has been held up at the Kenyan port for failing to meet the food safety standards of Kenya.

Sharing details, he said Pakistan's High Commission in Kenya has approached relevant Kenyan authorities in this regard. The authorities clarified that no Pakistan-specific inspections were being conducted on rice shipments. The authorities further assured that the situation is temporary and normalcy will resume after risk profiling is completed in few weeks.

The clarification came from the Commerce Division following local news reports that 600 rice containers from Pakistan were held up at a Kenyan port.

However, is true that the clearance of shipments of many food products – including sugar, edible oil and rice – at the Kenyan ports have recently slowed down after a few shipments of food items supplied from other countries did not meet the health and safety standards, the spokesperson added.

Published in Dawn, September 25th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1434826/govt-takes-up-rice-shipment-issue-with-kenya

FARMERS DEMAND TAIL-END AREAS ALSO BE DECLARED CALAMITY-HIT

Dawn Report September 25, 2018

BADIN: Farmers in tail-end areas of canals have demanded that the Sindh government declare the district calamity-hit like Thar region as acute shortage of water has destroyed agriculture and fodder for livestock in the district.

Ashique Ali Gopang, Mohammad Ali Khan and others said they had put their demand before elected representatives and district authorities but they had not yet given encouraging response.

In the wake of growers' demands Badin Deputy Commissioner Asif Jan Siddiqi had assessed the situation in 88 dehs of the district which faced 'calamity-like' conditions and sent his recommendations to Hyderabad commissioner, said sources.

The sources said that the officer had recommended 28 dehs of Badin taluka, 21 dehs of Tando Bago, 16 dehs of Shaheed Fazil Rahu, 13 dehs of Talhar, and 10 dehs of Matli taluka for being declared calamity-hit.

"Although there is no serious disaster but most of the areas in the district face acute shortage of water, which has seriously affected livestock and agriculture sector," said a revenue official.

Canal-irrigated parts of Thar equally hit by drought, say growers
MITHI: Residents of canal-irrigated part of Thar have stepped up protest against acute water shortage and demanded the provincial government declare their area drought-hit like the rest of the desert region since they too remain deprived of this basic need most time of the year.

The affected people from Kaloi, Satoon Mile towns as well as a number of villages falling in five canal-irrigated dehs of Thar which had not been declared drought-hit, told reporters that the only water channel for Thar, Rann Minor, had been supplied so little water that it was insufficient for cultivation of crops as well as for meeting needs of the population.

They said that thousands of people living in tail-end areas of the channel had not been supplied water even for drinking purposes for the past many years. After their continuous protest they were assured by chief minister and head of Supreme Court-mandated commission on water supply and drainage in Sindh that they would be given their required share in water but their words failed to translate into action, they said.

"Whatever little water is released into the channel is either stolen by influential people within a few months or pumped out to ponds near Naukot town to supply water to Mithi and other towns," they said.

They alleged that a water mafia had occupied the channel in connivance with irrigation officials. "Despite living in canal-irrigated area we have been facing worse conditions than most other parts of Thar for the past many years," they said.

They said that if adequate volume of water was supplied to the canal it would help produce enough food and fodder for drought-hit people of Kaloi and Diplo talukas. The water crisis had forced a number of families to migrate to towns leaving behind barren lands, he said.

They demanded that the Sindh government should either provide them water for cultivation as well as for drinking or declare their area drought-stricken like the rest of the desert region.

Published in Dawn, September 25th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1434741/farmers-demand-tail-end-areas-also-be-declared-calamity-hit

INNOVATIONS IN AGRICULTURE
M ZIAUDDIN SEP 26TH, 2018 ARTICLE

Urea demand in the country currently stands at 5.833 million tons. But in August 2018 Urea stocks hit the lowest level of 87,000 tons, 12 percent less than the monthly demand. With the local production of 460,000 tons, the total Urea availability in August was recorded at 547,000 tons as against the off-take of 620,000 tons, showing a shortfall of 73,000 tons.

Shortages led to increase in prices in the open market and prices jumped to around Rs100/bag in the past one month. The situation had started threatening the summer crops and posed as well risks to the major crops of wheat, gram and lentil in the upcoming Rabi (spring harvest, also known as winter crop).

In view of the looming crisis, the government has allowed import of 100,000 tons of Urea and as it costs almost Rs1000 more than the local prices per ton, it has also been, therefore, decided to provide subsidy of Rs960 per ton on imported Urea.

The Urea crisis had emerged as local production went down steeply due to diminishing supplies of gas – the feed stock. Officials said that the local gas would be supplied to the plants for the first two months and later they would be shifted to imported re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) at 50 percent of original tariff.

On the face of it, it looks as if our agriculture sector, the backbone of our economy, in due course of time, would come to crucially depend on imports which in turn would depend on the vagaries of global demand and supply of gas and Urea. Shortages and price fluctuations at the global level of these two items, it is feared, in turn would surely impact adversely on our domestic agriculture production.

But then, there is a way out. Let us emulate our CPEC partners – the Chinese – and learn how they increased their crop yields whilst reducing the use of fertilisers.

According to Briony Haris (China cut fertilizer use and still increased crop yields: This how they did it – Published in World Economic Forum's regional agenda on March 26, 2018) specific, evidence-based recommendations were made to 21 million Chinese farmers over a decade, offering them detailed advice about which variety of crop to use, exactly the best time to plant, how many seeds to sow and how much fertiliser to use.

The detailed guidance led to an increase in the amount of maize, wheat and rice produced, with crop yields increasing at an average of 11% at a time when fertiliser use was reduced by an average of 15% per crop, saving 1.2 million tons of nitrogen, according to the study published in Nature.

A report based on the outcome of concerted efforts in engaging millions of Chinese smallholder farmers to adopt enhanced management practices for greater yield and environmental performance has been compiled.

Field trials were conducted across China's major agro-ecological zones to develop locally applicable recommendations using a comprehensive decision-support program.

Engaging farmers to adopt those recommendations involved the collaboration of a core network of 1,152 researchers with numerous extension agents and agribusiness personnel.

From 2005 to 2015, about 20.9 million farmers in 452 counties adopted enhanced management practices in fields with a total of 37.7 million cumulative hectares over the years.

Average yields (maize, rice and wheat) increased by 10.8-11.5%, generating a net grain output of 33 million tons (Mt). At the same time, application of nitrogen decreased by 14.7-18.1%, saving 1.2 Mt of nitrogen fertilizers.

The increased grain output and decreased nitrogen fertilizer use were equivalent to US$12.2 billion.

Greenhouse gas emissions were 328 kg, 812 kg and 434 kg CO2 equivalent per Mg of maize, rice and wheat produced, respectively, compared to 422 kg, 941 kg and 549 kg CO2 equivalent per Mg without the intervention. On the basis of a large-scale survey (8.6 million farmer participants) and scenario analyses, the potential impacts of implementing the enhanced management practices on China's food security and sustainability outlook was further demonstrated.

The study is of huge importance to those looking at the future of sustainable agriculture and how the world will produce enough food for the rising population. It also points to the way in which science can improve agriculture.

The farmers were convinced to change their practices as a result of 14,000 workshops, on-site demonstrations and outreach programmes. This was achieved with the help of more than 1,000 researchers, 65,000 bureaucrats and technicians as well as 140,000 representatives from agriculture businesses.

Fertilisers such as nitrogen often end up in water sources, and contribute to the acidification of soil.

They also cause global warming, causing soil microbes to emit unexpectedly high levels of nitrous oxide. Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas with 300 times as much heat-trapping power as carbon dioxide.

The UN's Food and Agricultural Organization predicted that global fertiliser use would grow by 1.4% each year between 2014 and 2018, with China accounting for 18% of that growth.

The report notes that the Chinese farmers needed some convincing about the evidence before changing their normal farming methods.

And the wider community can learn from what happens when scientific evidence guides farming practices.

We also need to take a closer look at a 2017 working paper by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security. According to this paper, some of the most promising innovations in rural agricultural practices are service-based technology. With access to data, markets, and financial services, farmers can plant, fertilise, harvest, and sell products more effectively.

At the moment, these types of innovations are not featured prominently in most hunger-alleviation strategies. But that is slowly changing, especially as more people in emerging economies connect to mobile networks, and apps designed to collect and share agricultural information become increasingly accessible.

For example, in Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, local extension services are delivering real-time weather data to vegetable farmers via SMS. In West Africa, private companies such as Ignitia are expanding the accuracy and precision of SMS weather alerts to remote farmers.

In Mongolia, rural herders receive information about disease outbreaks to help them maintain the health of their livestock. And farmers throughout the Global South are turning to SMS-based services for technical support that allows them more easily to adopt new crops and growing techniques, with benefits for both natural resources and household income and nutrition.

Connectivity also improves the functioning of markets by allowing farmers and herders to access accurate price information, coordinate transport and other logistics, and facilitate easier exchange of perishable but nutritious foods such as animal products and vegetables. Mobile money and price information also enable animal farmers to adjust herd sizes to changing environmental conditions, while enabling farmers to secure seeds and fertilizer for future harvests.

Furthermore, by enabling the quick and secure transfer of funds, mobile-banking services allow producers to access markets more efficiently, reduce their transaction costs, and tap into higher-value market sectors. Mobile payment systems are also facilitating remittances from urban to rural areas, an increasingly important component of rural livelihoods.

Of course, the mere existence of this technology will not do the job. The challenge is to broaden access to all of these tools, and to ensure that they meet the needs of the farmers who use them. This demands that mobile technologies take into account differences in gender, education, and resource levels among farmers, and are responsive to changing circumstances. The impact and success of these tools and programs should be monitored and evaluated, with ineffective approaches being improved or replaced.

Research conducted in rural communities around the world, has found what they all have in common is the difficulty that farmers confront in accessing reliable information about markets, weather, and financing. With climate change a growing concern, traditional information networks are no longer sufficient. Farmers everywhere, but especially in developing economies, need the support of digital communities.

For hundreds of millions of people, information is the difference between food security and hunger. But, amid the triple threats of climate change, violent conflict, and mass migration, how that information is gathered and shared is changing. Farmers' personal networks are now global and online. To feed a rapidly growing population, we must use new technology.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180926410388/

EXPERTS STRESS NEED FOR OVERCOMING POST-HARVEST LOSSES
RECORDER REPORT SEP 26TH, 2018 FAISALABAD

Agriculture Scientists and Experts have emphasized the need for overcoming post-harvest loses; which can be increased productivity and farmer's income up-to 40 percent. Addressing at the All Pakistan Food Sciences Conference; arranged by National Institute of Food Science and Technology, and University of Agriculture Faisalabad; that was collaborated with the Pakistan Society of Food Scientists & Technologists (PSFST) at Iqbal Auditorium University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

The main session was Chaired by UAF Vice Chancellor Dr Zafar Iqbal Randhawa, while Government College University Faisalabad Vice Chancellor Dr Muhammad Ali, Government College Women University Faisalabad former vice chancellor Dr Naureen Aziz Qureshi, PSFST President Dr Faqir Muhammad Anjum, Dean Faculty of Food Sciences Dr Masood Sadiq Butt, NIFSAT DG Dr. Tahir Zahoor, Highfield International UK Chairman Richard Sprenger, Dr Shafique Chaudhry, Dr Javed Aziz Awan, and other notables spoke on the occasion.

Addressing on the occasion, Dr Zafar Iqbal said that the Pakistan China Economic Corridor will pave the way for the socio-economic development for all the provinces. He added that food industry had lot of potential to expand. The country can earn heavy foreign exchange by giving value addition to its food industry. He showed his concern that value addition in the food industry is only 4 percent while the industry in the developed world was having at least 25 percent value addition.

He added that there was weak industry-academia linkages in the country for which we had worked hard to cement the industry and academia ties. He said that he had dedicated pro-vice chancellor office for the industry to strengthen academia-industry linkages. He added that participatory management strategies were the step forward to address the different challenges confronting the country.

Dr Muhammad Ali showed his concern that the education we were imparting was not at par with the industry. He added that for the promotion of lecturers, assistant professor, associate professor and professors, besides teaching and research, indicator of the teacher's link with industry must be evaluated. He stressed upon the food scientists to get benefit from the CPEC and to get their due share in the international market.

Dr Naureen Aziz Qureshi said that the food security was the global issue. She added the concentrate efforts were needed to fight the challenges of the modern era and to compete with the rest of the world. She said that the culture of beginning start-up companies among the students will promote the entrepreneurships and help alleviate the poverty.

Dr Faqir Muhammad Anjum said that post-harvest losses in the country were standing at the 35 percent to 40 percent which is not only decreasing our productivity but also causing reducing the profitability margin. He said that establishment of Food Authorities contributed to make the situation of food quality better. He said that Halal Authority would also start working in two months. He added the CPEC would prove game changer in the coming years and we have to get our share.

Dr Masood Sadiq Butt said that value addition in the developed nations were more than 50 percent whereas we are stuck to 3 percent only. He added that beside malnutrition, and food security; food processing is an area where we have to make joint efforts in order to flourish the sector. He added that we were wasting huge fruits and vegetable due to lack of value addition. The issue needed to be addressed effectively. He said that they NIFSAT were offering nine degree programmes. He said that they had gotten NOC to initiate the PhD in nutrition.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180926410440/

PRODUCTION RESUMES AS IDLE FERTILISER PLANTS GET GAS SUPPLY
By Bilal Hussain

Published: September 26, 2018

KARACHI: Idle fertiliser plants have started receiving gas supply and Agritech has resumed operations while Fatima Fertiliser is likely to begin production soon as the industry gears up to produce urea ahead of the Rabi sowing season.

The industry was anticipating a shortfall of 400,000 tons of fertiliser. To bridge the gap, the government restored gas supply to the idle plants, which are expected to contribute 300,000 tons.

To meet the remaining shortage of 100,000 tons, the government has permitted import of up to 100,000 tons of urea.

"Hopefully, the strategy of bridging the 400,000-ton gap will not let the fertiliser crisis happen," Pak-Kuwait Investment Company AVP Research Adnan Sami Sheikh told The Express Tribune.

"The industry expected prices to swell due to the crisis, but instead gas supply has been restored and import of 100,000 tons has been allowed, so price hike will not take place."

However, Sheikh added that the fertiliser price of around Rs1,600 per bag would increase in October by Rs100-150 as companies would start passing on the impact of higher gas prices to the consumers.

He said two plants – Agritech and Fatima Fertilizer – would be able to jointly produce 300,000 tons. "Shortage of local gas and high prices of imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) have created major challenges for the sector," he pointed out.

Elixir Securities' research analyst Sharoon Ahmed said had domestic production not been supported, the shortage of urea would have occurred, forcing costly imports and increasing price volatility at a time when the country was facing a tough economic environment due to the rising current account deficit.

Pakistan's fertiliser industry has the capacity to meet national demand if the cost of production remains within viable limits.

According to an industry source, gas is provided to the fertiliser sector at a much lower rate internationally compared to Pakistan. It is $4.78 per mmbtu in Pakistan while internationally it is between $2 and $3 per unit.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1811494/2-production-resumes-idle-fertiliser-plants-get-gas-supply/

INDIAN TOMATOES SEIZED IN LAHORE
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated September 27, 2018

LAHORE: A team of the Pakistan Customs (Lahore chapter) seized on Wednesday a huge quantity of smuggled Indian tomatoes being transported to Lahore in three trucks from Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

"Our team representing customs department's anti-smuggling wing and comprising Moazzam Raza (deputy collector) and Agha Qadeer Haider (superintendent) intercepted near Gujranwala three trucks coming from Azad Kashmir. It seized the commodity packed in 1,072 baskets. The total weight of tomatoes is 21,440 kilo worth of Rs4m," a spokesman for the department told Dawn. He said the team also impounded the trucks besides capturing the drivers.

During initial investigation, the drivers revealed that the tomatoes had been imported from the Indian-held Kashmir and were supposed to be supplied in various markets of Lahore.

The spokesman said the entire import/export of perishable items (vegetables, fruits etc) between Pakistan and India by road, sea and air was banned these days. He said the Pakistan government had given facility to the people of AJK to import such items from held Kashmir without any duty through Titri Note point (AJK / held Kashmir border / post).

Under this facility, all sorts of perishable items, which are imported from held Kashmir, are supposed to be supplied in the areas of AJK alone and not other parts of the country. "Importers in AJK are involved in misusing this facility by supplying vegetables and fruits to Gujranwala, Islamabad, Lahore and other parts of the country unlawfully," he said.

Published in Dawn, September 27th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1435180

RAZAK CONCERNED OVER FALLING COTTON OUTPUT
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana Updated September 27, 2018

KARACHI: Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Textile Industry, Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood on Wednesday expressed concern over low cotton production and crop contamination.

Talking to textile industry leaders and exporters at PHMA House, the adviser said production cannot be increased without introducing new cotton seeds. Similarly for contamination-free cotton, ginning units have to go for better technology, he added.

He said the issue of wide trade gap between Pakistan and China was taken up during the recent visit of Chinese foreign minister. After detailed discussions, both sides agreed to work on narrowing down the trade gap, he added. Pakistan's imports from China are presently at $15.38 billion and exports at $1.5bn only.

The adviser informed the textile leaders that the number of preferential tariff lines with China has now been increased from 57 to 313. Also discussions were under way for revising the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China and Pakistan is seeking concessions equal to Asean countries.

On the occasion, he said a large buying mission from China is arriving on Oct 8. The adviser assured that no negotiations will take place without consultation with trade and industry.

Razak said a delegation headed by him will leave for China on Nov 4 with the aim of luring Chinese investors.

He said Pakistan's tariff policy needed to be rationalised. Responding to a question, he said the Chinese foreign minister assured to provide special corridor and space to Pakistan in bilateral trade which in the past was not fully explored.

Published in Dawn, September 27th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1435286/razak-concerned-over-falling-cotton-output

SUGAR CANE PRODUCTION IN SINDH LIKELY TO DROP BY 15PC THIS YEAR
Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated September 27, 2018

HYDERABAD: A drop of close to 50,000 hectares or 15 per cent in overall sugar cane cultivation has been reported in Sindh in 2018-19 season due to a variety of reasons, ranging from water shortage to sugar millers' obstinacy not to pay official rate, belated payments to growers and dilly-dallying on start of crushing season by sugar factories.

Official sources claimed that cane cultivation figures were being compiled but reports coming out of relevant quarters indicated that a drop of close to 50,000 hectares could not be ruled out. Sugar cane growers also claim that a number of sugar millers have confirmed to them that the sweetener's cultivation had dropped in their areas.

Sugar cane sowing target in Sindh has remained stuck at 320,000ha over the last four years since 2014-15. In 2013-14 season, cane was cultivated on 299,000ha against the sowing target of 269,000ha, prompting the provincial agriculture department to increase the target in subsequent years to 320,000ha. In the last season of 2017-18, 333,000ha were brought under cane cultivation against the same sowing target.

The official date of the start of cane crushing season draws nearer but it brings no joy to cane producers who look forward to it with great trepidation because of nerve-racking rounds of meetings over cane's price fixation.

The belated cane harvest, according to the cane growers, always benefits sugar millers because it increases recovery of sucrose content in the crop and decreases the cane's weight. Farmers get payment of sugar cane on the basis of per 40kg weight of their crop. It is why sugar millers delay start of crushing on lame excuse that the crop has not matured yet.

As sucrose recovery increases and crosses benchmark of 8.7pc, the payment of quality premium to growers also gets due.

Sugar cane growers expect the government to initiate the process of fixation of indicative price as it is the right time to discuss the issue and ensure the crushing starts on time. But there are no signs yet the Sindh government is gearing up for convening a meeting of millers and growers' representatives in October.

Sindh Abadgar Board vice president Mahmood Nawaz Shah says a number of mills have confirmed to growers that there is 20pc to 25pc drop in cane acreage in their area and he believes when the final sowing figures are compiled the actual loss per acre may rise to 35pc. "In the last crushing season, the growers had suffered badly on account of payment of cane price fixed by the government and then by the Sindh High Court," he remarks.

According to Sugar Factories Control Act the crushing season is to start not later than Nov 30 and as per later provisions in the law, the crushing is supposed to commence in October.

As soon as the government notifies date for the crushing season, growers prepare to harvest their crop and ready their land for wheat sowing. In the last crushing season, sugar millers had

suspended the crushing after starting it in December for around a fortnight on the ground that they were unable to pay the price of Rs172 per 40kg fixed by Sindh High Court.

The mills had then resumed the crushing in January but did not make payments in time and made matters worse for growers over accounts as millers had insisted not to issue CPR (cane price receipt) to growers.

Water shortage during early Kharif also had negative implications for the cane crop and it was believed to have affected the crop's overall health. Water availability is likely to be affected in the days to come during Rabi season as well which can hit the crop even further.

"Such back-to-back problems forced growers, in many cases, to burn their cane crop and sell it. Once the crop is burnt, its leaves are lost and the bare cane is sold at lesser rate after deductions. Many desperate growers even go for this option only to free their land for wheat cultivation," he says.

Published in Dawn, September 27th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1435151/sugar-cane-production-in-sindh-likely-to-drop-by-15pc-this-year

POULTRY EXPO BEGINS TODAY

RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: A three-day International Poultry Expo 2018 will start from Thursday (today) at the Lahore Expo Centre under the aegis of Pakistan Poultry Association.

The Expo will conclude on September 29 which will exhibit potential of Pakistani poultry sector and importance of poultry meat for human health, and it will have three interactive sessions with media, civil society and representatives of different medical associations, health authorities and academicians.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/27/17-page/741158-news.html

IMPORT OF USED TRACTORS TO HURT INDUSTRIES: PAAPAM
By Our Correspondent

Published: September 27, 2018

LAHORE: The managing committee of the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (Paapam) has decided to start its engagement campaign with the government to persuade it not to entertain the import of used tractors.

It was discussed at an emergency meeting of Paapam held on September 25 that discussed the impact of imported tractors on Pakistan's industries, agriculture and employment.

They were of the opinion that tractor import would have a negative impact on the domestic industry, which consists of 300 auto part manufacturers, employing around 50,000 people directly and contributing to the national exchequer by paying taxes and saving foreign exchange by providing import substitution.

On average, the industry operates at a capacity of 75% in the five-year cycle as demand fluctuates based on crop yields and market prices.

The industry posted growth in the last two years due to the support to farmers by the previous government in the form of fertiliser subsidy and interest-free loans among other measures. In the past 10 years, the industry witnessed two downturns – once due to the imposition of general sales tax (GST) and then due to drop in market prices and weather impact.

Consequently, neither the used imported tractors will go in favour of the farmers, nor the quality of these tractors can be ensured and their after-sales service will also not be possible due to unavailability of trained staff and spare parts.

The parts used in after-sales service will also have to be imported, putting further pressure on the Pakistani rupee, they said.

Imported used tractors would mean after-sales service issues for farmers, loss of business, closure of tractor part manufacturing units, loss of revenue to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and flight of foreign exchange.

Pakistan exports three to four thousand tractors due to their attractive price and quality. Tractors being manufactured in Pakistan are well suited for the Pakistani agriculture needs, they said.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 27th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1812307/2-import-used-tractors-hurt-industries-paapam/

APMPEA DEMANDS INCENTIVES TO BOOST HALAL FOOD EXPORTS
ZAHID BAIG SEP 28TH, 2018 LAHORE

All Pakistan Meat Processors & Exporters Association (APMPEA) has urged the government to treat this industry on par with other export sectors by extending all incentives being given to others, especially textile sector. “Despite having an export of over $2 billion, we are not being acknowledged as an industry. We have the potential to become an industry of $10 billion in next few years provided we are given incentives like other sectors,” said APMPEA Chairman Nasib Ahmad Saifi while talking to Business Recorder on Thursday.

He said all the raw material of this industry is present within the country and they do not need to ask for exemptions or reductions of duties. “We only need that the export refinance procedure be made simple and easy for us. Our industry is not in need of working capital. It just wants that the export refinance should be extended on easy terms against letter of credit opened by our importers against any consignment,” Saifi demanded.

He regretted that Pakistan was not taking advantage of $3.6 trillion international halal market despite being a Muslim country and having all the capabilities to make its presence realized. He said they are not having even one percent of the total international market.

Saifi proposed that the government should urge its commercial counselors deputed abroad to work in collaboration with their organization to capture different traditional and non-traditional markets. “We are exporting to only three markets of the Middle East while India is exporting halal meat products to over 40 countries,” he disclosed.

He claimed that recently beef exported to Russia and Turkey was appreciated very much due to its taste. “Beef of young animals was exported from Pakistan as compared to others competitors. We should target new markets such as Turkey, Central Asian countries, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Japan, Lebanon and Morocco,” he proposed.

Concluding his remarks, Saifi proposed that the government should immediately allot at least 500 acres of land each to the actual owners of meat processing and export units for livestock farming in Cholistan area, so they can enhance their capacity and production of meat.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180928411022/

BELARUS FOR EXPANDING TIES IN AGRI, TEXTILE SECTORS
RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: Belarusian ambassador Andrei Ermolovich in a meeting with the Punjab chief minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, here Thursday said that his government is desirous to further expand the existing cooperation with Pakistan particularly in agriculture and textile sectors.

Different matters of mutual interest including promotion of bilateral relations and expansion of cooperation came under discussion. Both agreed to further promote cooperation between Punjab and Belarus and options of investments were also pondered.

Talking on the occasion, the chief minister said that agenda of PTI government is the welfare of the masses and government is working hard to fulfill this commitment. Investment will be promoted with friendly countries and cooperation between Punjab and Belarus will be expanded in important sectors, he said.

He said that exchange of trade and investment delegations will help to promote investment and cooperation in different sectors. He said that ample opportunities of investments exist in different areas including agriculture, livestock and textile sectors. We will welcome Belarusian investors with open arms and practical steps will be taken for cooperation, he said.

Belarusian ambassador said that Belarus is far ahead in automobile industry and cooperation will be extended with Punjab in this regard. Similarly, we are also desirous to promote cooperation in agriculture and textile sectors.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/28/9-page/741323-news.html

INDONESIA EAGER TO BUY 1M TONS OF RICE FROM PAKISTAN
By Owais Qarni

Published: September 29, 2018

MULTAN: Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan Iwan Suyudhie Amri has said that Jakarta is working to establish a mutually acceptable mechanism for the import of one million tons of rice from Pakistan by 2019.

Speaking to members of the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) on Friday, Amri invited local manufacturers, exporters and industrialists to take part in the 33rd Trade Expo in Indonesia, which would be held from October 24 to 28 for promoting business ventures.

“We have decided to grant free 30-day visa to traders and visitors from 174 countries; registered buyers will be welcomed at Jakarta’s Soekarno-Hatta Airport,” he said.

Tracing bilateral relations, he said the two countries have had friendly and cordial ties since the inception. “However, now we should make serious efforts to translate these relations into greater economic partnership,” he stressed.

“The volume of bilateral trade is $2.18 billion which is far less than the existing potential.” He was of the view that exports from Pakistan should increase by a considerable degree.

He praised the improved law and order situation in Pakistan, saying it would definitely impact exports to Indonesia positively.

Pointing to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said it would attract foreign investment and also benefit all regional countries.

“Indonesia is a country with a huge population of 250 million; our domestic market is very strong which has provided us a solid base for speedy economic growth.”

Regarding halal food, Amri said Pakistan was quickly adopting halal food certification which would help raise its halal product exports to Indonesia.

Earlier in his welcome address, MCCI President Malik Asrar Ahmed Awan highlighted the importance of the region, saying Multan contributed 96% to total production in Punjab and 70% to the country's production.

"It has 47% share in wheat harvest, 23% in sugarcane, 50% in livestock and also produces good-quality mangoes," he said.

Awan pointed out that trade between Pakistan and the Southeast Asian nation had been growing strongly for the last couple of years.

The volume of bilateral trade grew from $700 million in 2010 to $2.3 billion in 2016, up 229%.

"Pakistan is not ready to explore Far East markets including Indonesia. Unless our exporters go for innovation and branding, the situation is not going to change," said Awan.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 29th, 2018

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1813939/2-indonesia-eager-buy-1m-tons-rice-pakistan/

COTTON MARKET: MILLS, EXPORTERS INDULGE IN FRESH BUYING OF QUALITY LINT
RECORDER REPORT SEP 29TH, 2018 KARACHI

Mills and exporters indulged in fresh buying of quality lint to meet their immediate requirements on the cotton market on Friday, dealers said. The official spot rate was down by Rs 50 to Rs 8000, they added. Prices of seed cotton in Sindh were at Rs 3700-3800, in the Punjab, rates at Rs 3500-3800 and in Balochistan, prices of seed cotton were at Rs 3800-3900, they said.

In ready session, over 20,000 bales of cotton changed hands between Rs 7800-8250, they said. Commenting on the fresh developments, cotton analyst, Naseem Usman said that the local cotton market influenced with the global track and it seems that present trend may persist in the near future.

Some leading brokers said that buyers are active to replenish their stock. The seed cotton arrivals are on full swinging, providing an opportunity to the buyers to lay hands over the fine type at cheaper rates, they said. According to the reports, cotton prices failed to come out of bottom side due to rising uncertainties about the world economies.

The following deals reported: 2000 bales of cotton from Tando Adam at Rs 7950/8000, 1200 bales from Sanghar at Rs 7850/7950, 1000 bales from Mirpurkhas at Rs 7800/8000, 1400 bales from Shahdadpur at Rs 7900/8050, 400 bales from Kotri at Rs 7900/7950, 200 bales from Daur at Rs 8050, 400 bales from Maqsoodo Rind at Rs 8050, 400 bales from Bandhi at Rs 8050, 400 bales from Sakrand at Rs 8050, 1600 bales from Nawabshah at Rs 8050, 1400 bales from Saleh Pat at Rs 8200/8250, 1200 bales from Rohri at Rs 8175/8200, 2000 bales from Khairpur at Rs 8125/8175, 400 bales from Yazman Mandi at Rs 8150/8200, 200 bales from Fort Abbas at Rs 8175, 400 bales from Mianwali at Rs 8100, 600 bales from Rajanpur at Rs 8200/8225, 400 bales from Fazilpur at Rs

8200/8225, 400 bales from Chistian at Rs 8050/8075, 600 bales from Haroonabad at Rs 8000/8025, 200 bales from Vehari at Rs 8075, 200 bales from Jehania at Rs 8025, 400 bales from Burewala at Rs 8000, 400 bales from D.G. Khan at Rs 8200, 400 bales from R.Y.Khan at Rs 8200 and 200 bales from Chichawatni at Rs 8075, they said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180929411393/

14 PAKISTANI FISHERMEN RETURN FROM INDIA, 52 STILL LANGUISH IN ITS JAILS
Shazia Hasan Updated September 30, 2018

KARACHI: As the fathers, brothers, uncles and friends of the 14 Pakistani fishermen returning from Indian jails lined up on platform number eight of the Cantonment Railway Station for the Night Coach Express to arrive on Saturday afternoon, they took out fistfuls of red rose petals from plastic bags to shower on the fishermen. A few rose petals also fell to the ground, which were quickly collected by tiny hands. A toddler in brown shalwar kameez squatted on the floor to gather the fallen petals.

He was Rihal, son of Faiz Mohammad, one of the returning fishermen. Rihal had come to the train station all the way from Sujawal district with his uncle Mumtaz Ali. “He is only two-and-a-half. When his father was arrested at sea by the Indian Coast Guard after unknowingly having crossed over to that side, he was only one year old but fearing that he would not have any recollection of his father, we have been showing him his father’s photographs,” said the uncle.

Rihal, two-and-a-half, watches his mother and grandmother crying with joy and starts crying too

“When we were informed that Faiz’s name was also among the fishermen being released from Indian jails this time we were overjoyed. Rihal watched his mother and grandmother crying with joy and started crying too. I have told him that he will meet his father today. He just can’t wait,” he said.

Asked how the family had been coping financially with one earning member away, Mumtaz said that Faiz was his elder brother and with him away the responsibility of taking care of the entire family fell on his own shoulders. “Our parents don’t keep well. We have younger siblings too, as well as our wives and children to take care of. I had to feed some 20 to 25 mouths, so I took on the job of driver besides fishing. Whenever there was a big fishing trawler leaving, I would take leave from my job for a week to 10 days to accompany them to make some extra money. Life has been very hectic,” he said.

As the train finally chugged in, families and friends of the fishermen who had come to receive them earnestly scanned the compartments passing them by. Suddenly they heard loud cheers from inside one and started running alongside the train until it stopped. Sons were united with fathers, brothers embraced brothers but the most tearful reunion was between Faiz and his little boy. Mumtaz quickly let his brother pull the boy into his arms as the little boy came face to face with his father he had only known through his pictures until now. Faiz kissed his little boy who was crying and promised him to never leave him alone ever again. “I will work as a labourer if need be, but I won’t go to fish in the sea anymore, I will be with you and see you grow big and strong,” he said to him.

Among the returning fishermen were Hamid Ali, Laung Ali, Manzoor Ali, Dilbar, Imam Ali, Yaseen, Rajab Ali, Sajjad Ali, Yousuf, Niaz Hussain, Siraj, Ali Asghar and Faisal Ali. All hail from Sujawal district. All were arrested on the same night at around 2am some 13 months ago. “There were three or four of us in five small boats. The sea was rough and we didn't realise when we had drifted over to the other side," said Faisal Ali, who also told Dawn that he had only been married for a couple of months when the unfortunate incident took place.

Beatings in jail

About his time in an Indian prison, he said they enjoyed beating him and the other Pakistani prisoners with him. "We were made to work extra hard and given very little food to eat. They referred to us as 'Dushman' [enemy]," he said. "But there is one positive thing that came out of all this," he said.

"Before this I used to be a chain smoker. But when I requested the jail staff for a biri [cigarette] I would only get a tight slap in return. I have not smoked in 13 months and now when someone offered me a cigarette after crossing the Wagah Border, I didn't feel like smoking. At least my bride would be happy," he said.

The Pakistani fishermen were handed over to Pakistani authorities at Wagah in Lahore on Sept 26. After a day's stay at the Edhi Home they were brought to Karachi with the help of the Edhi Foundation. Among others, they were received at the station by chairman of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum Mohammad Ali Shah and his volunteers with representatives of the Fishermen's Cooperative Society Limited.

After the return of these 14 fishermen, there are 52 more left in Indian jails, whose return is impatiently awaited by their poor families.

Published in Dawn, September 30th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1435783/14-pakistani-fishermen-return-from-india-52-still-languish-in-its-jails

PAD ARRANGES COTTON GROWING AREAS TRIPS FOR FARMERS
RECORDER REPORT SEP 30TH, 2018 LAHORE

The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) is arranging field days throughout the cotton growing areas to create awareness amongst the farmers about importance of clean picking of cotton. These field days are being held at village, union council, Markaz, Tehsil and district level where practical demonstration of clean picking of cotton is given to the growers.

This was disclosed by Additional Secretary Agriculture (Task Force) Beenish Fatima Sahi while speaking at the meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee here on Saturday. DG Agriculture (Ext) Syed Zafar Yab Haider, Director Cotton Dr Saghir Ahmad and others were also present on this occasion.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180930411596/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 17TH TO SEPTEMBER 23TH 2018
MILLERS ALLOWED SUGAR EXPORT WITH CONDITIONS
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 17, 2018

LAHORE: Sugar millers have been allowed export of sugar on the promise that they will start cane crushing in time, besides procuring the crop from farmers at the prescribed support price.

This was stated by Punjab Agriculture Minister Malik Nauman Langerial while talking to a delegation of Kisan Ittehad here on Sunday.

The farmers' delegation led by retired Capt Muhammad Hussain presented a 13-point charter of demands to the minister who assured them their issues would be resolved on priority basis. The charter included demands of maintaining power tariff for tube-wells at Rs5.35 per unit and freezing the recovery of arrears, imposing a complete ban on import of fruit and vegetables and provision of certified seed.

Mr Langerial held the government policies during last 10 years responsible for the problems being faced by the agriculture sector plunging small landholders into crisis.

The minister said as the foremost problem of the farmers was sale of fake pesticides and non-availability of seed and fertilizers, his department would play a proactive role in checking the counterfeit insecticides and heavy fines would be imposed on those involved in the ugly business.

Timely availability of certified seed and fertilizers would also be ensured, he said, adding the agriculture marketing system was also being changed to ensure a better return to the growers for their produce.

Published in Dawn, September 17th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1433345/millers-allowed-sugar-export-with-conditions

TAIL-END GROWERS PROTEST WATER THEFT BY BIG LANDOWNERS IN DADU
Dawn Report Updated September 18, 2018

DADU: Tail-end growers of various irrigation channels of Dadu and Mirpurkhas districts on Monday in their respective areas against irrigation officials' alleged connivance with big landowners in water theft.

Small growers having their lands in the tail-end of Pir Gunio Shakh (irrigation channel) in Dadu district took out a rally and held demonstrations outside the local press club and at different points of the dried bed of the channel to draw the attention of the higher authorities to their plight.

Mohammad Suleman, who led the protest, told reporters that they had been facing an acute shortage of irrigation and drinking water as big landowners of the area had deployed their armed men along the course of the channel. He alleged that "such forcible occupation of the entire water channel is not possible without their connivance with the local irrigation officials".

The protesters also alleged that the armed men were preventing water from flowing up to the tail-end areas. They complained that unavailability of water for many weeks had disabled them from cultivating their lands for cane, cotton and vegetable crops on several hundred acres.

A cane grower, Jan Mohammad, said that sugar cane was cultivated on 100 acres in the area but the crop had dried up for want of water. He said that the sub-divisional officers and executive engineer concerned were not found present in their offices to hear their complaints and the lower staff appeared helpless with regard to their woes.

Another grower, Haji Khan, said that the tail-end area of Pir Gunio Shakh was not getting water even for drinking. “Our animals are dying of thirst,” he said.

Similar complaints were made by participants in other demonstrations held by growers of various other areas of Dadu supposed to be provided water through Khudabad, Phaka and Johi irrigation channels.

In Mirpurkhas, scores of growers belonging to the tail-end areas of Kherao Shakh held a demonstration outside the local press club on Monday against an acute shortage of water.

Shahnawaz Halepota and Murad Marri led the protesters, who raised slogans against the irrigation officials concerned for not heeding their impassioned calls for supply of water.

Speaking to reporters, they alleged that their share of water was actually sold to influential landowners of the area.

The unlawful practices on the part of the landowners and local irrigation officials had rendered small growers’ thousands of acres of land barren, they lamented.

They urged the authorities concerned to intervene in the matter and ensure water supply and its judicious distribution in the area.

Published in Dawn, September 18th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1433529/tail-end-growers-protest-water-theft-by-big-landowners-in-dadu

FARMERS ADVISED TO STOP BURNING OF CROP RESIDUALS
RECORDER REPORT SEP 18TH, 2018 LAHORE

The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) has announced to monitor the burning of crop residuals and warned of strict action against those involved in this practice. A spokesman of the agriculture department said on Monday that Punjab is facing severe challenge of environmental pollution.

He further disclosed that it is recommended that air pollution must not exceed 80 microgram per cubic meter as per standard measure but if same exceeded to 200 microgram per cubic meter in multiple areas then this condition is known to be as smog. Dense smog has adverse effect on not only human beings but also on the crops.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180918408661/

TCP INITIATES IMPORT OF 0.1M TONNES OF UREA
RIZWAN BHATTI

KARACHI: Following the directives of the federal government, the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has initiated import of 0.1 million metric tons of urea for domestic consumption.

In the second week of this month, the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet had allowed import of some 100,000 metric tons urea to avoid shortage in the domestic market. Accordingly, the state-run grain trader was given the task to import urea from international market as local urea plants are unable to produce sufficient quantity of urea, mainly due to gas curtailment.

Sources said that sufficient urea stocks are available in the country for Kharif season, however Rabi season may face some shortage of urea, therefore in order to ensure adequate urea stocks in coming months, the federal government has decided to import some 0.1 millions urea.

Following the directives of the federal government, TCP has invited sealed bids from the international urea suppliers and producers for supply of 100,000 metric tons commodity through their local offices or local agents having capacity to supply 'Urea' in bulk through worldwide sources on C&F basis as per TCP's the terms and conditions.

According to tender the supplied urea will be strictly in accordance with the standards and specifications prescribed by Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and Import Policy Order in force. However, bids less than 50,000 metric tons (minimum quantity) will not be accepted.

Interested bidders have been asked to submit bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the tender documents by October 15, 2018 latest by 10:30 AM. The received bids will be opened the same day at 11:00 AM in the TCP's Board Room, in presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who may wish to be present.

As per tender term and conditions, the interested parties who have not fulfilled their contractual obligation with TCP will also not be eligible to participate in the biding process, unless they clear their dues along with penalties or fulfill their contractual obligations in services and commodities with TCP, as the case may be, before tender opening date. Furthermore, those firms against which black listing procedures have been initiated by TCP will not be eligible to participate in the tender.

Sources said that the country's fertilizer industry is capable to meet the domestic urea demand with an installed production capacity of over 6.5 million tons annually as against demand of 5.8 million tons annually. However, they (domestic urea producers) are unable to produce sufficient commodity due to gas curtailment. Therefore the federal government has decided to import urea from international market to avoid any shortage during next crop season.

Three urea producing plants operating on the SNGPL network are shut-down for the last one year due to lack of basic raw material-natural gas. There is no natural gas left to allocate to the urea producing plants on the SNGPL network, resulted in short production of some 85,000 metric tons urea every month.

Although, the federal government had also decided to provide the gas to these plants to ensure maximum production, however still these plants have not get gas supply for urea production.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/18/22-page/739755-news.html

TDAP PARTICIPATES IN WORLDFOOD MOSCOW
By Press Release

Published: September 19, 2018

KARACHI:The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is participating in WorldFood Moscow, Russia with six exhibitors relating to the product categories like rice, fruits and vegetables, spices, etc. WorldFood Moscow, a four-day exhibition starting from September 17, 2018, is a major exhibition serving the global food and drinks industry. Since its inception in 1991, the event has grown to become the entry point for international manufacturers looking to enter the vibrant Russian market. The event is the perfect platform to promote new food and drink products in Russia attracting thousands of businesses from around the world. Pakistan has constructed a customised pavilion with beautiful branding under the theme of "Emerging Pakistan" with the support of the Minister (Trade) Moscow Nasir Hamid.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 19th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1806745/2-tdap-participates-worldfood-moscow/

80PC SUBSIDY ON SOLAR PANEL FOR DRIP IRRIGATION

By Our Staff Reporter 9/20/2018 12:00:00 AM

LAHORE: The agriculture depanment will install 1,000 solar panels within 100 days to operate drip irrigation systems as a step towards saving water and energy sources.

The government will offer 80 per cent subsidy on the panels.

The task has been assigned to On-farm Water Management directorate of the depanment, says a spokesperson.

The farmers, who have set up drip/ sprinkler irrigation system in 2018-19, will be eligible to get solar panels installed.

He says the department is also offering 50pc subsidy on installation of tunnel farming infrastructure for growing vegetables and the farmers interested in any of the schemes may apply to nearby offices of On-Farm Water Management directorate and download the forms directly from the depanment`s website.

The spokesperson hopes that the programme will not only save [available] water for agricultural purpose but also enhance crop productivity.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=20_09_2018_002_00

PEST ATTACK: FARMERS ADVISED TO PROTECT CROP
Recorder Report Sep 20th, 2018 Karachi

The Met Office on Wednesday warned the farmers of a pest attack on cotton, asking them to step up measures to protect the standing crop from damage. In a farmers' advisory, it informed that a pest attack on cotton crop has been witnessed in the lower parts of the country, asking the growers to spray the insecticides in consultations with the concerned department.

It also urged the farmers to make irrigation plans keeping in view the current weather and remove the weeds from standing crops to help yield growth. "Continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country," it added. In the next 24 hours: Mainly the dry weather is expected in most parts of the country. Maximum temperature was recorded in Sibbi as 42 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Temperature in Karachi is expected to range up to 33 degrees Celsius on Thursday and Friday with 85 percent humidity. Weather is likely to remain partly cloudy.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180920409218/

UVAS VOWS TO REVAMP LIVESTOCK SECTOR
Recorder Report Sep 20th, 2018Lahore

The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore organized a meeting of the Livestock Emergency Subgroup under the theme of Prime Minister's 100 days agenda to develop concrete plan to revamp livestock sector, here at the City Campus Lahore on Wednesday.

Former secretary Livestock & Dairy Development Department Punjab (L&DD) Nasim Sadiq and UVAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Talat Naseer Pasha co-chaired the meeting while representatives of the federal government, officials of L&DD departments of all provinces, Punjab Breeding Authority, Pakistan Dairy Association, Buffalo Breeders Association (Punjab), Corporate Dairy Farmers Association of Pakistan , Pakistan Tanners Association, Dairy & Cattle Farmers Association, Meat Export Association of Pakistan, Pakistan Poultry Association, progressive farmers and a large number of stakeholders, academicians and researchers from across the country attended meeting.

Nasim Sadiq and Professor Pasha sought suggestions and technical input from stakeholders for making national livestock policies and plans to develop a concrete plan to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to "Revamp Livestock Sector".

Speaking on the occasion, Nasim Sadiq said that it is direly needed to enhance our indigenous fodder productivity and vaccine production to enhance livestock productivity in country.

He said that livestock industry would be the biggest industry of Pakistan due to its potential. He said that in recent years, livestock sector grew due to prevention of deadly diseases like foot and mouth, HS, PPR through guidance of farmers for their profitability and creating awareness among consumers about safe/healthy and high quality food due to combined efforts of Livestock Department and UVAS. Professor Pasha said the federal government is actively working to revamp livestock sector and this meeting is an effort to this end.

He said that the aim of the meeting was to provide a platform to stakeholders including farmers, meat exporters, service providers, poultry, dairy & meat industrialists in public and private sectors where they can forward their technical inputs and share their issues, impediments, problems which are hurdles in revamp of livestock sector.

He also recommended starting a school milk programme by providing schoolchildren to healthy foods like glass of milk and egg daily in their class rooms to solve the malnutrition issues of Pakistan. Various issues related to increase in productivity of dairy and meat farms, productivity of small dairy farms, poor milk and milk-based product quality, poor meat quality and lesser demand for products which can boost the sector discussed.ax rates for the industry.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180920409244/

PUNJAB FOOD AUTHORITY TO PREPARE POLICY FOR FORTIFICATION PROGRAMMEE
By Our Correspondent

Published: September 20, 2018

LAHORE:The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has rolled up its sleeves against flour mills in order to ensure the fortification programme is being implemented.

This was revealed in a meeting with officials from the Food Fortification Programme held at PFA's headquarter on Wednesday.

PFA Director General Captain (retd) Muhammad Usman directed the technical wing to make an initial policy regarding the implementation within the next two weeks. PFA will seek help from a scientific panel while preparing the policy regarding the action plan for fortification, its effects and problems.

"The purpose of this programme is to maintain food nutrition and to address the high percentage of micro nutrient deficiencies in Punjab," said Usman. The fortification programme is an efficient way to overcome nutrient deficiency which is why the authority is taking all the necessary steps to bring all the departments on board, he added.

PFA is also taking action against adulterators and those food manufacturers who are not abiding by regulations. The authority will not spare any individual found guilty of violating rules and regulations, he stressed.

Meanwhile, the authority lodged an FIR against the owner of a fake beverage factory. A special team caught employees red-handed producing fake beverages using the label of a renowned carbonated drink.

PFA teams also discarded 7,000 litres of fizzy drinks and more than 3,100 litres of raw material during the raid. The factory was functioning at a site located near Shahdrah.

The director general said that by busting factory operations, the authority had also foiled an attempt to supply thousands of litres of fake beverages to the market. Not only were counterfeit beverages being manufactured at the factory but they were also labelling these bottles trying to pass them off as drinks from renowned companies.

Teams also disposed of 2,000 litres of chemicals and fake flavouring, 500 kg of sweetner and more than 600 litres of poor quality food colouring. They also confiscated rusty machinery, 15 cylinders, one water tank and 1,000 empty bottles.

Usman added that these fake drinks were being supplied to areas in Lahore, Kasur, Gujranwala and Pattoki. PFA also seized the supply record and has launched an investigation in order to withdraw the bottles from the market.

Usman said that he had directed the operations and vigilance wings to accelerate their action against food adulterators in Punjab.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 20th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1807551/1-punjab-food-authority-prepare-policy-fortification-programmee/\

EMPLOYEES OF 250 FLOUR MILLS TRAINED ON WHEAT FORTIFICATION
Recorder Report Sep 21st, 2018 Islamabad

Planning Commission of Pakistan in collaboration with its international development partners including Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Food Programme had provided technical assistance and trained the staff of 250 flour mills on wheat fortifications in order to overcome the issues and challenges of malnutrition and stunted growth.

These mills were also provided micro-feeders to mix iron, folic acid and zinc in the flour wheat to provide nutrient filled food for children and women to overcome the malnutrition and stunted growth, said an official in the Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms.

Talking to APP, he said that the steps were taken to address the issues of malnutrition and challenges of stunted growth, which were affecting the efforts of human development index of the country. Besides providing the micro-feeders, he said that special efforts were also made for the capacity building of staff of these mills and other government sector institutions to ensure the strict compliance of quality and standards of foods, he added.

So far, he said that about 100,000 tons of the wheat flour were fortified with iron, folic acid and zinc with the micro-feeders, besides the capacity building of governmental organization in order to maintain the standards as well as ensuring the provision of quality and nutrient filled food.

Under the initiative about 76 vegetable ghee and edible oil manufacturing mills in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were also provided pre-mix for mixing Vitamin D in the vegetable ghee and edible, he added. He said that these mills had produced about 950,000 tons of edible oil and ghee, besides the capacity building of the workforce to produce nutrient filled ghee and oil for cementing the initiatives for human resource development and improving the human health in the country.

He further said that Planning Commission of Pakistan in collaboration with FAO would also launch ‘Pakistan dietary guideline for better nutrient’ by end of current month aimed at providing dietary characteristics for all age groups.

The initiative is also aimed at to overcome the malnutrition, stunted growth, and food deficiencies among the women and children. The guidelines have been finalized, covering two agro-ecological zones having information about 350 raw and cooked food items with 25 nutrition parameters to ensure strict quality control. To address the issue of stunted growth and malnutrition, he said that the linkages with academia was also strengthened and 52 national universities were engaged to conduct studies and research on production of high quality and nutrient filled food.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180921409555/

K-P GOVERNMENT ENHANCING WAREHOUSING CAPACITY FOR WHEAT STORAGE
By APP

Published: September 23, 2018

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber-Pakthunkhwa has accelerated efforts to increase wheat and others agricultural crops production in the province to provide quality food, vegetable and fruits services to all as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Provincial Minister for Food Qalandar Khan Lodhi has said that the K-P government has formulated a comprehensive policy to increase wheat and other agricultural production by giving special incentives to growers and farmers to cater food requirements of an ever growing population.

“We will construct new warehouses for wheat’s storage on need basis in districts while storage capacity of the already existing warehouses will be expanded in next five years,” he said.

Under the policy, he said, government would purchase wheat stock directly from growers to provide them full economic and financial benefits.

He said any farmer or grower producing at least 500 tonnes of wheat would take benefit from this policy and would get maximum profit compare to open market.

This policy would help end commission culture and role of middle man and all growers would get direct financial benefits under this policy prepared by previous PTI government after consultation with all stakeholders.

The food minister said K-P government would take a lead role by capitalizing on the quality works made by the former PTI Government to take food sector to a new heights under PM’s vision for quality ‘food for all.

‘”The total wheat’s demand of K-P is about 4,200,000 ton whereas the province’s own production is around 1,200,000 tonnes,” the minister said, adding around 400,000 tonnes are being purchased from open markets annually to meet people’s requirements.

“The shortages of wheat in K-P are being fulfilled from open markets and give it to people on subsidize rate.” The overall capacity of government warehouses will be enhanced from 450,000 tonnes to 600,000 tonnes in next five years, whereas warehouses in Shangla and Dir Lower districts will be constructed on modern lines,” Lodhi said.

“As result of these positive measures, not a single kilogram atta (flour) shortage has been reported from any area of the province during last five years rule of PTI governement,” Lodhi said.

He said Food Authority setup by previous PTI government would be strengthened to curb unhygienic food practices in bazaars, hotel and other public places and elements involved in such unlawful activities would be punished according to law.

The minister said government had adopted zero tolerance against corruption as this social ill make negative effects in all socio-economic sectors of life. He said corruption has been eliminated in food department and good governance was ensured.

Lodhi said construction of dams was imperative for bolstering agriculture sector vital to ensure autarky in food.

With construction of dams and water reservoirs, he said a large chunk of infertile land in southern districts would be irrigated inevitable to get self-sufficiency in food.

"The water table has plunged in most areas of K-P and if dams were not constructed not only agriculture and industrial sectors but people would be largely affected besides mass exodus from villages to urban areas and hilly areas.

"He said Diamir Bhasha and Mohmand dams were vital for sustainable conservation of water and generation of electricity besides controlling peoples' migration.

The minister said Chamak Mera dam in Abbottabad would be constructed besides tube-wells to provide clean drinking water to people and fulfill agriculture needs of farmers.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 23rd, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1809443/1-k-p-government-enhancing-warehousing-capacity-wheat-storage/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 10TH TO SEPTEMBER 16TH 2018
ECC TAKES UP FERTILISER SUBSIDY, GAS PRICE HIKE ISSUES TODAY
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated September 10, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Amid criticism from the opposition PML-N, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet will take up for a decision on Monday (today) two of the most politically sensitive economic issues — subsidy for import and domestic production of fertiliser and 30 to 186 per cent increase in gas prices.

To be presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umer, the ECC meeting is expected to consider only two summaries, according to the agenda circulated among the members. The two subjects have been on the agenda of all the three meetings of the ECC since it was reconstituted on Aug 26.

In those meetings, the finance minister had set for himself the target to ensure that Rs14 billion windfalls earned by fertiliser industry through subsidised export of the commodity last season returned to the economy.

Sources said the timing of the decision on urea import was the most important thing because upcoming Rabi season (2018-19) has been estimated to face a 316,000 tonnes of shortage and the cropping season begins on October 1 and the import process in the public sector can hardly be completed in two months. Among other crops, wheat is the major and most crucial crop of the season being the staple food.

Meeting to be chaired by Asad Umer likely to discuss only two summaries

Therefore, more important to the decision-making on fertiliser will be its integrity given the background of both Mr Asad Umer and Abdul Razzaq Dawood, the prime minister's adviser on commerce, industries and production, as the fertiliser shortage could trigger price hike and black marketing if not handled carefully.

An official said the two have engaged with the industry in the recent days. It is estimated that when run on full capacity, three fertiliser units — Pak-Arab, Agritech and Dawood Hercules — can together produce 87,000 tonnes per month or 260,000 tonnes in three months when the commodity is required the most by wheat crop.

That would leave a shortfall of about 60,000 tonnes or up to 100,000 tonnes of import if some cushion is also taken into account. If run on 28pc liquefied natural gas and 72pc on domestic gas as has been the practice, the industry requires a subsidy of Rs2.95bn for two months.

But the fertiliser review committee under the leadership of Mr Dawood has proposed all the three plants be run on RLNG on a 50pc cost sharing basis by the fertiliser plants and the government. The ECC would decide the quantum of subsidy required for running domestic plants and on the import of remaining quantity of 60,000 to 100,000 tonnes, as the case may be and how the import process be minimised while remaining within the procurement rules.

Secondly, the ECC would also decide how to implement an average 46pc gas price increase determined by the regulator to keep the two gas utilities afloat. The government has the powers under the law to switch price increase among various consumer groups and slabs without changing the overall 46pc increase.

The summary moved by the petroleum division on gas prices on the basis of Ogra's determination has proposed 186pc increase in the price for the two lowest domestic consumer slabs. It has proposed the price of first 100 cubic meters per month be increased from Rs110 to Rs315 per MMBTU (million British Thermal Unit) and from Rs220 to Rs629 per MMBTU for up to 300 cubic meters per month.

For the third domestic slab above 300 cubic meters, fertiliser fuel, general industry and captive industry, the summary has worked out 30pc increase from Rs600 per MMBTU to Rs780. For old fertiliser, the rates have been proposed to go up by 30pc from Rs123 to Rs160 per MMBTU.

The tariff for power plants has also been worked to go up by 30pc from Rs400 to Rs520 per MMBTU while rates for cement plants have been proposed at Rs975 per unit, instead of Rs750. The rates for CNG and commercial consumers have also been proposed to go up by 30pc to Rs911 per MMBTU, instead of Rs700 per unit.

The petroleum division said the regulator had worked out 30pc increase in gas sale rates for all consumers except domestic sector where an increase of 186pc had been proposed. Even with this increase, the proposed tariff depicts 50pc cost recovery for first slab and 100pc of second slab.

Interestingly, the increase in gas rates for the SSGC are proposed relatively on the lower side — between 14 and 168pc — but given the government policy of uniform gas rates across the country, the SNGPL rates of 30 to 186pc have to be followed, according to the petroleum division's summary.

Published in Dawn, September 10th, 2018\

https://www.dawn.com/news/1431995/ecc-takes-up-fertiliser-subsidy-gas-price-hike-issues-today

IMPORT OF UREA MAY BE ALLOWED
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN & ZAHEER ABBASI SEP 10TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

Finance Minister, Asad Umar is likely to allow import of urea to meet domestic requirements after a deadlock was reached with local fertilizer industry on the issue of subsidy, well informed sources told Business Recorder. The final decision, however, will be taken by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, which is scheduled to meet on Monday (today).

According to sources, on September 7, 2018, Finance Minister Asad Umar conveyed to fertilizer industry that no one would be allowed to make windfall profits on sale of urea at the expenses of the poor farmers and last year's subsidy provided to the industry may be adjusted in the current fiscal year. Urea fertilizer is in short supply in the country but the government has yet to decide whether to run local plants or import the commodity. Urea reserves are depleted and the government requires an estimated $ 136 million to import urea which will reach Pakistan in two months time at the rate of Rs 2600 per bag.

According to industry sources, SSGCL has agreed to make available 60 MMCFD pipeline gas to SNGPL which will then provide 18 MMCFD to closed fertilizer units.

Fertilizer industry maintains that if GoP ensures supply of 78 MMCFD system gas, subsidy obligation of GoP will reduce substantially. In reply to a question put forth by Business Recorder the local fertilizer industry maintained that the government maybe tempted to import urea because of the option of deferred payment from Saudi Arabia however till the commodity is imported there would be a shortage that will jack up the price.

Sources revealed that it was agreed during the meeting to operationalize closed fertilizer plants for the two months that it would take to import to meet the demand of Rabi season. Industry sources further informed Business Recorder that they suggested to the Finance Minister to bear 50 per cent of the difference in price between RLNG and domestic gas whereas 50 per cent would be borne by the industry.

Asad Umar, sources said, clarified that he has approved 50 per cent subsidy on urea to be borne by the government and fifty percent by industry. The total impact of subsidy has been calculated at Rs 7-9 billion. "Local industry should pay 50 per cent of total subsidy. I have decided the issue, whether you take it or leave it, I will import the commodity," the sources quoted Finance Minister as saying.

One of the industry sources told Business Recorder that “the ball is in his (Finance Minister’s) court as we cannot operate our plants on this mechanism.”

A decision on whether there is a need to import urea or not will be taken after two months on the basis of demand-supply requirement for next season. Finance Minister does not want any increase in price of urea from last year’s price of Rs 1610 per bag.

The Minister was quoted as saying that according to government estimates, the industry was making a fair profit even at Rs 1610 per bag of urea and the question of an increase in the price does not rise. An official said that available stock of urea will be adequate to cater for Kharif season and as per estimate about 2982 thousands tons of urea would be available during Kharif 2018 against the total off-take of 2,912,000 tons. This includes opening balance of urea at 316,000 tons and domestic production of 2,666,000 tons.

The sources said, Abdul Razak Dawood, Prime Minister’s Advisor on Commerce, Textile and Industry who facilitated the meeting between the Finance Minister and fertilizer industry extended support to Finance Minister rather than the fertilizer industry. “It’s very strange that Finance Ministry is ready to spend more money on import of urea instead of extending subsidy to local industry”, the sources maintained.

In early 2017, the industry was carrying huge inventory (1.7 million tons) because all the plants were operating at full capacity after withdrawal of gas curtailment and provision of RLNG at reasonable prices. Moreover, National Fertilizer Marketing Limited was still holding considerable stocks imported during the previous year, which could not be liquidated in spite of highly subsidised rates. In view of the inventory position, the FRC during its meetings on 7 & 19 October 2016 concluded that the surplus inventory of over one million besides buffer stocks was likely to continue as all plants were operational and the possibility of shut down could not be ruled out. ECC initially allowed export of 300,000 tons by end March 2017, and subsequently enhanced quota to 600,000 tons to be exported by 31 October 2017, The industry exported 559,000 tons by the end of September 2017. Later, on the request of the government of Sri Lanka, an additional 34,000 tons of export was also allowed. Total 634,000 tons were exported by February 2018.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180910406122/

FARMERS’ GROUPS DEMAND ENTIRE PROVINCE BE DECLARED CALAMITY-HIT
By Our Correspondent

Published: September 10, 2018

HYDERABAD: Farmers’ lobbying groups in Sindh have asked the provincial government to declare drought in the entire province owing to persistent water shortage which continued for six months till August.

On the one hand, water shortage severely harmed cultivated crops and on the other, it affected livestock.

The provincial government on September 5 classified parts of six districts of Sindh, including Tharparkar and Umerkot, as calamity-hit areas. Following the government’s move, the Sindh

Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) on Sunday demanded that rest of the districts where the economy is based on agricultural produce be also declared calamity-hit.

The SCA held a meeting in Hyderabad on Sunday, which was attended by farmers from Karachi, Sukkur, Sanghar and Ghotki districts through video link.

SCA President Qabool Muhammad Khatian said water scarcity had affected around 80% of 12.7 million acres cultivable land under command area of the Guddu, Sukkur and Kotri barrages. “The crops on 9 million acres of land dried due to water scarcity,” he lamented.

Abdul Majeed Nizamani, president of another lobbying group Sindh Abadgar Board, echoed the same demand for declaring the province calamity-hit while talking to media personnel. He criticised the government for belatedly announcing the drought in six districts and delaying to start the relief work.

“The drought conditions have harmed livestock animals mainly those kept in the arid zone areas in Sindh. The government should have already begun supplying wheat and fodder to these places,” he observed, reiterating that the delay may already have harmed thousands of livestock.

According to him, the livestock breeders who are migrating from Tharparkar, Umerkot and Sanghar to the neighbouring districts are finding it hard to arrange fodder for their animals.

Sugar cane crushing

The SCA meeting also discussed the approaching sugar cane crushing season.

Almost every year, farmers and mill owners end up in a dispute over cane crushing which sometimes even leads to litigation. The chamber asked the provincial government to timely act to preempt a new standoff. “The government shall ensure that the sugar mills start sugar cane crushing from the first week of November,” the SCA demanded.

The chamber further called for fixing the sugar cane purchasing price at Rs250 per maund instead of R172 per maund, which was fixed on the Supreme Court’s order last year. The farmers said the meeting of Sugarcane Development Board should be called at the earliest to fix the price.

Meanwhile, the SCA meeting also expressed concern over water shortage in the irrigation canals. The farmers urged the Sindh government to stop releasing 20,000 cusecs water in the downstream of Kotri barrage and to store that water in the barrage’s upstream for distribution among its four canals.

The chamber also asked the government to waive taxes and agricultural loans.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1799226/1-farmers-groups-demand-entire-province-declared-calamity-hit/

GOVT URGED TO REDUCE CULTIVATION OF WATER-GUZZLING CROPS
M RAFIQUE GORAYA
LAHORE: The Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the FPCCI has called upon the government to curtail cultivation of water intensive sugar cane and rice crops to save the scarce water resource for drinking and other vital purposes till the construction of Diamer Basha and Mohmand Dams.

Talking to Business Recorder here on Sunday former Chairman Standing Committee on Horticulture Exports of the FPCCI, and Secretary General (Federal Area) of the Businessmen Panel, Ahmad Jawad said that the Meteorological Department has warned the nation of drought conditions due to poor monsoon and snowfall this year. Mangla reservoir could only be filled by less than fifty percent thus water shortages will occur during Rabi sowing season, therefore a judicious use of available water has to be assured, Jawad emphasised.

He said that the government should rationalise the country's agriculture sector and diversify the cropping pattern immediately to save water till the completion of big and small reservoirs. In this regard it is vital that provincial governments must curtail the cultivation of sugar cane and rice crops because it consumed too much water and promote other cash crops that need less water for sowing/growing/maturing.

Jawad said we need to start laser levelling of lands under cultivation and make drip irrigation and sprinklers system mandatory instead of centuries old flood irrigation to grow our crops as well as fruit orchards. In this regard the provincial governments should do necessary legislation.

He pointed out that Pakistan's canal system is worth more than $30 billion but at the same time "abayna" (price of water) from farmers is very minimal. The Irrigation departments should increase the prices of 'abayna' so that worn out canal system is rehabilitated for judicious use of this precious resource.

Pakistan has not formulated canal water pricing yet whereas other countries have water pricing mechanism.

Today all industrial units in Pakistan use water for free, including mineral water companies. The government must place a policy where mineral water companies pay the amount per litre while pumping the underground or surface water.

He stressed that provincial governments must also build new barrages and small dams/ponds to store flood/rain water for agriculture and domestic purposes.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/10/5-page/738070-news.html

MILLERS SEEK GOVT'S HELP IN SUGAR EXPORT
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 11, 2018

LAHORE: Sugar mills owners have sought Punjab government's help for exporting the outstanding stocks to at least neighbouring Afghanistan.

A representative delegation of the sugar industry led by Zaka Ashraf called on Punjab Agriculture Minister Malik Nouman Langrial and apprised him of the issues being faced by the sector.

They said the industry had already surplus stocks of sugar, while production of the sweetener this year would be over 5.90m metric tons. They requested Mr Langrial to help them convince the federal government that the sugar industry be allowed to export surplus stocks to Afghanistan. The measure was necessary to help the industry to start crushing season in time, they said.

The minister asked agriculture department Secretary Wasif Khurshid to write a letter to the federal government in this regard. He hoped the millers would start the cane crushing season in time so that the growers didn't face losses due to weight loss of the produce. He said the growers should be paid as per support price and delay in the payment would not be tolerated.

Published in Dawn, September 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1432151/millers-seek-govts-help-in-sugar-export

RALLY SEEKS RELEASE OF FISHERMEN FROM INDIAN JAILS
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 11, 2018

KARACHI: From the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi to Karachi Press Club, families of the fishermen still locked up in Indian jails staged a protest rally organised by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) here on Monday.

The fishermen are in Indian jails for inadvertently crossing over to Indian waters in search of good catch.

Speaking on the occasion, PFF chairman Mohammad Ali Shah said there were 94 Pakistani fishermen languishing in Indian jails and their 391 Indian counterparts in Pakistani jails. He said the minors among them, along with those who had been incarcerated for more than six months, needed to be released on humanitarian grounds.

He said fishermen of both countries suffered badly due to the cruel practice of arresting them by the coast guards of the two states. "It is no solution for a mistake at sea by the poor illiterate fishermen. They are only punished due to the tension between the governments of India and Pakistan," said Shah.

"The fear of getting arrested has also led to an increased reluctance to [go] fishing in the deep sea, which has had an impact on their livelihood, too," he pointed out.

"Then confiscating of boats, which are the only means of livelihood of the fishing communities, makes the matter even worse," he concluded.

Published in Dawn, September 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1432107/rally-seeks-release-of-fishermen-from-indian-jails

IMPORT OF 0.1M TONS OF FERTILISER MAY NOT BRIDGE SHORTFALL
By Bilal Hussain

Published: September 11, 2018

KARACHI:The government initially pondered to facilitate the revival of idle plants ahead of the start of Rabi sowing season in October, but due to forecast of low gas availability in winter, it has now permitted import of 100,000 tons of subsidised fertiliser to ensure smooth supply.

The market is expecting a shortfall of 300,000 tons over the next four months as demand for fertiliser stands at 2.2 million tons and the present stock, along with the manufacturers' capacity, could meet 1.9 million tons of the requirement.

According to Sherman Securities' research analyst Saqib Hussain, the demand for fertiliser in the upcoming Rabi season will be strong and present reserves will not be enough to meet the demand for the next four months.

Therefore, the government is left with two options – either to provide subsidised gas to three idle plants to locally manufacture fertiliser or to import it to meet the expected demand.

According to initial reports, the government was mulling over providing gas with the aim of conserving the depleting foreign exchange reserves, but now Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry has announced that the government will import 100,000 tons of fertiliser.

The present price of urea bag is Rs1,615 and the imported price, as quoted by Chaudhry, is Rs2,575. The difference of Rs960 will be paid by the government in subsidy.

"According to what Fawad Chaudhry has said, the government will be paying Rs2 billion in subsidy to ensure smooth supply of fertiliser to farmers," said Topline Securities' research analyst Shankar Talreja.

Nonetheless, the decision to import 100,000 tons of urea will not meet the anticipated shortfall of 300,000 tons.

Although the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet has not shed light on restoring gas supply to the closed fertiliser plants, expectations are that the government has been trying to find a good mix of imported and locally manufactured urea to bridge the shortfall.

Currently, three plants are closed namely Agritech Limited, Fatima Fertilizer and Pakarab Fertilizers having cumulative capacity of around 0.97 million tons per annum.

Hussain of Sherman Securities said the government seemed to have budged from its previous stance of manufacturing the urea locally to meet the shortfall and now has mulled over importing it as well.

"Providing gas during winter is not an easy task and they have now come to understand they must import for the Rabi season. Import takes time, a lag of around one and a half month, which must have compelled them to take the decision on time," he added.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 11th, 2018

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1800005/2-import-0-1m-tons-fertiliser-may-not-bridge-shortfall/

PSMA SEEKS TO EXPORT SUGAR
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN SEP 12TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) on Tuesday sought permission to export 1 million tons of sugar prior to start of new crushing season, official sources told Business Recorder. This proposal was floated at a meeting of Sugar Advisory Board (SAB) which was held in the Ministry of Industries and Production. Prime Minister"s Advisor on Commerce, Textile, Industries and Production, Abdul Razak Dawood was scheduled to preside over the meeting but he opted not to attend.

According to the statistics tabled by the Ministry of Industries and Production, sugar stocks in 2017-18: in Punjab were 3.865 million tons; 2.281 million tons in Sindh and 0.470 million tons in KPK, totaling 6.617 million tons. With the balance from the previous year of 0.541 million tons total available stocks are 7.158 million tons.

The Ministry which obtained statistics from Provincial Cane Commissioners informed the meeting that with consumption of 5.200 million tons in 2017-18, the expected surplus inventory has been calculated at 1.959 million tons.

The sources said, on behalf of sugar industry Chairman Javed Kayani gave a detailed briefing to Sugar Advisory Board- the first meeting called by the new government to review and ascertain stock position.

He alluded to the already approved summary of the Cabinet referred to by the Commerce Ministry wherein sugar has been removed from Export Order (EPO) schedule 1 in view of sufficient stocks and production in the country. Commerce Ministry revealed that the government has decided to ratify the matter and it will again be taken up for review in the ECC as the previous government could not do in its last days.

"Ministry of Law has suggested that since the approval was accorded by the former government in its dying days, it needs fresh approval from the new government," said an official. Chairman PSMA further requested for the release of pending rebates to a cash-strapped sugar industry amounting to about Rs 16 billion. The source said PSMA also gave cost of production of Rs 63.50 with sales tax of Rs 6.60/kg whereas presently ex-factory price is Rs 50 per kg while employees state that industry is facing huge losses.

"The prime objective is to start the crushing season on time and get rid of the glut like situation; we have sought permission to export 1 million tons of sugar immediately. Currently we are getting offers from Afghanistan at around $ 360 to 380 per ton," the sources quoted Mr. Kayani as saying in the meeting.

PSMA argues that this advantage will be lost as India is expecting the highest ever production of 36 million tons, higher than even Brazil"s, and once that is available in the market Pakistan"s advantage will be lost. An official who attended the meeting, told Business Recorder that the Ministry of Industries and Production will submit a summary to the ECC after due consultation with the concerned Ministries within a few days.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180912406585/

WATER SCARCITY AND AGRI OUTPUT
RECORDER REPORT SEP 12TH, 2018 EDITORIAL

Briefing the Special Senate Committee on 6th September, 2018, the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) revealed that "as per preliminary analysis of data, it is anticipated that the water deficit may result in 35-45 percent shortfall during the forthcoming Rabi season 2018-19." The Tarbela Dam has now achieved maximum conservation level of 1150 feet, meaning that the drawdown for irrigation during the current Kharif season would mostly remain contained. Total storage in reservoirs stand at about 9.255 million acre feet (MAF) or 32.4 percent short of total capacity, which was 13.681 MAF. The reserves at this stage last year were 12.080 MAF or almost 24 percent lower than the capacity. Referring to the current water scarcity situation, the Secretary, Water Resources said that Pakistan is losing almost 50 percent of its total water availability despite infrastructure development of billions of dollars by the federal government. However, the lack of matching efforts by provinces has rendered this investment useless. He gave the example of Darawat Dam in Jamshoro, Kachhi Canal in Southern Punjab and Baluchistan and a small dam in KPK where only 5 to 6 percent of the envisaged benefits could be reaped. Kachhi Canal had been built with an investment of Rs80 billion to irrigate 713,000 acres of land but only 10,000 acres could be irrigated. Total water resources available in the country are 138 MAF with a storage capacity of only 13.7 MAF, i.e., 10 percent of the available total resources. Pakistan could store water for a maximum of 35 to 36 days which is way less than the rest of the world. India's storage however could last for as many as 320 days. Highlighting the problems of Sindh, Senator Sassui Palijo said that since yearly rainfall in her province is rare, farmers generally depend on the river system. Therefore, there is a need for judicious and fair distribution of water and implementation of the Water Apportionment Accord, 1991 to address grievances of smaller provinces.

The briefing of Irsa to the Senate Committee on Water Security and observations by the Secretary, Water Resources and Senator Palijo clearly point to a very depressing picture of the water management in the country. The quantity of rainfall is endowed by nature, and, therefore, cannot be altered but other elements determining the productivity of crops could certainly be changed by human efforts. It is sad to note that after a bad Kharif season, Pakistan may be braving for upto 40 percent water shortage in the upcoming Rabi season that would adversely affect country's agricultural output. The total storage in all the reservoirs is not more than two-thirds full. It is also sad that Pakistan has not been able to build any additional capacity for storage of water despite being an agricultural country. The federal government has been active in the field but matching efforts have not been made by provinces although the federating units are key players and required to take the necessary steps. In order to reach a consensus on the issue, four sessions with all the Chief Ministers were held under the Council of Common Interest (CCI) and a National Water Policy was evolved, committing the provinces to conserve at least 33 percent of the water by 2030. There is also a need to conserve water to the maximum. At present, 90-95 percent of the country's water is being used for irrigation and 50 percent of this is lost during canal diversion works. The country, as a last option, could install desalination plants in case of acute water shortage but this method of irrigation is too costly to be implemented.

It is, however, very good to see that, realizing the gravity of situation, the prime minister and the Chief Justice of the apex court are working on the issue on war footing and have appealed to all the Pakistanis, including expatriates, to contribute to the effort. How much money will be collected to build new dams is difficult to say but awareness about the issue will certainly be created at every tier of society. There is of course no doubt that agriculture sector plays a central role in the economy, contributing 19 percent of GDP and absorbing 42.3 percent of the labour force. It is also an important source of foreign exchange earnings; it stimulates growth in other sectors. In order to realize the full potential of the agricultural sector, there is also a need, besides adequate availability of water, to conserve water through various means such as sprinkling and rehabilitation of irrigation and drainage infrastructure. Moreover, agriculture modernisation is essential for enhancing integrative agriculture production capacity which, alongwith crop science, can give a massive boost to our crop yield. Improving credit access for farmers is also important in this regard.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180912406633/

COMMITTEE FEARS DRASTIC FALL IN COTTON PRODUCTION
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana Updated September 13, 2018

KARACHI: The Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC) has revised cotton production estimates to 10.847 million bales of 170kg each for this season, down from earlier projections of 14.2m bales.

The committee in its first meeting held in Islamabad on Wednesday dashed all hopes of harvesting a bumper cotton crop in 2018-19.

The country's overall cotton production has deteriorated over the years in turn affecting the gross domestic product. The country's last bumper cotton crop of 14.9m bales was harvested in 2013-14.

The decline in estimates for cotton production to 10.847m bales from 14.2m bales for the current season would push the harvest lower than last year's production at 11.581m bales.

Under the revision, production in Sindh is expected to witness a shortfall of 1.4m bales to 2.6m bales. The province produced 4.253m bales in last season.

However, making up for losses in Sindh, officials revised the estimates for Punjab up to 8.077m bales lifting the overall estimates for the season. Punjab produced 7.382m bales during the last season much lower than its historic record of producing around 10m bales.

Production estimates for Balochistan were also revised upward to 0.15m, which is higher than the last year's output of 0.117m bales. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is expected to produce around 0.02m bales.

The country's cotton production has been under stress during the last four years as country mainly because of adverse effects of climate change and shortage of irrigation water and partly due lack of attention to the declining output from the successive governments, observed Naseem Usman.

Cotton — semi-draught plant – can even survive in less irrigation water but the growers have to be educated and ensured of getting minimum required water for their cotton crop, he added.

There is an urgent need to increase country's water reservoir capacity and shift towards drip irrigation from the current flood irrigation which had been done away in many countries to conserve water, he maintained.

Published in Dawn, September 13th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1432607/committee-fears-drastic-fall-in-cotton-production

COTTON PRODUCTION TARGET REVISED DOWNWARD
TAHIR AMIN SEP 13TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

The Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC) has revised downward cotton production target by around 25 percent, i.e. to 10.847 million bales against the initial target of 14.37 million bales set for the current season 2018-19, after missing the sowing target by over 8 percent.

Official sources told Business Recorder that a meeting of the CCAC met with secretary National Food Security and Research. The meeting was also attended by representatives of textile industry, provincial governments, Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP), cotton growers, All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) and Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA).

The official sources said that the country has missed cotton sowing target by over 8 percent due to extraordinary shortage of water. Cotton was sown on 2.684 million hectares against the target of 2.95 million acres. Sources said that due to increased sugarcane cultivation in cotton areas, delay in harvest of wheat and shortage of water, decline in cotton sowing was registered.

The government had fixed the cotton area and production target for the year 2018-19 according to which Punjab was expected to cover 2.31 million hectares and produce 10 million cotton bales, Sindh had to cover 0.62 million hectares and produce 4.2 million cotton bales, Balochistan had to cover 0.03 million hectares and produce 0.15 million bales and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been targeted to sow cotton on 0.005 million acres and produce 0.02 million bales of cotton.

According to the official figures, cotton has been sown on 2.665 million hectares of land in the current season across the country against 2.665 million hectares during the same period of the last year.

The sources said that decline in cotton sowing was recorded in Sindh which is the second major cotton producing province. Sindh has covered 0.394 million hectares in the current season against the target of 0.62 million hectares and missed the target by around 35 percent. Sindh province produces around 32 mounds seed cotton per acre compared to 21 mounds in Punjab, but due to water shortage, Sindh has missed sowing target.

The target for cotton seed sowing for 2018-19 in Punjab was 2.31 million hectares and the sowing was done on an area of 2.29 million hectares. The overall sowing area in Pakistan was told to be 2.684 million hectares against the target of 2.95 million hectares.

Extraordinary shortage of water during the Kharif season has badly affected the cotton sowing in early season. However, in Punjab, 99% of sowing target was achieved, whereas in Sindh, only 64% of the target area could be sown.

According to the revised estimates Punjab is projected to produce 8.077 million bales, Sindh 2.6 million bales, Balochistan 0.150 million bales and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is projected to produce 0.020 million bales. Officials said that sugarcane crop has overtaken the cotton rich areas of the province including Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Muzaffargarh and Lodhran, which is another reason for decline in cotton areas.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180913407218/

ORGANIC FARM PROSPERS ON THE NUTRIENT-RICH WATER FROM MALIR RIVER
By Oonib Azam

Published: September 13, 2018

KARACHI:Generally, when you think of Malir River, you would imagine a stream that is always full of sewage water and filth that gets flooded when it rains. However, there's more to it. Just behind the Mehran Base, adjacent to the Expressway, the Malir River's landscape appears otherwise.

With neem trees surrounding the area and casting their shade, various crops growing and cattle grazing the land – the 86-acre area paints a picture of a soothing environment. The meadow is encircled by a chain of buildings far away.

"You want some tea?" laughed 54-year-old Shazad Hussain and asked his farmer to 'grab the goat' and milk it. The farmer then prepared tea on a woodfire. "That's how we spend our time here – with nature in a natural way," he said.

Hussain has acquired a 10-acre piece of land behind the Mehran Base on rent for irrigation pasturing. He has been growing seasonal crops in the river for the past 10 years which include organic vegetables. Organic food is the product of a farming system which avoids the use of man-made fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives.

The pesticides and medicines, according to him, have side effects. "We sow organic seeds and use gobar [cow dung] and patto ki khad [natural fertilizer]," he said.

Hussain has an experience of 23 years in the banking sector. "In 2016, I was the country head of a private bank when I quit my job to pursue what I love most," he said. His family, however, is quite sceptical about his hobby, but he believes in pursuing his dreams. Even when Hussain was working in a bank, he used to own this farm and visited it every weekend. "Now it's my full-time job," he smiled.

Sale purchase

Hussain has a Facebook page and a WhatsApp group named 'Green Karachi' through which he sells what he calls his organic crops. Currently, he is growing cauliflower, bringer and carrots on his farm. "These are three-month crops," he said, adding that just a month before Eidul Azha he planted Jantar [cow feed] and managed to earn a handsome profit.

He owns around 100 goats and as many hens. He is also rearing 10 cows and 15 sheep at his farm. "As the dawn breaks, the animals want to go out in the field," he said. "By dusk, they all come back to their shelters themselves. This is their natural process."

Snakes and Scorpions

Clad in a simple T-shirt and blue jeans, he strolled through the farm which is covered by wild grass and blue flowers. "Be careful there're snakes and scorpions here," he warned.

Hussain believes that if one is afraid of snakes and scorpions, he or she can never do farming. "It's a whole science," he said, explaining that one needs to know how to deal with the snakes and which crop to plant at what time to gain maximum profit.

Irrigation channel

At one end of his land is a small dam which, he claims to be 200 metres long, 100 metres wide and around 15-feet deep. “This is the natural flow of water,” he said, adding that the dam stores water and doesn’t allow it to go back.

When asked if it’s industrial wastewater, he said that the industrial wastewater was at Korangi Creekside. “This is domestically consumed water which is very fertile,” he explained. There is a pump and small water channels made of mud, through which the water is supplied to the crops.

Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams of Karachi University’s Institute of Environmental Studies believes that usually in urban areas, irrigation is done through the domestic wastewater which provides nutrients to the plants. He, however, said that the presence of micro bacteria cannot be ruled out. “The industrial wastewater has metal in it, which is extremely dangerous,” he said and explained that in order to bring the domestic water to use, one should install small treatment plants, which he added, were not very costly.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1801637/1-organic-farm-prospers-nutrient-rich-water-malir-river/

E-AGRICULTURE STRATEGY DISCUSSED
By APP

Published: September 13, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), organised a two-day consultation workshop to identify the road-map for e-agriculture strategy in Pakistan.

Initiatives were aimed at identifying effective and efficient ways for reaching more farmers, transferring knowledge, adaptation to climate change and supporting modernisation of Pakistan’s agri-sector by using available information and communication technologies.

The consultation process will lead to the preparation of a framework for providing support for the formulation of national e-agriculture policy which will ensure improvement in livelihoods, food security and value-chain development.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1801808/2-e-agriculture-strategy-discussed/

SC ORDERS RELOCATION OF SUGAR MILLS LINKED TO SHARIFS
Nasir Iqbal September 14, 2018

ISLAMABAD: While dismissing appeals against a Lahore High Court order in a sugar mills case, the Supreme Court on Thursday ordered relocation of three sugar mills from cotton belt districts in southern Punjab to their original sites after dismantling of their machinery within two months.

“We do not find any merit in these appeals, consequently the petitions are dismissed,” announced Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar while closing the hearing of the appeals moved by Haseeb Waqas Sugar Mills Ltd, Chaudhry Sugar Mills Ltd and Ittefaq Sugar Mills, believed to be linked to the Sharif family.

In a short order, a three-judge bench of the apex court, however, allowed the appellants to conduct any lawful business other than running sugar mills in the buildings after the relocation of the machinery.

Dismisses appeals against LHC order

The appellants had requested the apex court to set aside the LHC order of March 2, 2017, by allowing the petitioner companies to commence functioning.

A number of petitions, including those by JDW Sugar Mills Ltd, Ashraf Sugar Mills and Indus Sugar Mills, were earlier moved before the court pleading that the relocation of the existing sugar mills would amount to establishing a new sugar mill in the local area.

On Thursday, the Supreme Court announced its short order after senior counsel Aitzaz Ahsan, who was representing JDW Sugar Mills, suggested that the appellants could be ordered to take the machinery back with nuts and bolts but he would have no complaint if the facility was utilised by them for a textile factory.

During the proceedings Justice Umar Ata Bandial observed that some incentives should be given to gradually remove sugar mills from those districts, which were known as cotton belt areas but where some sugar mills had been given massive monopoly.

But on a lighter note, CJP Nisar observed that Omni Group would take over and monopolise everything if all the mills were relocated from Punjab. Apparently, CJP Nisar without naming anyone was referring to Omni Group of the Majeed family which is believed to be close to former president Asif Ali Zardari.

One of the sugar mills — Ittefaq Sugar Mills Limited — was relocated from Pakpattan district to Bahawalpur district during the period when a ban was in place on the establishment of new sugar mills or the expansion of the existing sugar mills.

In 2006, the Punjab government had issued a policy under which neither a new sugar mill could be set up in Punjab nor could an existing sugar mill expand its production capacity. The purpose of the policy was to discourage sugar cane crop in the cotton belt areas since sugar cane consumes 18 per cent more water than other crops. It was believed that the relocation of an existing sugar mill would not be covered by that policy.

Subsequently, petitions were filed in the LHC during the hearing of which the then provincial government announced a relocation policy on Dec 4, 2015, allowing relocation of an existing sugar mill but on the recommendation of a special committee. That policy too was challenged before the LHC and was later suspended on Jan 4, 2016.

While the operation of the relocation policy was suspended, Chaudhry Sugar Mills decided to relocate its existing sugar mills to Rahim Yar Khan with an impression that there was no requirement for the mills to seek permission from the Punjab government as the relocation policy was suspended. The petitioners believed that the relocation was not in contravention of the 2006 policy as it applied only to setting up of new mills or expanding the production facility of the existing mill in the province, as neither new mills had been set up nor the size of the existing facilities expanded. The mills were only relocated.

The appellants argued that the 2006 notification did not restrict relocation of the existing sugar mills since such relocation would leave the total crushing capacity installed in the province unchanged.

They argued that at the time when the mills were established in Pakpattan district, there was an average sugarcane cultivation of 50,000 acres and average yield per acre was approximately 550 maunds but with the passage of time the total cultivation area reduced to 8,000 acres during 2013-14.

Due to decreasing availability of sugar cane in the area, the petitioner mills were forced to function below its available capacity that also constrained its business viability. Contrary to the situation in Pakpattan, Bahawalpur had shown tremendous growth in sugar cane cultivation and at present there were 400,000 acres under sugar cane cultivation.

Published in Dawn, September 14th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1432867/sc-orders-relocation-of-sugar-mills-linked-to-sharifs\

DEMURRAGES AT KENYA PORT: RICE EXPORTERS FACE LOSSES WORTH MILLIONS
RECORDER REPORT SEP 15TH, 2018 KARACHI

Pakistani rice exporters are facing millions of rupees losses due to demurrages on over 600 containers stuck at Kenya port. Exporters said the recent policies revised by the government of Kenya have created multiple issues for Pakistani rice exporters and these policies have inadvertently increased the direct cost of Pakistani products.

Despite appropriate certification at the loading port by Kenya's recognized agencies such as SGS, Intertek, Bureau Veritas, etc, the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) and Customs have subjected the consignments to 100 percent examination with effect from August 2, 2018.

The Kenyan Customs has announced to commence full verification and sampling of Pakistani rice containers reaching Mombasa, Kenya port, resulted some 600 containers loaded with Pakistani rice have been stuck up at Kenyan port due to 100 percent examination and slow process.

Unfortunately, the Kenyan authorities have insufficient infrastructure to expedite the examination of imported rice. Phytosanitary conditions (Aflatoxin, Pesticides & Microbiology) are being tested in Nairobi and the broken percentage is verified in Mombasa, they informed.

Import duty on these rice consignments has already paid and now these stuck containers are causing heavy demurrages, resulted in millions of rupees losses to Pakistani rice exporters.

Exporters informed that despite the intervention by Pakistan High Commission and Commercial Counselor, Kenyan authorities are not cooperating with Pakistani exporters for early release of rice consignments.

They informed that KEBS examination and sampling at Mombasa port is being carried out in absence of importers' representative and according being rejected. The main reason of rejection of rice consignment is the percentage of broken rice in the cargo.

The allowed percentage of broken rice is 5 percent for Grade 1 and 25 percent for Grade 3. While, according to KEBS the percentage of broken rice in the cargo sampled and tested is between 6-11 percent for Grade 1 and 26-35 percent for Grade 3. The quantity of broken rice could be increased due to rough handling of collected samples, exporters said.

"We have requested Kenyan authorities for re-sampling of Pakistani rice in the presence of the importers' representatives to ensure a fair testing," they said and added that it is illogical to reject an entire cargo due to the minor increase of broken rice, which could be due to mishandling of the samples.

"As the containers are stuck-up for the last one month, now we have to pay millions of rupees on account demurrages," exporters said. They said that Pakistan has always provided level playing field to Kenyan tea exporters for marketing their valued product in Pakistan and Pakistani exporters are expecting same attitude from Kenyan Government.

However, Kenyan authorities are continually taken inappropriate that are hurting trade between two countries. In February 2018, Kenyan authorities sealed warehouses of Pakistan rice importers and arrested some 8 Pakistanis on allegation of Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Fake Passport, Fake Visa without evidence. Then Ambassador of Pakistan in Kenya intervened and these charges were confirmed fake, they maintained.

Rice exporters urged the ministry of commerce to take up the issues with Kenyan authorities on highly priority basis to resolve the issues, otherwise not only Pakistani exporters will face financial losses but the country will be deprived of millions of dollars precious foreign exchange.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180915407928/

SITUATIONER: TRAGIC SAGA OF FISHERIES HARBOUR
Behram Baloch | Muhammad Akbar Notezai Updated September 16, 2018

THE wind is dusty on a calm but hot day and people are hardly visible on the dilapidated roads of Pasni, a town in Gwadar district.

In the evening, as the heat lets up, fishermen gather in the harbour area. Not for fishing, but to play cards and tell stories as they wait for the fisheries to reopen. Their livelihood is suspended due to silt-ups, and boats are stuck in the sand around the harbour.

The fishermen in a group that my colleague Behram and I sat and spoke with are all worried. Kauda Abul Kareem Baloch, 53, leads this party. Sporting a nicely trimmed beard and wearing a loose Baloch-style shalwar-kameez, Kauda speaks Balochi rapidly and likes to tell stories. But Meeru

Baloch, his close associate, decides to have none of it, interjecting him over his monologue about what his father would do some 30 years ago for Pasni's fishermen community. "Talk about our harbour, not about what your father did three decades ago!" he exclaims, and goes back to playing cards with his friends.

But, regardless, Kauda is well-respected and even though he dropped out of school as a young boy, the other fishermen appreciate that unlike them he did at least go to one, and have given him the responsibility to speak for the community. Kauda is losing hope just as his associates are. Pointing toward dozens of boats stuck in the sand, he says it's been a long time they've been used. Things, he says, do not look good for his community.

Kauda's fears are not irrational, not in the least. Over 60,000 people live in Pasni, and fishing is their primary source of employment and income. Due to this reason, the talk of the town is that the rehabilitation of the harbour — which has been closed since 2003 — is paramount. In the run-up to the general elections in July, Pasni only asked for one small thing — fix the harbour. The people here say they don't care about the water or the electricity, but fishing, Kauda claims, is what puts food on the table.

Situated in Gwadar district, the view of Pasni tehsil from a distance is breathtakingly beautiful. The town is sandwiched between the gushing sea and the desert. But, like other towns in Balochistan, Pasni too does not have good infrastructure. The law and order situation has not been stellar either, but has somewhat improved recently.

With the dawn of relative peace, the Chinese have also appeared on the horizon bearing gifts of promises of rehabilitating the fishing sector in the town.

By Pasni's fisheries harbour's account, there are about 13,000 fishermen in the area and some 4,000 boats. The annual catch estimate is 27,600 tonnes. But since the harbour is dysfunctional and with the boats stuck, the current catch is zero.

Abdul Rab Baloch, the deputy director of the harbour authority in the town, while speaking with us, repeatedly stresses the importance of these harbours. He says that what happened to the harbour is just the natural deterioration of the facility. "Everywhere in the world, harbours in port towns do get silted up. The sea ensures that happens," he tells Dawn at his office, "this is the law of nature. We get stuck and cannot move ahead."

Newly elected legislators Aslam Bhootani and Hammal Kalmati recently made a visit to Pasni to address this harbour problem. Due to security issues, they said, the Chinese could not accompany them, but local officials claim that the Chinese have vowed to help the fishermen in the town and get the harbour going again. However, the people want more. They want a new harbour — and for good reason it seems. "If they rehabilitate the older one, it will again get silted up in a year or two," says Kauda, "then, we will again be left high and dry with the same old problems".

Responding to a question, Abdul Rab Baloch says that the beach expands every five years. "As waves move back in the sea large quantities of sand remain on the beach and the waves take back only a small part of it. The silt keeps growing and growing. The harbour area needs regular maintenance. To do that, we need equipment and resources. But given the tense law and order situation, foreign firms have failed to help us as well."

Local journalist Sajid Noor — who has been reporting on the harbour for some time — has a grim view of the matter, however. “It is leashed around our neck even though fishermen paid several taxes to the government when the harbour was running.”

Mr Noor does not think the situation will change as he remembers the distant but glorious past of the town: “Pasni used to be the economic hub of the whole Makran area and it used to be a mini free port, where cargoes from Dubai and the Gulf states loaded and unloaded. Now, the town is in the shambles because the bureaucracy does not want to reopen the harbour — it has become accustomed to pocketing the grants.”

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1433243/situationer-tragic-saga-of-fisheries-harbour

CANE CRUSHING UNLIKELY TO START ON TIME, THIS YEAR ALSO
Mohammad Hussain Khan September 16, 2018

HYDERABAD: Fears of another belated commencement of sugar cane crushing season haunt sugar cane growers in Sindh considering the fact that government’s initiative to kick start the process of starting negotiations with sugar millers and growers to fix cane price for 2018-19 season is not in sight yet.

No meeting has been convened by Sindh agriculture department to start negotiations between millers and sugar cane growers over fixation of cane’s indicative price and commencement of crushing season as required under law.

Sindh’s growers expect provincial agriculture department expect provincial agriculture department to convene meeting as soon as possible so that sugar cane crushing season is not jeopardised.

Belated start of crushing of crop involves a cost on the part of sugar cane producers as they are required to provide irrigation water to their crop in fields which is otherwise to be utilised for wheat sowing of winter season.

For last few years Sindh has been witnessing a serious controversy over fixation of sugar cane price as millers and growers come up with their own rationale to demand per 40kg price for sugar cane with the result that crushing of sugar cane crop gets delayed.

Sindh agriculture department is supposed to convene a meeting of representatives of Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) Sindh zone and representatives of growers’ bodies – Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, Sindh Abadgar Board and Sindh Abadgar Ittehad by Sept-October period.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture vice president Nabi Bux Sathio fears PSMA would again be linking price fixation with subsidy on sugar’s export by the federal government. “We feel that one group of industries that deals in sugar cane sector in lower Sindh sector mainly as it owns most mills here is facing money laundering probe. Their accounts are frozen and if this investigation continue then very group will come up with excuse of frozen account for not starting crushing of sugar cane,” he says.

He says that mills must start crushing as required and court could appoint receiver on those sugar mills that are facing litigation but they should not be allowed to jeopardise entire sugar cane season for sugar cane producers.

He apprehends that Tarbela dam that ensures supplies to Sindh mainly is depleting fast on a daily basis. If current depletion trends continue, he adds, then the water shortage in Sindh once again couldn't be ruled out.

In that case, he says, survival of sugar cane crop will become difficult if crop is not harvested. He also doesn't rule out 35pc to 40pc drop in overall sugarcane crop in Sindh due to back to back controversy over crop's price which has discouraged sugar cane growers to cultivate it.

"Writing letter to agriculture department is a symbolic exercise. The earlier the crushing season starts the better for everyone," said Mahmood Nawaz Shah, vice president Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB).

He said that his organisation would formally write a letter to Sindh agriculture department in next few days but even without such initiative the government must start process of holding meetings with millers as it required multiple sittings to come to an agreement or decision.

Sugar millers in last season didn't pay notified price of Rs182/40kg announced by Sindh government and moved Sindh High Court where the court decided that millers should pay Rs160/40kg to sugar cane growers and differential amount Rs22 per 40kg would be paid once an identical petition over question of sugar cane price in Sindh was decided by the apex court.

PSMA Sindh zone representatives have been questioning price fixation mechanism under Sugar Factories Control Act 1950 on the ground that price of sugar should also be determined by Sindh government in addition to sugar cane's price.

Although Sindh High Court decided that Rs160/40kg would be paid to growers but millers, according to growers' leaders, didn't pay that price whereas their liabilities were also accumulating.

PSMA believes that their cost of per kilogram of sugar makes it extremely difficult to pay Rs182/40kg to sugar cane growers. They want the price to be fixed on lesser side like Rs140/40kg to Rs150/40kg.

Sindh cane commissioner Agha Abdul Rahim confirmed on Saturday that no meeting had been conveyed yet by agriculture department. He said that sugar cane crushing was to start in November and hopefully process of price fixation would be started by government.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1433118/cane-crushing-unlikely-to-start-on-time-this-year-also

USDA RAISES US CORN, SOYA HARVEST VIEW ON RECORD YIELDS
RECORDER REPORT SEP 16TH, 2018 CHICAGO

The US Agriculture Department on Wednesday issued a surprise increase to its corn harvest forecast due to expectations of record yields in key production areas such as Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and

Indiana. Soybean yields were seen at an all-time high, with the production outlook raised above its already record-high forecast.

USDA also boosted its outlook for Russian wheat production, where concerns about dry conditions had raised concerns about export cuts from that key global supplier. Chicago Board of Trade corn and wheat futures dropped sharply after the report was released, with both sinking to their lowest since mid-July. Soybeans shrugged off the bearish news amid hopes for fresh trade talks between the United States and China.

In its monthly supply and demand report, USDA pegged the 2018/19 corn harvest at 14.827 billion bushels, which would be the second biggest ever. The government forecast average corn yields at a record 181.3 bushels per acre. “Everybody and their brother was expecting a decline in the corn yield,” said Tomm Pfitzenmaier, partner, Summit Commodity Brokerage. “It caught everybody leaning the wrong way when they came out with a bigger-than-expected yield.”

Soybean production was seen at 4.693 billion bushels, based on average yields of 52.8 bushels per acre. A month ago, USDA had predicted the corn harvest at 14.586 billion bushels, with yields at 178.4 bushels per acre. Its August outlook had pegged the soyabean harvest at 4.586 billion bushels, based on an average yield of 51.6 bushels per acre.

Analysts expected the USDA to cut its corn harvest outlook to 14.529 billion bushels and yields to 177.8 bushels per acre. Soybean production had been expected to rise to 4.649 billion bushels, with yields seen at 51.6 bushels per acre. USDA said supplies would balloon due to the bumper harvests, with domestic soyabean ending stocks for the 2018/19 marketing year rising to 845 million bushels. This is above both the previous year’s 395 million bushels ending stocks and the previous forecast for 2018/19 of 785 million bushels made in August.

USDA pegged corn ending stocks at 1.774 billion bushels, up from its August estimate of 1.684 billion bushels. The forecast for Russian wheat production was raised by 3 million tonnes to 71 million tonnes. USDA kept its outlook for soyabean exports steady at 2.070 billion bushels despite an ongoing trade war with China. It lowered its forecast for Chinese soyabean imports to 94 million tonnes from 95 million. Earlier in the day, China slashed its forecast for 2018/19 soyabean imports to 83.65 million tonnes.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180916408228/

POULTRY ASSOCIATION DENIES USE OF HORMONES
By Our Correspondent

Published: September 16, 2018

LAHORE: Chicken meat, once considered a luxury, has now become the cheapest source of animal protein in the country, said Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) Founder Chairman Khalil Sattar.

He said that at present, chicken’s diet mostly constitutes corn, broken rice, wheat bran, corn by-products, oil seed meals and vegetable oil, etc.

"On the basis of rapid weight gain, the consumers would jump to the conclusion that they are fed hormones," he asserted.

"If it were so, firstly, the FDA would lodge criminal cases against the producers and besides, the consumer would file suits of billions of dollars against such producers."

He added that the weight gain in the US in broilers is far greater than what is in Pakistan without the use of any hormones. "Had the poultry industry in Pakistan been using hormones, there would be a colossal import of hormones in the country duly reflected in the customs import figures," he argued.

"Pakistan produces over 1.2 billion broilers (meat-type chicken) annually, placed at 11th largest producer in the world."

He said that the US, Brazil and Argentina, because of the low price of edible oils and feed grains, produce feed with much higher energy content than that produced in Pakistan.

"For example, a broiler chick there gains more than two kilograms weight in five weeks while in Pakistan it takes about six weeks to gain the same weight," he said. "Since there are only three major companies providing poultry genetic material, the chicken available in Pakistan is the same genetic package as is available in the US, Europe, India, Brazil, Argentina, China, and elsewhere in the world."

He said that most large producers in the country have modern state-of-the-art laboratories equipped with Elisa, Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and necessary equipment for virus and bacterial isolation in order to evaluate the health status of the chicken.

"Regular tests are carried out according to a schedule to ensure that the chicken is free of viruses, bacterial contaminants particularly Salmonella, which is a transmittable bacteria injurious to human health and of course, is extremely harmful for the chicken itself," added Khalil.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 16th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1804370/2-poultry-association-denies-use-hormones/

DISRUPTIVE MARINE WEATHER LOWERS CATCH FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERMEN
Jan Khaskheli September 16, 2018

HYDERABAD: The declining fish catch in September has disturbed Sindh's fishermen, who are unable to recover even the cost of operating boats along the 350 kilometre provincial coastline.

September is a prosperous month for fishermen who catch more fish, adding to their stock on their traditional landing sites. But this year, the rough sea weather, that started in June and July has now extended to September, impacting marine life, a community activist said. "Usually violent tides start in June and July, which normalise up to August 15," he added.

Information gathered from community activists from the coastline of Thatta and Sujawal's Keti Bunder, Kharo Chhan and Shah Bunder areas reveals that this new phenomenon emerged quite recently during the month of September.

The two months of June and July are considered breeding season of the most important commercial species of shrimps, and the provincial government always bans fishing activities during the time to avoid loss of juvenile fish, and give rest to the sea.

The new fishing season starts on the first of August. After lifting of the ban crew members leave their local jetties on the boats for fishing in the open seawaters.

But this year boats are coming with low catch compared to the previous years, creating a tough situation for the boat owners and workforce, because the catch they bring is not enough to recover operating cost of boats, including fuel, ice, food and other things used in routine practice.

Community people link these challenges to overall global warming, climate change, degradation of habitat, increasing marine pollution, and changing temperature.

Pakistan is rich in seafood products, and the industry provides livelihood to more than 300,000 families directly or indirectly. The country’s coastline is spread over 1,050km, from where fishing activities take place.

There are 800 marine species, out of which 120 species are commercially important. These species are brought to the market and processing zones in Karachi from different areas.

Community people on the coast of Sindh, who have been dealing with both commercial and non commercial marine species, say that the number of both commercial and non commercial species is declining. They have not been able to catch large quantities of commercial marine species this year so far. Their operating boats are of different sizes. Bigger boats stay out in the open seas for a few days, sometimes weeks, depending on catch and weather situation. Small boats have short-range target and move to the sea early morning and return back in the evening with little catch for sale.

Elderly fishermen endorse that the operations of smaller boats are more sustainable. These methods have been in practice through generation. These small boats do not create a burden on the marine environment, they say.

They claim that the different approach and policies of the government, which allow bigger boats with larger commercial operations to exploit the sea, have impacted their smaller, more sustainable operations. These larger fishing vessels with huge capacity and net size, are wiping out available fish stocks, they said.

Majeed Motani, an elderly captain, and owner of fishing vessels that operate from Ibrahim Hydri, Karachi, blames the overall weather changes, which have impacted fishing activities as well as marine life.

For instance, he said small-scale fishermen owning little boats were still reluctant to start their activities because of rough sea weather, which has continued till September this year. These small boats usually harvest fishing nets along small waters and stay there for the whole day. But this year, they could not move their vessels out to the sea for routine activities, due to the poor weather conditions.

This phenomenon has also forced mid-sized boats to stay anchored at the harbour and jetties, with an occasional trip here and there. The weather has badly affected the livelihoods of hundreds of community people, who have been associated with fishing for generations.

Talking about the much-talked government's fisheries policy, Motani said, "There are no criteria, who should be allowed to invest in purchasing larger-capacity boats with huge sized nets and operate in the sea. These 'alien' people, hailing from different areas of the country, have joined the fishing profession, but they do not know the sensitivity of the sea, as the sea also needs rest."

These people operate huge vessels 24 hours a day, seven days of week without break. The over fishing has also impacted the fish catch, exploiting available fish stocks. In this situation, only small-scale fishermen face hardship, despite being natural custodians of the sea for generations.

Elders also speak of the depleting water share from Indus River, which flows downstream Kotri, recharging the marine ecosystem. They blame the low downstream water of destroying the natural marine resources as well.

The community elders urge the government to understand that after agriculture, fishing was a major source of livelihood for a large portion of Sindh's population.

Local activists also remind about the time when low river water flow forced a large number of coastal farmers to join fishing for survival. These farmers were accepted in fishing and now share resources in the coastal areas.

However, the situation is changing now. Licensed factory trawlers operate fishing nets in the provincial jurisdictions, marginalising the local and indigenous fishermen of Sindh. This has impacted alarmingly on resources, leaving small-scale fishermen to stay idle at home without any earnings.

Marine scientists believe that like other species, fish have good sense about the extreme weather and avoid frontline wind pressure. These species move to the bottom to avoid the cold water. Presently there is no exact data about registered boats operating in marine waters. Local jetties are crowded, while others are being established along coastal villages to have additional and separate space for landing products and operating boats. This is happening despite the hue and cry of the community against exploitation of fishing grounds.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/368997-disruptive-marine-weather-lowers-catch-for-small-scale-fishermen

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 3TH TO SEPTEMBER 9TH 2018
LACK OF ACCESS TO CERTIFIED SEEDS LOWERS CROP YIELDS
Mohiuddin Aazim Updated September 03, 2018

Crop yields are directly proportional to the quality of seeds. Quantity also matters. Farmers can't hit a certain crop size and per-hectare yield if they don't have enough seeds of a particular quality.

In Pakistan, crop seeds of all kinds are generally in short supply. The quality of the bulk of them is far from the best. Therefore, per-hectare yields are low and large pieces of land produce small volumes of crops.

That, in turn, means a higher cost of production per hectare, bigger financial subsidies for farmers and still higher market prices of food grains, sugar, cotton etc. In the local economy, it has an impact on food inflation. In foreign markets, it makes our food exports less competitive.

So what is the way forward?

Theoretically, the way forward is pretty clear: we need to revamp our seed sector; we need to produce larger volumes of certified seeds at affordable prices and we ought to streamline the distribution of quality seeds among farmers across Pakistan. Previous federal and provincial governments did not leave these areas unaddressed: they did launch some initiatives and got some results.

A majority of seed companies is engaged only in marketing certified seeds, which is why we don't see new seed varieties more often

But the present federal and provincial governments need to do more — and better — to consolidate the gains of past efforts and make further progress.

Pakistan's seed sector issues are many. The most outstanding one is that supplies of certified seeds are largely in the hands of the private sector. In the last fiscal year, farmers got more than 82 per cent of certified seeds from private companies and 12pc from public-sector institutions. Imports covered the remaining 6pc.

Industry sources say public-sector institutions at the provincial and federal levels manage to meet a tiny part of total demand for seeds of wheat, cotton and pulses. In the case of seeds of other crops, their role is negligible.

The Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department, an attached department of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, keeps a constant eye on demand and supply of seeds and coordinates among various stakeholders of the seed sector.

Contrary to the public perception, imported seeds meet a small percentage of total demand. Markets rely on imports largely in the case of seeds for fodder crops, maize and vegetable crops. But lately, imports of hybrid, high-yield paddy seeds have also started, industry sources say. Whereas seeds for fodder crops and maize are sourced primarily from western and East Asian countries, vegetable crop seeds come mostly from India and China, they say.

Hundreds of national seed supply companies are operating in the country along with Pakistan-based operating units of some multinational companies, including Monsanto, Syngenta and ICI.

But most of the supplies originate from 10 to 20 leading companies. About 40 to 50 other companies are operating viably, sources in the seed industry say.

First of all, there is a need to examine why all other companies — 500-plus in number — are either struggling to survive or have packed up and quit despite the fact that the gap between the total requirement of certified seeds and their supplies is quite large — 66pc according to 2017-18 estimates.

Secondly, provincial governments should invest more in conducting research on new seeds for food and non-food crops. They should also spend more on preservation and better application of seeds.

Punjab Seed Corporation's separate projects on enhancing the production of pulses and veggies through high-yield seeds have improved output. Under another project, development of some potato tissue culture seeds has boosted potato production in the province, senior officials of the corporation claim.

Development of new seed varieties is an expensive affair. Companies have to test seeds in designated farms before taking them to federal authorities for registration as candidates for approved varieties. The rate of rejection is very high because most of the seed companies lack adequate financial investment and technical inputs required for this purpose. Even when some seed varieties developed by seed companies are approved, their application does not immediately start for large-scale production. It takes lots of time. All of this means a low return on investment for these companies.

Finally, after new seed varieties are approved and their application begins on a large scale, crop-switching practices of farmers, corruption, bureaucratic red tape and political meddling in the farming business make the success of certain new varieties doubtful and less lucrative for seed companies, industry sources say. It is imperative to address such issues for ensuring smooth operations of seed manufacturing and marketing.

The industry sources say a majority of seed companies is engaged in just marketing of certified seeds produced by leading seed-producing companies, which is perhaps why we don't see new seed varieties more often. And that is why even technological advancement in preservation of seeds is not progressing well in the country.

Since certified seeds account for just one-third of the total requirement of seeds in our farming sector, a large number of small and poor farmers continue to use traditionally obtained and preserved seeds that are easily infected with diseases. As a result, per-hectare yields of their crops remains lower than what it potentially could be. This has to change.

"But the change will not come so easily. With giant multinationals like Monsanto, Syngenta and ICI in the seed business and national private-sector seed companies enjoying support and patronage of one major political or feudal lords' group or another, streamlining the seed industry has its own challenges," warns an official of Sindh Seed Corporation.

Apart from that, Sindh's seed sector also suffers from the illegal occupation of its farmland by politically influential people. Complaints about the supply of spurious seeds from the corporation are common as the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture keeps protesting about it off and on.

Of late, the Seed Association of Pakistan, a representative body of seed-producing and marketing companies, has been pressing the authorities concerned for streamlining the seed industry in Pakistan. Several working groups and technical committees of the association continue to identify the issues facing this industry and offer solutions. Their efforts have not remained completely unproductive. The Plant Breeders Rights Act promulgated towards the end of 2016 is an example.

This piece of legislation has come in response to the industry's demand for full legal cover to new varieties of seeds developed by them. But the biggest beneficiaries of it are multinational companies that have the financial and technical resources available with them to conduct comprehensive research on seeds and develop new varieties.

Perhaps local private-sector companies can join hands with multinational companies operating in Pakistan to strike a win-win deal. “Incentivising them through public-sector funds is unwise because that would be against the principle of level playing field for all and unacceptable to foreign companies (operating in Pakistan’s seed industry),” opines a senior official of the Sindh agriculture department.

Meanwhile, provincial governments must eliminate corruption and mismanagement from their seed corporations before allocating larger funds for them to obtain better results.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, September 3rd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1430528/lack-of-access-to-certified-seeds-lowers-crop-yields

COTTON HARVESTING BEGINS IN SINDH, PUNJAB
RECORDER REPORT SEP 4TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

Cotton harvesting has started in Sindh and some areas of Punjab province as due to favourable weather conditions, suitable climate position for crop, better management and low intensity of pest attack in the Punjab and Sindh as compared to the last year were indicating significant growth in output and reach to 14.23 million bales.

The upward trend in crop production estimates were mainly attributed to multiple reasons including increase the area under crop cultivation, which had witnessed over 2 percent increase during the period under review as compared the same period of last year, said Cotton Commissioner Dr Khalid Abdullah.

Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that white fly attacks on cotton crop in the Punjab had reduced from 17 percent to 12 percent, where as jassid 13 percent against 15 percent of the last year.

The pest attack including cotton mealybugs, pink ball worm also reduced and it was reported at 23 percent as compared the 27 percent of same period of last year, he observed.

However, he said that the cotton crop in the Sindh had remained under water stress due to bellow normal rain falls in crop growing areas of the province, where as the water situation remained satisfactory in Punjab, which had supplemented the over all output for the season.

Dr Abdullah further informed that due to water stress, the overall 5-10 percent yield in Sindh was expected to reduce, adding that prices of local produces was remained stable and encouraging the growers.

The prices of above mentioned commodity in the international markets were recorded at 91 Cents, where as in local markets it was sold at Rs 4,000 per 40 kg, the Cotton Commissioner added.

It may be recalled that cotton crop had been sown over 2.69 million hectares of land as against the fixed targets of 2.95 million hectares in order to produce over 14.37 million cotton bales during the crop season 2018-19.

The crop cultivation targets, which fixed for the current sowing season were achieved by over 91 percent as it went up by 2 percent as compared with the area under cotton crop cultivation during same period of last year.

Over all cotton sowing in the province of Punjab registered about 11 percent growth as it had cultivated the crop over 2.29 million hectares of land as against the set targets of 2.31 million hectares for the period under review.

However, crop sowing in the Sindh province was decreased by 31 percent and attributed the low sowing trend with dry weather during the crop sowing time as well as shortage of water for crop irrigation.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180904404458/

THREE IDLE FERTILISER PLANTS TO GET SUBSIDISED GAS
By Bilal Hussain Published: September 5, 2018

ECC, in its recent meeting, decided to open closed fertiliser units immediately by providing subsidised gas.

KARACHI: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet has decided to provide subsidised gas to three idle fertiliser plants, which will avert the need for fertiliser imports for local consumption in the remaining four months of the current calendar year.

According to Sherman Securities' research analyst Saqib Hussain, fertiliser demand for the upcoming Rabi sowing season will be strong and current reserves will not be enough to meet the need in the next four months.

The present stock, along with the functioning manufacturers' capacity, can meet 1.9 million tons of the total anticipated demand of 2.2 million tons of fertiliser for the next four months. Thus, a shortfall of 0.3 million tons is expected.

"To meet the demand, the government had been left with two options – either to provide subsidised gas or import fertiliser. It has opted for the former, which is a better one, considering the present condition of the country's current account deficit," Hussain told The Express Tribune.

ECC, in its recent meeting, decided to open closed fertiliser units immediately by providing subsidised gas.

"Our analysis shows that the government may save around $100 million in foreign exchange. However, per bag subsidy is expected to be higher in case the closed plants get operational compared to the subsidy provided on imports," he said.

The ECC decided to restore gas supply to the closed fertiliser plants for a period of four months. Currently, three plants are closed namely Agritech Limited (AGL), Fatima Fertilizer and Pakarab Fertilizers having cumulative capacity of around 0.97 million tons per annum.

“If these plants run on full capacity, they can produce around 0.32 million tons of urea in the remaining four months of this calendar year, hence meeting the total urea demand of the country,” Hussain added.

According to the new arrangement, the government will bear 50% of the total gas cost of these plants while the remaining cost will be borne by the fertiliser units.

At present, feed gas is supplied to these plants with a mix of local gas and LNG in the proportion of 28% and 72% respectively while fuel gas comprises only LNG.

According to Topline Securities’ research analyst Shankar Talreja, the decision to run the idle plants instead of importing fertiliser was better but was only a short-term solution.

“The cost of providing gas per bag will be around Rs2,000 to Rs2,100. If half of the price is borne by the government, the remaining half, around Rs1,000 to Rs1,100, will be borne by the companies. The urea bag has been selling for around Rs1,600, so it will not cover the annual fixed cost per bag in four months for the companies,” Talreja added.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 5th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1795330/2-three-idle-fertiliser-plants-get-subsidised-gas/

MINISTER ORDERS TO SPRAY ANIMALS ENTERING SINDH
By Our Correspondent

A view of a jam-packed cattle market. PHOTO: ABDUL GHAFFAR/EXPRESS

KARACHI: The Minister for Health and Population Control, Dr Azra Pechuho, has directed the officials of livestock to carry out sprays on all the animals brought to Sindh at the check-posts on Sindh and Balochistan border, in order to protect people from the deadly Congo virus.

While chairing a meeting at her office, she directed all the stakeholders, including officials from the livestock department and Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), to take necessary precautionary measures. Additional Chief Secretary Dr Usman Chachar and General Health Director Dr Mobeen were also present at the meeting.

She directed the Karachi Health Director to keep records of all Congo virus related cases and submit a report daily to the data surveillance cell so that the situation could be assessed. She also ordered to keep the record of 12 other diseases to initiate the awareness campaigns.

Dr Pechuho directed the livestock officials and slaughter house workers to take precautionary measures while handling animals by initiating sprays and directed the programme manager for dengue to initiate campaign to control dengue in the province.

Currently, four out of 12 patients admitted at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center (JPMC) died after Eidul Azha, confirmed JPMC Executive Director Dr Seemin Jamali. Moreover, three patients are still under treatment at the isolation ward facility of the hospital. She added that there are patients coming in from Balochistan and Southern Punjab as well.

Dr Jamali said that the viral disease is highly contagious and has a high mortality rate, which can be spread through the bite of a ‘tick’ present on wild and domestic animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and hares.

In the current year, 55 cases of Congo fever were reported at Aga Khan University Hospital for either treatment or testing; of which the majority came in from Balochistan while others from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

Six cases of Congo fever in this year, which came in from Sindh, resulted in deaths, said the focal person for Congo Prevention, Dr Syed Zafar Mehdi, due to frequent exposure of people with the sacrificial animals.

“The animals serve as amplifying hosts for the virus or it contacts with wounds and abraded skin of handlers,” explained Dr Mehdi, adding that transmission of Congo virus to humans occurs through contact with infected ticks of animal or human blood.

He added that the virus is so contagious that it can be transmitted from one infected human to another by contact with infectious blood or body fluids, and can infect medical care providers due to improper sterilisation of medical equipment, re-use of injection needles and contamination of blood supplies.

However, he said it can be avoided if the public and animal handlers use personal protective measures like appropriate clothing and gloves during handling and butchering of animals. According to Dr Mehdi, anti-tick repellants could help not to acquire Congo virus and the animals must be sprayed with or dipped into water having acaricide, cypermetherin, etc and later use insecticide chemicals to decontaminate the animal’s offal and waste to control the spread of virus.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 5th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1795374/1-minister-orders-spray-animals-entering-sindh/

PAD IMPARTS TRAINING TO LABOUR FOR CONTAMINATED FREE COTTON PICKING
RECORDER REPORT SEP 6TH, 2018 LAHORE

Secretary Agriculture Punjab Waif Khurshid has said that Agriculture Officers (Ext) female staff is imparting training to women involved in picking of cotton bolls as per International standards as contamination free picking always ensure profitability to the farmers.

He advised farmers to start picking of cotton bolls after 9 am and end at 4 pm. If there are chances of rainfall then picking should be postponed; labour involved in picking should wear cotton clothes for this purpose and avoid mix of hair and other contamination items in cotton bolls. Farmers should start picking of cotton when 50% bolls had become fully matured; picking should be started from lower part of the plant and gradually move upward because lower bolls may get damaged from drop of branches and be contaminated if picking was started from upper parts of the plant. The department has further advised the growers that during picking process, only cotton boll should be extracted from the cotton plant. Interval between one picking to another should be of 15 to 20 days. Cotton plants affected by attack of pink bollworm should be eliminated. Wages paid to labour should be according to cleanliness of cotton picking so that they may be vigilant during picking process

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180906405039/

THREE FERTILIZER PLANTS BEING OPERATIONALISED
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN SEP 7TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

The fertilizer sector Thursday held a meeting with Prime Minister"s Advisor on Commerce, Textile, Industries and Production Razzak Dawood and discussed issues raised in the recent meeting of the ECC. One of the participants told Business Recorder that the supply-demand situation was discussed at length. It was concluded that by end of January 2019, the country must have 200,000 tons in stock therefore the three plants must be operationalised.

Three fertilizer plants, ie, Fatimafert, Agritech and Pak Arab are not operational for the last one year. Pak Arab produces a mix of fertilizers and its urea production capacity is about 8500 tons per month. Fatimafert and Agritech are exclusively urea plants with production capacity of 44,000 tons and 35,000 tons per month respectively. Installed capacity of all 19 fertilizer plants in the country is 6.23 million tons per annum while the annual consumption, on average, comes to 5.9 million tons. The shortfall has occurred due to the export of 635,000 tons of urea last year after approval by the ECC and shut down of three plants for want of system gas for the last year. By operating three plants for four months, September to December, 2018, an additional 348,000 tons can be achieved. The net Variable Contribution Margin has been worked out in consultation with fertilizer industry and comes to Rs 606 per bag.

The meeting also discussed options for provision of RLNG or mixed gas. Price of gas will be finalised by the concerned parties at a meeting with Finance Minister on Friday (today).

The Ministry of Industries and Production maintained that the option of operationalising the three plants seems viable and was recommended for approval. As regards the total subsidy impact, it was worked out based on the variable contribution margin which comes to Rs 3.20 billion. In the ensuing discussion, it was observed that it might be a more sustainable proposition to operationalise three plants through exclusive provision of RNLG rather than a gas mix.

The perception of making windfall profits through exports and price hike were thoroughly discussed and this impression was apparently dispelled.

The ECC directed the Ministry of Industries and Production to work out the windfall gains reaped by the fertilizer industry, in the light of the net Variable Contribution Margins, as a result of charging higher prices as well as through exports during 2017-18 and 2018-19. The windfall gains may be adjusted against the subsidy outstanding in favour of fertilizer industry schemes which were in vogue during the preceding three financial years.

Fertilizer industry also highlighted the impact of envisaged gas price revision on Urea prices: Rs 79 per bag in case of 26 percent and Rs 97 in case of 30 percent hike

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180907405313/

45PC WATER SHORTFALL TO HIT RABI CROP
Khaleeq Kiani Updated September 07, 2018

ISLAMABAD: After a bad Kharif cropping season, Pakistan may be braving for up to 45 per cent water shortage in coming Rabi season that would negatively affect agricultural and resultant economic output.

"As per preliminary analysis of data, it is anticipated that the deficit may result in 35-45pc shortfall during the forthcoming Rabi season 2018-19", the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) on Thursday told a Special Senate Committee on Water Scarcity.

The committee, presided over by Senator Maula Bux Chandio, was, however, told that Tarbela Dam had now achieved maximum conservation level of 1,150 feet and prevailing temperatures in the catchment areas currently were promising. That would mean the drawdown for irrigation during the current Kharif season would mostly remain contained.

The committee was also informed that the total storage in reservoirs currently stood at about 9.255 million acre feet (MAF), 32.4pc short of its total capacity, which is 13.681 MAF. The reserve last year at this stage was 12.08MAF, almost 24pc lower.

The Rabi season begins in October-December and ends in April-May. Wheat is the largest crop in Rabi season. Gram, lentil, tobacco, rapeseed, barley and mustard are some of the other Rabi crops.

Briefing the panel on the current water scarcity situation, Secretary Water Resources Shumail Ahmed Khawaja said that Pakistan was losing almost 50pc of its total water availability and lamented that infrastructure worth billions of dollars had been developed by the federal government. However, the lack of matching efforts from the provinces rendered it useless.

He gave three examples of this case: Darawat Dam in Jamshoro, Katchhi Kanal in Southern Punjab and Balochistan and a small dam in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where only 5-6pc of envisaged benefits could be realised. Katchhi Kanal had been built with an investment of Rs80 billion to irrigate 713,000 acres of land, but owing to the inability of both the provincial governments to develop allied facilities, only 10,000 acres could be irrigated.

Mr Khawaja said that it was imperative for the country to take maximum value for money by simultaneously completing projects at the federal and provincial level in a timely manner.

He said the total water resources available in the country were 138MAF with a storage capacity of 13.7MAF – 10pc of our available water resource. Pakistan can store water for a maximum of 35-36 days which is way less than the rest of the world. Any countries can hold their reserves for 130 days. He said that India's storage could last for about 320 days.

The secretary explained that since water was a devolved subject, the four provinces were the key players and equally responsible to take remedial steps. In order to come to a consensus on this issue, four sessions with all chief ministers were held under the Council of Common Interest (CCI) and a consensus was achieved on National Water Policy.

In addition to construction of dams, the secretary stressed the need to conserve water. He said 90-95pc of Pakistan's water was being used for irrigation; 50pc of which was lost during canal diversion.

He said that the parties to the National Water Policy have committed to conserve at least 33pc of this water by 2030 with minimal expenditure. He said 8-9MAF water can be conserved if this wastage is controlled.

Senator Azam Khan Swati emphasised the need to strengthen officers working on this daunting challenge. He also asserted that for any progress to be made it was imperative that awareness about this issue is created at every tier of society.

While highlighting the problems of Sindh, Senator Sassui Palijo said that since yearly rainfall was rare in the province, the people largely depend on the river system. She stressed the need for equal distribution of water and implementation of the Water Apportionment Accord 1991 to address grievances of smaller provinces.

Secretary Water Resources was of the view that it is imperative to regulate the water distribution to all provinces. The Pakistan Council for Research and Water Resources (PCRWR) responding to a question on the need for installation of water desalination plants in the country reported that when faced with acute water shortage, desalination was the last option due to exorbitant costs.

Published in Dawn, September 7th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1431436/45pc-water-shortfall-to-hit-rabi-crop

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https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180907405313/

GLOBAL OPIUM PRODUCTION HITS RECORD HIGH: UN

By Sardar Sikander

Published: September 7, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The global opium production has increased by 65 per cent to 10,500 tonnes in 2017, which is the highest level since a United Nations body started estimating global opium production on an annual basis at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Moreover, 80 per cent of the morphine and 85 per cent of the heroin seized by Iran were trafficked from Pakistan, says a UN document.

A marked increase in opium poppy cultivation and a gradual increase in opium poppy yields in Afghanistan resulted in the production of opium in the country, reaching 9,000 tonnes in 2017, an increase of 87 per cent from the previous year, says the World Drug Report released earlier on Wednesday.

The document that has been divided into five booklets brings to light some startling revelations about the global drug trade, which includes opium, poppy, heroin and morphine trade involving this region—Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and adjoining countries.

In 2016, 80 per cent of the morphine and 85 per cent of the heroin that Iran said it had seized had been trafficked into the country through Pakistan with the rest being smuggled directly from Pakistan, according to the document.

Moreover, there are significant amounts of Afghan opiates remain in the region for local consumption. As much as 32 tonnes of morphine and heroin were seized by Iran in 2016.

“Some Afghan opiates are trafficked to Europe through the so-called southern route, which goes from Afghanistan to Pakistan (and partly to the Islamic Republic of Iran) for subsequent shipment to the

Gulf countries and East Africa and onward trafficking to Europe, either directly by air or via Southern or West Africa by air or sea," said the report.

"Alternatively, drugs are trafficked along the southern route to India and other countries in South Asia for subsequent shipment to Europe or North America (mostly Canada)."

"Among the drivers of that increase were political instability, lack of government control and reduced economic opportunities for rural communities, which may have left the rural population vulnerable to the influence of groups involved in the drug trade."

The surge in the opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan meant that the total area under opium poppy cultivation worldwide had increased by 37 per cent from 2016 to 2017, to almost 420,000 hectares.

More than 75 per cent of that area is in Afghanistan. Overall seizures of opiates rose by almost 50 per cent from 2015 to 2016. The quantity of heroin seized globally reached a record high of 91 tonnes in 2016. Most opiates were seized near the manufacturing hubs in Afghanistan, said the World Drug Report 2018.

"The increase in production in Afghanistan was not only due to an increase in the area under poppy cultivation but also to improving opium yields. There is no single reason for the massive increase in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in 2017 as the drivers are multiple, complex and geographically diverse, and many elements continue to influence farmers' decisions regarding opium poppy cultivation. A combination of events may have exacerbated rule-of-law challenges, such as political instability, corruption, a lack of government control and security. The shift in strategy by the Afghan government — focusing its efforts on countering anti-government elements in densely populated areas — may have made the rural population more vulnerable to the influence of anti-government elements."

A reduction in the engagement of the international aid community may also have hindered socioeconomic development opportunities in rural areas, according to the report. As a result of the massive increase in opium production in 2017, opium prices fell in Afghanistan by 47 per cent from December 2016 to December 2017.

However, the price of high-quality Afghan heroin decreased by just seven per cent over the same period, which may be an indication, that heroin manufacture to date has increased far less than opium production.

Of the 10,500 tonnes of opium produced worldwide in 2017, it is estimated that some 1,100–1,400 tonnes remained unprocessed for consumption as opium, while the rest was processed into heroin, resulting in an estimate of between 700 and 1,050 tonnes of heroin manufactured worldwide (expressed at export purity), 550–900 tonnes of which were manufactured in Afghanistan, says the report.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1797235/1-global-opium-production-hits-record-high-un/

600 RICE CONTAINERS FROM PAKISTAN HELD UP AT KENYAN PORT
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated September 08, 2018

LAHORE: At least 600 containers of Pakistani rice are stuck up at Kenyan ports as the customs authorities there have subjected the consignment to 100 per cent scrutiny and verification against the norms.

Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (Reap) Chairman Sameeullah Chaudhry says the Kenya Bureau of Standards and Customs started full verification and sampling of rice containers reaching Mombasa port, Kenya, for inspecting phytosanitary standards and physical characteristics (broken, damaged) since one month.

The step is being taken despite appropriate certificate of conformity at the loading port by the agencies recommended by KEBS including SGS, Intertek and Bureau Veritas etc, he says, adding the detention of containers is causing heavy demurrages and thus landing cost of the rice is increasing with each passing day.

He says that there is only one lab in Kenyan capital Nairobi to conduct the heavy metal tests whereas the cargo is stuck up at Mombasa port and thus the testing process is taking extraordinary time.

Mr Chaudhry demands that the foreign office should take up the issue with their Kenyan counterparts for Pakistan High Commission as commercial consular's requests are not being entertained by Nairobi. Kenya is one of the largest markets for Pakistani rice as it imports at least 475,000 tonnes or 12pc of the total rice exports of Pakistan.

Published in Dawn, September 8th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1431656/600-rice-containers-from-pakistan-held-up-at-kenyan-port

COTTON PRICES SOAR
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 08, 2018

KARACHI: Rising demand for quality cotton pushed prices higher on Friday as spinners and exporters were seen active in replenishing their stocks.

Many official forums had given incorrect cotton production figures. This caused caution among buyers who began to chase quality cotton which is currently readily available. Brokers said that cotton production estimates will be confirmed once the Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC) meets in Islamabad on September 12.

Since phutti (seed-cotton) arrivals from Punjab have yet to achieve their normal flow, some cotton analysts believe that after Muharram it would gain momentum and quality cotton would be adequately available. However, annual domestic consumption by textile mills for cotton stands at around 14-15 million bales, which was no more than 10-11m during the past season. At this stage, it could be said that demand is higher than supply which has soared the prices for ready trading, brokers added.

On the global front, New York cotton and Indian cotton were reported to have closed easy, but Chinese market stood firm.

The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) spot rates were further revised upward for the second day running today by Rs50 to Rs8,200 per maund.

The following major deals were reported to have changed hands on the ready counter: 1,400 bales from station Tando Adam were done at Rs8,150 to Rs8,175; 2,000 bales, Shahdadpur, Rs8,125 to Rs8,175; 1,000 bales, Sanghar, Rs8,125 to Rs8,175; 600 bales, Kotri, Rs8,100 to Rs8,125; 1,000 bales, Khairpur, Rs8,175 to Rs8,200; 400 bales, Khanewal, Rs8,300 to Rs8,390; 600 bales, Mian Channu, Rs8,350 to Rs8,390; 200 bales, Mianwali, Rs8,350; 600 bales, Chistian, Rs8,250 to Rs8,300 and 200 bales from Chichawatni were done at Rs8,300.

Published in Dawn, September 8th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1431651/cotton-prices-soar

AGRICULTURE SECTOR FACING CHALLENGES, SAYS UAF VC
RECORDER REPORT
FAISALABAD: University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor, Dr Zafar Iqbal Randhawa said that the agriculture sector is faced with tremendous challenges.

He said that low productivity and profitability, climate changes, depleting water resources and marketing issue are some of the challenges for which inter provincial coordinated efforts are needed to ensure food security and making agriculture a profitable sector.

He was talking to a delegation of Sindh agricultural experts at his chamber. The team of the Sindh experts comprised of Dr Muhammad Ismail from Sindh Agricultural University Tandojam, Sindh Forestry Working Coordinating Organisation CEO Suleman Abro and Dr Zulfiqar Ali Poto. UAF Director Office of Research Innovation and Commercialisation Dr Zahir Ahmad Zahir, Chairman Plant Breeding and Genetic Dr Hafeez Sadaqat, Dr Khurrum Zia and other notables also attended the meeting.

The Vice Chancellor said that the sustainable agriculture would pave the way to address the issues and to alleviate poverty. The agriculture share to Gross Domestic Product was 20 percent, he said, adding that majority of people was associated to agriculture sector directly or indirectly.

He said that university is strengthening our connections with agriculture experts and scientists from all corner of the country for the betterment in the sector. He said that the time has come when we have to shun traditional way of farming to compete with the rest of the world. He viewed that per acre agriculture production in the country was very low. Therefore, it is prerequisite to adopt modern practices that will not only increase yield but also jack up the income of farming community. He said trained manpower, quality education and researches providing solutions to problems of society and farming community; and knowledge based economy are prerequisite to alleviate the poverty from the country. Dr Muhammad Ismail lauded the measures being taken on the part of the university particularly research advancement. He added that the collaborated efforts would help address the problems of the farming community.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/08/7-page/737738-news.html

UVAS INKS MOU WITH CHINESE VARSITY ON AGRI RESEARCH
RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore and Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU) China have signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance scientific, educational and institutional linkages.

UVAS Director External Linkages/Chairman Department of Parasitology Prof Dr Kamran Ashraf and Vice President, Huazhong Agricultural University, Wuhan, China Prof Zhou Chengzao signed the MoU in a ceremony held in Syndicate Room City Campus Lahore on Sunday. UVAS Vice-Chancellor Meritorious Prof Dr Talat Naseer Pasha, UVAS Pro VC Prof Dr Masood Rabbani and a numbers of UVAS faculty members and HZAU Chinese delegation were present on the occasion.

As per MOU both universities would collaborate in various programs of education, research, extension & business development and technology transfer. They will exchange teachers, researchers, and students and also provides some scholarships. They would develop collaborative projects on education, researches and agriculture extension. Both parties will also organize joint academic program, symposia, seminar and conference.

The Chinese delegation led by Prof Zhou Chengzao and other delegation comprising Hu Chengxiao, Director/Dean, Department of International Cooperation & Exchange/International College, Chen Sheng, Director, HZAU Alumni and Endowment Fund Work Office, Hu Lihua, Vice Dean, College of Animal Science & Technology/College of Veterinary, Ms Xu Xiaoyun, Vice Dean, College of Food Science & Technology and Ms Song Lanxiang, Section Chief Department of International Cooperation & Exchange, Dr Shoaib Munir, Post-doctoral, College of Horticulture.
They also hold a detailed meeting with Vice-Chancellor Prof DrTalatNaseer Pasha and other senior faculty members of UVAS.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Dr Talat Naseer Pasha said that UVAS is working very closely with the Government of Punjab, livestock and Dairy Development Department Punjab, poultry and dairy industry playing an active role for the development of livestock sector.

He said that UVAS is working actively to ensure safe and quality meat reaching the consumers. He mentioned that with the help of Government of Punjab another veterinary university recently established named Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Bahawalpur (CUVAS) for development of livestock in south Punjab, which is the hub of livestock.

He said that there ample opportunities in livestock/agriculture in the Pak-China Economic Corridor (CPEC) and we should get maximum benefit from them.

Prof Zhou Chengzao thanked to UVAS for providing full support and cooperation and institutional linkages.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/09/5-page/737908-news.html

October 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 22TH TO OCTOBER 28TH 2018

DEPLETING GAS RESERVES SPELL DISASTER FOR FERTILISER INDUSTRY

Amjad Mahmood Updated October 22, 2018

ECONOMIC experts consider fertiliser consumption a direct indicator of growth in the agriculture sector. Pakistan has a flourishing fertiliser industry, which has been growing at approximately 8.5 per cent per annum.

More than 14 factories are manufacturing urea, calcium ammonium nitrate, ammonium phosphate and nitro phosphate, with each one of them having a direct impact on soil fertility. Urea is considered the highest-grade fertiliser and is useful for all types of crops. In particular, wheat crop consumes the largest part of the farm nutrient.

The fertiliser industry is facing an uncertain future as indigenous reserves of natural gas, the basic raw material for manufacturing urea, are depleting fast. The government has been subjecting fertiliser units to gas loadshedding in winters for two reasons: a lack of required gas pressure and to provide domestic consumers of gas with relief.

Imported RLNG is costlier in winter when its demand as raw material for urea production is high

The Mari gas field in Ghotki district is supplying 535 million cubic feet gas per day (mmcfd) to three units of Fauji Fertiliser Company, two units of Engro Fertilisers and one unit of Fatima Fertiliser Company. Located within a radius of around 60 kilometres, these units are manufacturing 90pc or 5.2m tonnes of the country’s total production of 6.2m tonnes.

Engro Fertilizers Senior Vice President Asif Tajik fears that the Mari gas reserves, dedicated to the fertiliser units, may go dry within six to eight years. They have already gone down from six trillion cubic feet to 2tr cubic feet.

The claim should set alarm bells ringing for stakeholders of the agriculture sector. If not taken care of immediately, the gas shortage may threaten national food security as experts believe our over-cropped fields may not give optimal yields without the use of fertilisers.

Underlining the importance of urea in reaping higher yields, Mr Tajik said that half of the world population will go hungry in the absence of the compost.

Dr Javed Ahmed, who serves as director for wheat at the Ayub Agriculture Research Institute (AARI) in Faisalabad, says wheat production in the country will drop by at least 50pc in the absence of urea treatment.

Referring to the federal government’s recent statement about changing the focus of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) from infrastructure to agriculture and job creation, he says the country can feed its neighbours only if it is able to enhance its farm production by improving fertiliser intake.

But the million-dollar question is how to maintain smooth supplies of gas to the urea-producing units when existing indigenous reserves are rapidly exhausting and the discovery of new ones does not seem likely through conventional exploration.

One of the available options is the import of Re-gasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG), although its fluctuating prices pose a problem. Having been clubbed with the world oil prices, RLNG will be cheaper in summer and costlier in winter when it is in great demand as raw material for urea production. In the case of RLNG, Mr Tajik says the government will have to subsidise the industry for keeping urea affordable for farmers.

Another option is getting gas from Iran, which has already built a pipeline up to our border for the purpose. But fearing trade sanctions by Washington, Islamabad is reluctant to buy gas from Tehran. There is also the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. However, this option is too unreliable for want of peace in the war-torn Afghanistan.

Yet another solution is exploring unconventional sources of natural gas, gas reserves. But a senior official of the Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC) cautions that unconventional gas finds are more difficult to develop and costlier to produce. Their discovery will require new technologies and improved skills because it needs directional drilling, unlike vertical drilling done for the natural gas reserves.

Mr Tajik says it is up to the government whether it wants to invest on the exploration of gas reserves or subsidise the import of the raw material for keeping the local fertiliser industry running. Otherwise, it has to import farm nutrients and provide the local farming community with them at subsidised rates. The current per-tonne price of urea in the world market is $280. About 100,000 tonnes of it is already being imported to meet the shortage for the 2018-19 Rabi season caused by the closure of fertiliser units for want of feed gas.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 22nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1440539/depleting-gas-reserves-spell-disaster-for-fertiliser-industry

CM ASSURES RESOLUTION OF FISHERMEN’S PROBLEMS IN GWADAR

By Our Correspondent

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan has said development of Gwadar will be pointless if relief is not provided to locals.

He said this while chairing a meeting with a delegation of fishermen belonging to the port city on Saturday. He pledged that their problems would be resolved.

The CM said the rights of the people would be protected at all costs. He added that the government had been taking steps to address fishermen’s problems.

“We have been working to boost the province’s fisheries department,” he said.

On the occasion, the delegation informed the CM about the protection of their boats and construction of the Eastbay Express. He directed the authorities to build breakwater structures in Eastbay Expressway.

The meeting also agreed to provide three routes to local fishermen in the Eastbay Expressway.

Provincial Minister Zahoor Buledi, Sardar Abdul Rehman Kethran, Mir Naseebullah Marri, Saleem Khosa, Sardar Saleh Bhotani, Noor Muhammad Dumar, Chairman Gawadar Port Authority Dostain Jamaldini and other government officials were present in the meeting.

Meanwhile, the chief minister visited Jiwani and Panwan and met local residents and tribal elders. He assured the residents that incumbent government had been taking measures to provide electricity and clean drinking water to the locals.

Earlier, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) provincial general secretary Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch urged the government to pay attention to the apprehensions of fishermen regarding the Gwadar Expressway or else his party would not accept the master plan agreed upon between Islamabad and China.

Referring to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said fishermen were being ignored in the Gwadar projects, but the “JI is standing behind them”.

Baloch called it unfortunate that fishermen and other local people were not taken into confidence before the Gwadar projects were finalised. He alleged that the government wanted to enforce their agenda on the fishermen and locals at gun point.

He said CPEC was being created because of Gwadar, but the people of Balochistan were being deprived of its fruits. He warned that the JI would never accept any project launched without the consent of locals, and stage a protest if locals were deprived of CPEC benefits.

Before concluding his talk, Baloch urged the lawmakers of Gwadar to work for the interests of people instead of others.

On Friday, a large number of fishermen had staged a protest march, demanding protection to their businesses that is feared to take a hit after the construction of Gwadar East-Bay Expressway. Representatives of various NGOs and civil society activists also took part in the protest march.

The march started from Dhoria, a settlement of fishermen in Gwadar. The participants of the march carried placards and chanted slogans in favour of their demands. They said the authorities had not taken any step despite their reservations about the expressway.

The fishermen said they were not against the construction of the expressway but wanted the authorities to protect their interest and means of business.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 22nd, 2018

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1831072/1-cm-assures-resolution-fishermens-problems-gwadar/

SUGAR MILLS DECRY NEW CRUSHING DAT
Kalbe Ali Updated October 23, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) has objected to the new crushing date announced by government, saying it was two weeks earlier than the traditional date of crushing and the mills already have sufficient sugar stocks.

In a statement, Chairman Aslam Faruque said the date of crushing sugarcane has traditionally been November 30, but the new one is Nov15, which was not appropriate as the cane is not ripe at that time.

“This makes no sense at all,” Faruque said, adding, “We have surplus sugar stocks in the mills and the government wants to add to this by forcing early crushing.”

He said that currently Pakistan has around $500 million worth of sugar in stock, and certain restrictions on exports make it difficult for mills to sell their produce overseas.

The PSMA deplored that respective governments have had wrong policies towards sugar mills which is a direct link between agriculture and industry.

The association said that federal and provincial governments owe more than Rs16 billion to sugar mills in terms of export subsidies.

It has forwarded four demands to the government to be fulfilled before the start of next crushing season; clearing all pending subsidy amount; minimum sugarcane price for new season should be linked with local sugar prices; federal government should allow unconditional export of one million tonnes of proven surplus sugar; and the rate of sales tax should be based on sugar’s retail price instead of being fixed by FBR.

According to PSMA, the price of sugar in market was around Rs47-48 per kilogram whereas the sales tax being collected for the past two years was the same as when price was Rs60 per kg.

Published in Dawn, October 23rd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1440781/sugar-mills-decry-new-crushing-date

‘GOVT LACKS FUNDS TO PROVIDE FODDER TO THARPARKAR’S LIVESTOCK’
By Our Correspondent

Published: October 23, 2018

HYDERABAD: As the drought-stricken Tharis await food and fodder aid to endure the calamity, Sindh Livestock Minister Abdul Bari Pitafi has said the government lacks funds to provide fodder to Tharparkar’s livestock.

“Providing fodder to seven million livestock [in Tharparkar] is a very difficult and expensive task,” said Pitafi at a press conference in Mithi taluka of Tharparkar on Monday.

He acknowledged that the provincial government lacked the financial resources required to buy and later distribute the forage. He denied having knowledge of Sindh chief secretary’s recent announcement to provide fodder in all calamity-hit districts in Sindh.

The minister, however, said that in view of the drought situation, veterinarians from different districts of the province have been posted in Tharparkar. He added that free medicines and vaccines will be given to livestock in need of medical care.

Pitafi accused former chief minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim of establishing cattle colonies in Tharparkar’s non-feasible locations. He added that unfinished work of the cattle colonies will be completed soon to facilitate the breeders. "Uplifting the livestock sector in Tharparkar is essential to end poverty in this desert region," he said.

Responding to a question, he claimed that the big livestock animals have migrated from Tharparkar but small livestock animals, such as goats, have not migrated. Pitafi said the Sindh government has been fulfilling its responsibility, but Tharparkar is part of Pakistan and the federal government should also come forward to help the drought-hit people.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 23rd, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1831710/1-govt-lacks-funds-provide-fodder-tharparkars-livestock/

PROMOTING AGRICULTURE: PUNJAB GOVT VOWS TO FACILITATE SMALL FARMERS
Published: October 23, 2018

LAHORE:The provincial government is focusing on the uplift of small farmers in accordance with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, emphasised Punjab Agriculture Minister Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial.

Addressing a launching ceremony of a report on 'Creating Wealth in Smallholder Farmers Through Efficient Credit System in Pakistan', on Monday, he said, "The Agriculture Department is facilitating the farming community through the use of mobile-wallets."

The event was organised by the Punjab government in collaboration with Australian Center for International Agriculture Research at a local hotel.

Langrial remarked, "Small farmers comprise of a major portion of farming community in Punjab and they had previously been provided little access to formal affordable finances."

The credit available to these farmers, mainly from informal sources, used to be extremely costly, which escalated their cost of production.

"We have a total of 55,000 active mobile-wallet accounts," the minister claimed, adding, "The incumbent government allocated a Rs93-billion budget solely for the agriculture sector compared with Rs81.3 billion in the previous financial year."

The agriculture minister added that the government had allocated Rs15 billion for extending interest-free loans. Other speakers also stressed the need for finding ways for small landholders regarding the availability of credit.

The report to increase the income of small farmers through effective credit system was formally launched. It provides recommendations based on effective policies to make loans accessible to the owners of small agricultural farms.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 23rd, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1831727/2-promoting-agriculture-punjab-govt-vows-facilitate-small-farmers/

SHC SUMMONS AGRICULTURE SECRETARY OVER NON-PAYMENT OF FARMERS' DUES

By Our Correspondent

Published: October 23, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC), expressing displeasure with the performance of the Cane Commissioner over non-payment of dues to sugarcane cultivators, ordered the agriculture secretary to ensure his presence at the next hearing next week. A two-member bench headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar heard the case.

The cultivators have alleged that they had been exploited and looted. They claimed that firstly they had to sell their products at low rates and then they weren't even paid the money owed to them.

Justice Mazhar said that the court was aware of the situation and it wants to constitute a high-level investigation committee on look into the matter.

The petitioners' lawyer argued that there were more than 1,000 complaints of non-payment and added that despite a court order, the dues had not been cleared.

The court remarked that the cane commissioner was presenting the same report every time.

Harassing suspect

The SHC ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to stop harassing Tahir Mehmood, a companion of Anwar Majeed who is the prime suspect in a money laundering case. A two-member bench heard the plea.

Representatives of the FIA, federation and other institutions appeared before the court.

Mehmood's lawyer, Kashif Hanif Paracha, argued that despite cooperating with the FIA, the agency continued to harass his client and just two weeks ago, they raided his office. The FIA officer argued that Mehmood was not cooperating.

The court ordered the FIA not to harass Mehmood and ordered the petitioner to cooperate with the FIA. The hearing was postponed till December 4.

Reduction of forest cover

After receiving replies from the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the forestry department in a case pertaining to logging and reduction of forest cover, the SHC granted time to the environment department and other respondents to submit their replies. A two-member bench heard the petition.

The KMC in its reply claimed that it was planting thousands of trees annually in parks and greenbelts. The department of forestry said that steps were being taken to extend the forest cover.

The petitioner, Agha Ataullah Shah, argued that the forest cover in Sindh had reduced from 17% to 4%.

Extorting money

The SHC issued notices to the National Highway Authority (NHA) and others in the case regarding officials extorting money from truck drivers on the M9 Highway. A two-member bench heard the petition filed by the All Truck Owners Association.

The petitioner’s lawyer argued that officials, claiming the trucks are overloaded, extort heavy sums of money from the drivers on M9 and Super Highway. He said that usually, sand is loaded on the trucks and it is taken down if the bribe is not paid. The sand is then used by the police or sold. The court issued notices to the respondents and summoned a reply by November 10.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1831705/1-shc-summons-agriculture-secretary-non-payment-farmers-dues/

AGRICULTURE TUBEWELLS IN BALOCHISTAN: ECC DEFERS DECISION ON SUBSIDY PROPOSAL
RECORDER REPORT OCT 24TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

The Econ-omic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has decided to defer a proposal of subsidy to agriculture tube-wells in Balochistan till a meeting is held between Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief Minister Balochistan Jam Kamal Khan to resolve outstanding subsidy arrears.

Sources said that a proposal was submitted to the ECC meeting, presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar, and according to it, earlier the subsidy to the agriculture consumers was provided from fiscal year 2001-02 to fiscal year 2009-10. Despite having financial constraints, the subsidy was restored in pursuance of ECC decision dated 22.11.2012 for the period of two years from 01.12.2012, but without clarification/ fate of intervening period i.e. from 1.7.2010 to 30.11.2012.

The stakeholders, however, did not discharge their liabilities and Rs 54.636 billion is still outstanding against the stakeholders by end-December 2014. The committee constituted by the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCE) in 2015 on recovery of receivables and addressing the issue of circular debt in its meetings held on 9.2.2015 and 25.2.2015 agreed to fix the subsidy for the intervening period, i.e., from July 2010 to November 2012 as per subsidy package already approved by the ECC of the Cabinet on 22.11.2012. As per decision, the share of tube-well owner was fixed at Rs 6,000 per month while the federal and provincial governments shares at the rate of 40% and 60%, respectively.

The ECC was informed that of the remaining amount of bill after deduction of the tube-well owner’s share was subject to a maximum of Rs 44,000 per month. In case, the bill exceeds Rs 500,000, the amount over and above would be paid by the tube-wells owner.

As per the above formula, the subsidy share receivables for intervening period, i.e., after withdrawal of subsidy from July 2010 to November 2012, the payment formula as per committee’s recommendations was federal government’s share @ 40% (Rs 21.127 billion), provincial government's share @ 60% (Rs 31.690 billion), and consumer share @ Rs 6000+above Rs 50,000 non-subsidised (Rs 1.819 billion). The total amount stood at Rs.54.636 billion.

Agriculture being major source of livelihood in Balochistan and in order to bring the farming community at par with other farming communities of the country, it was decided in the budget 2017-18, that the federal government will pay a portion of their electricity bills to run agriculture tube-wells and continue to provide electricity subsidies on tube-wells in Balochistan.

In view of the above, Power Division solicits consideration of the ECC of the Cabinet proposed; (i) continue the subsidy for agriculture consumers for a further period of two years from 1.1.2018 to 31.12.2019 subject to commitment of past payments by all concerned/ stakeholders on same terms and conditions as approved by the ECC of the Cabinet vide case No. 101/12/2015 dated 17.6.2015; (ii) alternative Energy Development Board in collaboration with the government of Balochistan will work expeditiously on solarisation of agriculture tube-wells and drip irrigation system in Balochistan. The government of Balochistan may extend full legal and law enforcement agencies cooperation for recovery efforts being made by QESCO from the electricity defaulters especially from the agriculture consumers; (iii) receivables for intervening period i.e. after withdrawal of subsidy from July 2010 to November 2012 will be made in accordance to the payment formula recommended by the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCE) vide case No. 4/1/2015 as narrated at para 5 ante; (iv) and the ECC of the Cabinet may decide subsidy amount on the basis of average load/ motor size for agriculture consumers as per different options.

The ECC was further told that it is with great reluctance that the Power Division would consider extension of current subsidy scheme in view of outstanding liabilities and the existing financial crunch to the power sector. The Finance Division has to make firm commitment to clear the outstanding subsidy arrears, besides streamlining the subsidy payment process.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181024418208/

FARMERS ADVISED TO ENSURE QUALITY OF COTTON
RECORDER REPORT OCT 24TH, 2018 KARACHI

The Met Office on Tuesday asked the farmers to step up with proper precautions while plucking cotton to ensure the quality of production since the high-standard output fetches a better return. The poorly plucked cotton is treated as a filthy output that finds a lower price on the market, it cautioned the farmers. "Use proper precautions during picking of cotton because the cost of good and clean quality cotton is high than that of the filthy one," it added.

Growers should make plans to irrigate corps keeping in view the light-rainy weather in until Oct 31, it said, adding that farmers should also remove weeds from their fields to help attain a better production. "Removing weeds from the standing crops is very important as weeds utilize moisture and food which are to be utilized by the crop," it said.

The daytime temperature in the most parts of the country is expected to remain slightly normal but the nighttime may stay below normal in the most of agriculture plains over the forecast period. Normal wind is likely to blow in the most of the agricultural plains of the country with a chance of sandstorms in southern Punjab and Upper Sindh.

Weather in Punjab and Sindh are expected to remain dry until Oct 31. However scattered light rainfall in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir over the period. It forecast mainly dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country in the next 24 hours with and isolated rain-thunderstorm is expected in Kalat and Makran Divisions.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181024418252/

STAKEHOLDERS EXPRESS RESERVATIONS OVER PUNJAB'S AGRICULTURE POLICY DRAFT
By Shahram Haq

Published: October 26, 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab government's draft of new agriculture policy 2018 has been slammed by leading stakeholders of agri-business.

The businessmen are of the view that the new policy, commissioned under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government does not ensure a level playing field for domestic consumers. They believe that it will benefit multinational companies working for the province.

The policy proposes establishment of a new institution, the Punjab Seed Registration and Regulation Authority (PSRRA), in consultation with federal and other provincial governments for consistency of methods. PSRRA will be comprehensive in its ability to permit companies to pursue "enlistment" and be subject to a truth in labelling system.

Under the truth in labelling the obligation to maintain seed quality will be shifted to private companies to develop and test varieties and self-report their characteristics on label. The claims on label will be checked by PSRRA and fines and other sanctions can be imposed for false claims.

Proposing such a parallel regulation system in Punjab for the same sector, when the federal government is already controlling the seed business, will create undue hassle for the seed industry. It will be counter-productive and such proposals have already been rejected by stakeholders in previous meetings. The proposed reforms in seed sector are against the interest of farmers and local seed producers, the stakeholders lamented.

Speaking at a meeting convened by Punjab Agriculture Department for reviewing draft agriculture policy 2018, stakeholders said it has been an established fact that seed development, manufacturing, marketing, exports and imports are a federal subject.

The draft agriculture policy proposes dual regulation for seed companies on different grounds. It is a discrimination that multinational seed companies are proposed to sell seed in truthfully labelled packing while local companies are advised to go through a stringent trail and registration process. Instead, only the sale of certified seeds should be allowed.

All companies should be asked to undergo stringent multi-tier seed trial and certification process, said Seed Association of Pakistan (SAP) President Shafiqur Rehman.

He added that Pakistan is on the path of becoming self-sufficient in producing seeds for various crops, citing examples of maize, rice and vegetables.

Vehari Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Asif Ali appreciated the formulation of agriculture policy. He welcomed the government's move of establishing market committees with the consultation of business community.

However, he criticised introduction of GM seed in the country, saying that only traces of GMOs were found from the rice export consignments but country had to pay heavily due to imposition of ban by various countries. He also strongly opposed any idea of introducing GM food in the country.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 26th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1834051/2-stakeholders-express-reservations-punjabs-agriculture-policy-draft/

BIG AGRICULTURE EYEING GENETIC TOOL FOR PEST CONTROL
RECORDER REPORT OCT 26TH, 2018 PARIS

A controversial and unproven gene-editing technology touted as a silver bullet against malaria-bearing mosquitos could wind up being deployed first in commercial agriculture, according to experts and an NGO report published Tuesday. So-called "gene drives" force evolution's hand, ensuring that an engineered trait is passed down to all or most offspring, and from one generation to the next.

If that trait is being male or female, for example, genetically altered specimens released into the wild could lead to the local extinction of a targeted species within a dozen generations. For health campaigners battling malaria, which kills nearly half-a-million people – mostly in Africa – every year, and conservationists desperate to save island birds decimated by avian malaria and invasive rodents, gene drive seems almost too good to be true.

It just may be, say some scientists.

"The use of CRISPR-based gene drive could lead to an ecological cacophony," said Virginie Courtier-Orgogozo, a biologist at the Jacques Monod Institute in Paris, referring to the underlying gene-editing technique that has revolutionised the field.

"We could see every interest group in the agro-food industry editing the genome of those they call pests, spreading various mutations through gene drive and causing long-term effects on the ecological dynamics of ecosystems – along with the human populations depending on them," she wrote recently in the journal EMBO Reports.

Critics calling for a moratorium on the release of gene drives in the wild fear they could mutate, jump to other species, or spread far beyond target areas.

And yet, in the absence of national or international regulations, the technology could be used on large-scale farms or orchards within a few years.

“Gene drive is headed toward agriculture,” said Jim Thomas, research director at ETC Group, a Canadian-based NGO that tracks potentially dangerous bio-technologies, and lead author of a report on the technology’s inroads into Big Agriculture.

In the United States, at least, it already has a foothold.

Associations representing the US citrus and cherry industries, for example, have commissioned tailor-made gene drives to combat the pests threatening their crops – and their bottom lines.

In January, the California Cherry Board noted “considerable progress” in developing a “functional” gene drive system for the invasive spotted wing fruit fly (Drosophila suzukii), which has devastated cherry, peach and plum orchards.

“Our plan it still to continue with caged trials and ultimately wild releases,” the group noted in its annual review.

With funding from the cherry growers, scientists at the University of California in San Diego set up a pair of companies last year to commercialise gene drives, with one focused on insects and plants, and the other on engineering lab mice and possibly pet dogs. Agri-chemical and GMO giants such as Monsanto-Bayer, Syngenta-ChemChina and Dow Dupont, meanwhile, are reportedly tracking the technology’s emergence. “Gene drives offer agribusiness new potential opportunities to generate income from the problems faced by farmers,” Thomas said.

But with a new twist: rather than making plants pest-resistent, gene drive technology alters the pests, rendering them harmless or programming their extinction.

That potential was clear early on. One of the cornerstone patents – co-owned by Kevin Esvelt of Harvard University, often described as one of the inventors of gene drive – lists dozens of agricultural applications. Esvelt has retreated somewhat from his initial blanket enthusiasm.

“Given recent history, it’s clear that early commercial applications in agriculture would seriously jeopardise popular acceptance of the technology as a whole,” he told AFP, noting that public health aims should take priority. “A temporary moratorium on commercial applications of gene drive wouldn’t be a bad idea.”

The gene drive issue will be front-and-centre when the 195-nation UN Convention on Biological Diversity meets in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt next month.

A preparatory meeting in July of the Convention’s science and technology advisory board “was an almighty fight and circus around gene drive,” said Thomas, a member of the board’s Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology.

A petition released on Tuesday, World Food Day, by nearly 200 civil society and small-farmer groups call for “a global moratorium on any release of engineered gene drives,” a position supported by numerous developing countries. There is also a fairness issue for local communities in the regions where gene drives might be released, Thomas said.

"This isn't just about environmental impact, it's also about consent," he said by phone. Gene drive technologies have been funded to the tune of several hundred million dollars by a handful of backers, including the US military, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, India-based Tata Trusts, and the Facebook-backed Open Philanthropy Project

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181026418946/

MUBARAK VILLAGE FISHERMEN AWAIT REHABILITATION MEASURES AFTER OIL SPILL
Faiza Ilyas Updated October 27, 2018

KARACHI: While there has been no official explanation yet on the source and true extent of a recent oil spill reportedly affecting coastal parts of Sindh and Balochistan, fishermen at Mubarak village — a coastal town worst hit by the disaster — desperately await damage-limitation and rehabilitation measures.

A visit to the village, located some 46km away from the main city at Sindh-Balochistan border and home to about 7,000 people, showed on Wednesday that the air was heavily polluted by hydrocarbon fumes and dark oily patches could be seen covering large parts of the beach.

Ignorant of how this disaster might affect their health, villagers were found more concerned about their fishing activities — their only source of income.

"It's the only month when we get the largest catch. We have been ruined by the disaster, but no one has come to inquire about it. We think it might take a year or so for the whole area to rehabilitate," said Sabir, a fisherman, voicing concerns of villagers, adding that fishermen in the open sea were returning empty handed.

The villagers demanded that the government hold an independent inquiry into the incident as they didn't trust the Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency officials and that the government provide them with alternative employment.

Still no answers about source of spill

"This village is deprived of piped water supply, electricity, gas, health and educational facilities for many years. Now, we have lost our livelihood; the disaster is not only killing fish, but also ruining our fishing nets," another villager said, adding that someone must take responsibility for the incident.

He also shared the concern that picnickers won't visit this area for recreation this winter, contributing to fishermen's financial woes.

According to villagers, the oil spill was initially reported near Churna Island on Wednesday and reached the village the following day. A number of marine animals, including turtles, fish and crabs, they said, were found dead on the beach.

Many of these animals, they said, were eaten up by stray dogs while they buried some of them. The oil stench was so intense on Thursday that they found breathing difficult.

Health hazards
Asked about how hydrocarbon fumes affect health, Dr Javaid Ahmed Khan, senior consultant pulmonologist at the Aga Khan University Hospital, said: “This could be seriously damaging for health especially for the respiratory system. The elderly having other health complications, for instance asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, and children are most vulnerable.”

Damage to health due to inhalation of hydrocarbon fumes was well-documented, he said, calling for urgent action to protect the public health.

Sharing similar concerns, Naeem Mughal, a senior official of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), said that a Sepa team had visited the site and measures were being planned by the government to contain oil spill damage.

“There is a need to fix responsibility because then the party concerned would be asked to support rehabilitation measures. It’s not a one-time damage. The whole marine ecology has been affected by this incident,” he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency held a meeting on oil spill, which was attended by all relevant officials of government departments and private organisations.

According to sources, the meeting remained inconclusive on the source of oil spill and it was suggested that all departments would pool resources to tackle the challenge.

Dr Nuzhat Khan representing the National Institute of Oceanography said that data was being collected to determine the scale and damage caused by the oil spill.

“We have taken samples of sediments, water and oil from various spots. It’s too early to say about the source of the oil spill. However, what I could say is that it’s emulsified oil,” she said.

It seemed that there was a large oil patch which broke up due to wind and currents and affected various coastal parts.

According to Dr Khan, the spilled oil has reached many locations including Cape Monze beach, Bhit Khori beach and Hawkesbay beach. Sunhera beach, however, was found clean during the visit.

“Oil spills have the potential to contaminate sediment, seawater and air due to many volatile compounds emitted by the spilled oil into the air. They have negative impacts on the residents of the affected areas and these effects can aggravate [due to] severe weather conditions,” she said.

No official of the Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency was available for comments.

Environmental disaster
Expressing serious concern over the devastation caused by the oil spill, the Word Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan issued a statement according to which “a major oil spill occurred along the coast of Karachi, spreading from Mubarak village to Manora.

It also affected Sandspit beach.

"The oil seems to have weathered and has converted into semi-solid tar indicating that it might have released a few days back. A WWF-P team visited Mubarak village and Sandspit and found dead animals, including a turtle covered with oil on the rocky shore.

"The impact of the oil spill on other animals, birds and ecosystem has not been determined as yet but it is likely to have serious implications," it says.

According to Muhammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine fisheries at WWF-P, the oil spill can have a severe impact on the marine ecosystem of the area as it has affected the rocky beaches.

"The incidence can lead to mortality of marine animals and plants inhabiting this important ecosystem. It can also have serious consequences for marine birds if they come in contact with this oil," he said.

The oil spill, according to him, has spread to Churna Island, which is one of the most sensitive habitats along Pakistan's coast. This island is among a few areas where corals are found and is known to have diverse marine life.

"It is possibly the most important diving and snorkelling site along Pakistan's coast. Cleaning beaches affected by oil spill is extremely difficult as its physical removal or use of dispersant is not easy," he noted.

Published in Dawn, October 27th , 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1441576/mubarak-village-fishermen-await-rehabilitation-measures-after-oil-spill

STAKEHOLDERS INVITED TO SETTLE CATTLE MARKET ISSUE
The Newspaper's Correspondent October 27, 2018

MIRPURKHAS: Mirpurkhas Deputy Commissioner Mehdi Ali Shah said on Friday that the issues relating to the cattle market that recently led to violence would be resolved through talks with all stakeholders.

He took notice of a clash between cattle traders and police in which two SIs were injured a few days ago and two FIRs against some notables belonging to the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as well as scores of cattle traders were registered.

The DC said that chief municipal officer of Mirpurkhas, chairman of the municipal committee concerned, cattle market contractor, Mirpurkhas SSP and two DSPs concerned would sit together with the traders' representatives and notables of the area on Wednesday to sort out and settle the issue.

Published in Dawn, October 27th , 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1441563/stakeholders-invited-to-settle-cattle-market-issue

EXPORTING SINDHRI MANGOES

SYED BAKHTIYAR KAZMI OCT 27TH, 2018 ARTICLE

"In comparison to India, Pakistan economy is losing the advantage of gaining importance in international trade market for its products such as Sindhri Mangoes, Kinoos, Green Cardamom, Khairpur dates, Hunza Apricot, Multani Mitti, Hala Handicrafts, Khanpur Oranges, Kasuri Methi, Chiniot furniture, Sahiwal cows and buffalos, Sindhi Ajrak and cap, Sukkur Chuhara, Shikarpur pickles, Peshawari Chapli Kabab, Peshawari Ice-cream, Kashmiri Pashmina Shawls, Knives of Wazirabad, etc., which are indentified to qualify the criteria of GIs defined in international legislations. If implemented, this can be a vital source of economic development particularly pertaining to the rural areas which result in exports and eradication of poverty. Many of them have acquired valuable reputations which, if effectively protected, may be misrepresented by dishonest commercial operations".

Notwithstanding that my friend, Uzair Rabbani, who was back then preparing a thesis on GIs and duly attached the related research methodology with his mail, was rather passionate about the subject, and notwithstanding that quite depressively, I myself am not aware that Kasuri Mehti, Multani Mitti and Sukkur Chuhara, amongst others included in the list are hot items, and notwithstanding that it took me a couple of months to get back to the email, apparently, we still have not finalised Geographical Indication (GI) laws; at least to my knowledge.

And what is the importance of GI laws and why do we need them?

Well, according to a news report, as late as March 2018, the then prime minister had "promised to resolve this long outstanding issue", pursuant to rice exporters asking for protection against Dubai-based Indian Trading Houses buying Pakistani rice on the cheap and selling them internationally as Indian rice; taking advantage of the fact that India has already enacted the relevant GI laws. Apparently, India enacted the law way back in 1999 and implemented them in 2003, and Bangladesh has done this in 2013. Sri Lanka has also implemented GI legislation and its most famous GI registered product is Ceylon Tea, which is a major source of its foreign exchange earnings.

For the record, Uzair insisted that I write about GI laws for the attention of those in the corridors of powers on the far chance that they might just get interested in the matter; hence, he takes credit for this piece in entirety. Albeit on a lighter note, I am not sure, whether those in power ever read this column!

Irrespective, according to Rabbani's research, we did draft the GI laws in 2001, and since then have done nothing much about it and this procrastination has resulted in economic loss of millions to Pakistan. And to venture a guess here, in the case of Basmati rice, our loss was apparently India's gain.

Admittedly, simply enacting GI laws does not automatically provide a monopoly on selling the GI product internationally, there is the more difficult exercise of demonstrating internationally that a country's GI products indeed qualify as identifiably originating from a specific territory, has differentiating qualities and a reliable reputation. But if you can do that, you fall in the defined concept of geographical indicators of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement for Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

And to remind those belonging to my generation, TRIPS is the agreement because of which the cheap DVD business collapsed domestically and all of us have to pay a pretty penny to watch international movies; notwithstanding my views on allowing Indian movies in Pakistani Cinema in the first place. Further education is costlier now in Pakistan since most text books and educational software are copy right protected. I may not support piracy, perhaps; however, it is bad strategy not to protect your products while submitting to everybody else's protection mechanism. Conspiratorially, TRIPS may primarily have been conceived to extract economic benefits from developing nation's markets; with multilateral lenders loan conditions, via structural programs, being the process through which TRIPS is imposed on such developing countries. Something similar to CPEC!?

At this point, I just cannot resist hitting out at those continuingly, and in an uninformed manner, arguing against protectionism. Everybody does it; albeit the western world does it in a formal manner and the oil rich countries of the Middle East and the economic powerhouses of Asia do it blatantly. If we don't pursue protectionist policies, pretty soon we won't have any industry. Irrespective of the arguments concocted in favour of free markets, they being the catalyst for efficiency and innovation, our industries are simply not sizeable enough or resourceful enough to compete with international giants.

While I am not sure why we haven't enacted GI laws ever since drafting them in 2001, probably a because of a mess as complicated and as absurd as Kalabagh Dam, and I am also not very well informed on whether enacting such laws will indeed provide any advantage to all the products listed in Uzair's email, however why not? Alternatively, if we don't, it seems that we soon won't be exporting Sindhri mangoes.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181027419103/

TCP SEALS DEAL FOR IMPORT OF 0.1M TONS OF UREA
RIZWAN BHATTI

KARACHI: The Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has finalized deal for the import of 100,000 tons of urea at $346.11 per metric tons for domestic consumption.

Following the directives of the federal government, in the third week of last month, the state-run grain trader issued tender for the import of 0.1 million metric tons urea to avoid urea shortage in the domestic market in Rabi season.

The urea import tender was opened on October 22, 2018 and some 11 bidders participated in the tender. Four bids were found non-responsive, while the remaining seven were responsive in terms of prescribed evaluation criteria. The bidders quoted prices in the tender ranging from $346.11 to $367.95 per metric ton (C&F) for supply of 100,000 metric tons.

The lowest bid was submitted by Ameropa Asia Pvt Ltd, which offered to supply 100,000 tons of urea at $346.11 per ton (C&F). Conforming to technical specifications and terms & conditions of the tender, TCP accepted the first lowest offer and accordingly the contract was awarded to Ameropa Asia Pvt Ltd on Wednesday for urea supply.

As per amended tender term and conditions, interested parties were required to submit bids for the entire quantity, ie, 100,000 metric tons of the tender.

M/s Aries Fertilizer Group offered to supply commodity at $351.97 per metric ton, Agrifert Liven $352.88 per metric ton, Quantum Fertilizer $353.90 per metric ton, Swiss Singapore Overseas Enterprises $357.33 per metric ton, Dreymoor Fertilizer 361.72 and CHS Ins quoted a price of $364.37 per ton for supply of urea.

While, bids of HELM AG, Agri Commodities & Finance and Keytrade AG Zurchestr were non-responsive due to conditional offers and one bidder namely Samsun C&T Corporation submitted a regret letter.

The TCP has already asked bidders that the supplied urea will be strictly in accordance with the standards and specifications prescribed by Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and Import Policy Order in force.

In the second week of this September, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet allowed the import of some 100,000 tons urea to avoid shortage in the domestic market. Accordingly, the state-run grain trader was given the task to import urea from international market as local urea plants are unable to produce sufficient quantity of urea, mainly due to gas curtailment.

Industry was estimating some shortage of urea in the Rabi season, therefore in order to ensure adequate urea stocks in coming months; the federal government decided to import some 0.1 millions urea.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/27/18-page/746286-news.html

COMMERCIAL FISHING BEGINS IN RAWAL LAKE
By Kalbe Ali | 10/28/2018 12:00:00 AM

ISLAMABAD: As the winter season started, commercial fishing has commenced at Rawal Lake and the contractor is preparing to enhance the harvest. But illegal netting and angling still pose a challenge to both the contractor and the authorities concerned.
It is the last season of the two-year commercial fishing contract and to ensure a higher yield the contractor says he hasintroduced a large number of varieties in the water which will also help diversify the aquatic life.

Mohammad Aurangzeb, one of the partners of the contractor, said currently they were preparing for the large-scale netting to start from the next month.

`To replenish the fish population in the lake, several freshwater varieties compatible to the local environment have been introduced,` he said.

`Islamabad has wide ranging temperatures from up to 40 degrees in the summer to almost zero in the winter, so varieties with higher survival rate have been introduced in the lake,` he added.

These include Thaila, Mori, Rahu, Mahasher, Silver, Bighead, hybrid (Thaila and Rahu), Singra and Sole.

`We bought seedlings from hatcheries in several parts of Punjab and introducedthem in March-April so that they nourished well in the rainy season and be big enough for harvest in the winter,` he added.

Some of these have been breeding naturally in the lake but Mr Aurangzeb said excessive fishing in the previous years had depleted almost all aquatic life in the lake.

The two-year contract was awarded by the capital administration for Rs44 million in Jan 2017 with the condition that the contractor would introduce around one million fish seeds in March-April every rear.

The last contract for commercial fishing was awarded in 2004 and terminated the same year as the contractor developed differences with the local administration over continued illegal fishing.

While a majority of the catch is sold to wholesalers at the fish market inGanjmandi, Rawalpindi, a large portion is also bought by enthusiasts from the sale point near Naval Club. The contractor complained that the authorities had not provided a dedicated sale point in the city.

The authorities have their own limitations as one inspector and seven fisheries watchers are responsible to stop and persecute illegal netting or angling with the use of fishing rods.

The lone boat belonging to the fisheries department is out of order and all the operations against illegal netting are conducted on boats belonging to the contractor.

However, abundant water supply during 2017 and in the current year has helped the fish population to mature well in the lake. The current water level at the lake is 1,752 feet and it is likely to remain at the same position in November.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=28_10_2018_151_006

BRAZIL SUGAR PRODUCTION FALLS 43 PCT EARLY IN OCTOBER, SAYS UNICA
Imaduddin October 24, 2018

SAO PAULO: Sugar output from the main producing region in Brazil fell 43 percent in the first half of October as rains delayed cane processing and mills continued to favor ethanol production over sugar, cane industry group Unica said on Wednesday.

Mills in Brazil’s center-south region produced 1.11 million tonnes of sugar in the first half of October compared to 1.28 million tonnes in the previous two-week period and 2 million tonnes at the same time last year, Unica said.

Cane crushing fell to 25.58 million tonnes versus 27.64 million tonnes in the second half of the previous month and 32.5 million tonnes seen at this time last year.

The numbers were somewhat in line with market expectations. Mills had lost more than five processing days early in October due to rains that make cane harvesting impossible.

Mills were also unmoved by recent rises in sugar prices in New York and continued to heavily favor ethanol output over sugar production, since the biofuel has given them better returns.

They earmarked almost 68 percent of all cane to produce the fuel, leaving only a bit more than 32 percent to sugar making.

Unica said local sales of hydrous ethanol were up 42 percent in October versus last year, as owners of flex fuel cars increasingly prefer the biofuel over more expensive gasoline.

The industry group said 15 mills finished operations for the season early in October and that 64 more are expected to end field work in the second part of the month, as a smaller crop leads to a before-normal end of the season.

https://www.brecorder.com/2018/10/24/448990/brazil-sugar-production-falls-43-pct-early-in-october-says-unica/

ABCD QUARTET OF GRAIN TRADERS PARTNER TO DIGITIZE GLOBAL TRADES
RECORDER REPORT OCT 28TH, 2018 CHICAGO

The world's four largest agribusinesses are working together to standardize and digitize international grain trades using technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence, the companies announced on Thursday.

Archer Daniels Midland Co, Bunge Ltd, Cargill Inc and Louis Dreyfus Co, known collectively as the ABCDs of global grain trading, said the effort would make international commodities trades more efficient and transparent and reduce costs.

The aim is to replace a system that relies on paper contracts and invoices and manual payments with an automated electronic system, the companies said in a joint statement. The first area the companies are targeting is automating grain and oilseed post-trade processes, according to an emailed statement from all four companies to Reuters.

It is a specific problem they are trying to make simpler and cheaper: 275 million emails are sent annually by commodity traders to process 11,000 shipments of grain transported on the ocean, they said. "Many aspects of agricultural trading are highly manual and costly: paper documents, facsimiles, manual retyping of data, and so on," the companies said. "And many transactions still utilize hard copy transfers of documents.

The companies did not disclose further details of the effort or how soon a new system would be rolled out. They are hoping other international grain traders – such as China's Cofco and Japan's Mitsui – will join their effort, the companies said. The effort mirrors moves by other companies and industries to make supply chains more traceable by using technologies such as blockchain, which is a shared record of data maintained by a network of computers, rather than a trusted third party. Louis Dreyfus completed the first agricultural commodity transaction using blockchain in January, CEO Ian McIntosh said in the statement.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181028419449/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 15TH TO OCTOBER 21TH 2018
THE PLIGHT OF THE SMALL FARMER

Mohiuddin Aazim October 15, 2018

Just consider this: 18,606 big landlords got agricultural credit worth Rs222.7 billion in the last fiscal year. Against this, 1.752 million small farmers got just Rs183.6bn. A little more than 110,000 mid-sized landowners received Rs76.3bn.

Small wonder then that our agriculture sector's productivity remains wanting on almost all counts.

We must keep in mind that big landlords are defined as those holding more than 50 acres of land in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and over 64 acres of land in Sindh and Balochistan. Small farmers are those who hold up to 12.5 acres in Punjab and KP, up to 16 acres in Sindh and up to 32 acres in Balochistan. Mid-sized landowners of each province fall in between respective provincial categories of small farmers and big landlords.

Small farmers remain neglected and that makes fuller exploitation of growth potential of agriculture all the more difficult.

The average farm size in Pakistan is 5.6 acres, less than half of what it was back in 1972. This makes it difficult for banks to reach out to the under-served segments of agricultural borrowers

Since the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) is in power at the centre and in Punjab and KP, people expect more from it. But other provincial governments will also have to play an active role in setting things right in agriculture.

The plight of small farmers of our country is visible everywhere — in landholding and in the form of bonded farm labour, in access to irrigation water and in access to inputs and markets to name a few. But how banks continue to neglect them in agricultural lending also often comes as a shock for many.

The fact that less than 20,000 big landlords get more bank credit than 1.75m small farmers is often justified on the grounds that financial needs of the farming sector must be seen in the context of the land area.

Naturally, a landlord who controls 50 acres of land needs more finance than a small farmer working on 12.5 acres.

But a 2010 World Bank study reveals that only two per cent farm households control 45pc of farmland and 98pc control the remaining 55pc. This pattern of land holding and the tenure system in Pakistan's agriculture are just too skewed in favour of big landlords.

As such, it is responsible for many of the problems of small farmers, including their inability to get their due share in irrigation water and, to some extent, bank financing as well.

According to 2010 Census of Agriculture, which is the latest, 75pc of Pakistan's total farm area belonged to owners whereas the remaining 25pc was cultivated by tenants or owners-cum-tenants. Farmers' lobbies, such as Sindh Abadgar Board and Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, say that an apparently high percentage of the farmland being controlled by owners does not mean that landless farmers have acquired pieces of land on a large scale over the years. They claim that in most cases it showed the transfer of parts of the land held by big landlords to their younger generation.

This means that the practice of tenure farming or the tilling of land of big landlords by poor farmers of their area still continues on a large scale. Farmers' lobbies lament that in practice such land tenancy, which should ideally be a decent partnership between owners and tillers of land for a certain period, turns out to be nothing short of poor farmers' slavery.

Big landlords, particularly those in Punjab and KP, contest this allegation. They say that with the ongoing digitisation of rural land records at a rapid pace in their provinces, anyone can check the genuineness of land titles. Members of the landed gentry argue that with corporate farming now taking root, the so-called enslavement of poor farmers by big landlords holds little truth at least in the case of Punjab. But in smaller provinces, poor farmers continue to receive unfair treatment at the hands of big, politically influential landowners, they admit.

Issues in landholding, tenure farming and genuineness of the titles of farmland are a big reason for low lending to small farmers. Offering collateral-based crop loans to farmers that work on others' land or jointly own land with unclear ownership titles becomes too difficult for banks.

Regardless of the accuracy of data on agriculture landholding, the breakdown in terms of small, medium and large farms presents another disturbing fact: according to Agriculture Census 2010, 90pc farms are categorised as small, 6pc as medium and only 4pc as large.

A higher percentage of small farms in the country's total stock of 8.35m farms spread over 55.6 acres means the average size of farmland is quite small. In fact, the average farm size in Pakistan — 5.6 acres as of 2010 — is less than half of what it was back in 1972 — 13.06 acres.

This makes it difficult for banks to reach out to the under-served segments of agricultural borrowers which, in turns, results in poor farm care and little investment in farming innovation.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1439041/the-plight-of-the-small-farmer

RESISTING THE LURE OF CASH CROPS
Mohammad Hussain Khan October 15, 2018

The Sindh irrigation department recently advised growers to cultivate short-duration crops in the brackish water zone. But growers based in the sweet water zone can cultivate wheat in the upcoming Rabi season, according to the advisory issued against the backdrop of uncertain water supplies.

This is not unusual. Irrigation water supplies during summer and winter crop seasons usually remain erratic in Sindh. This makes things difficult for farmers cultivating major crops ie wheat, rice, sugar cane and cotton. It calls for crop diversification by farmers who, by and large, stick to major cash crops.

Sindh doesn't get its share of water allocated under the Water Apportionment Accord 1991 in early Kharif. Its groundwater resource remains marginally or highly saline. The areas located close to the Indus or on its left bank have marginally saline water zones. According to experts, a conjunctive use of marginally saline water with canals' freshwater could be permitted for cultivation.

Water-intensive crops like sugar cane have already become a perennial problem for farmers because of the price-setting mechanism and non-payment of the official rates by powerful sugar millers. Paddy remains the second high-delta crop as farmers complain about the payment of inadequate rates by rice millers.

This crop is also cultivated in areas fed by the left-bank canals of Sukkur Barrage where its sowing is prohibited under the law.

Smaller crops like maize grow in areas where groundwater is marginally saline. These crops can be cultivated easily in spite of seasonal variations in water flows. But they account for negligible acreages, thanks to the farmers' reliance on major crops

Its cultivation is, however, permitted in the left-bank areas of Kotri Barrage and the right-bank areas of Sukkur and Guddu barrages.

Increasing water shortages that are becoming frequent can be attributed to climate change, poor storage capacity, losses at the field level, wastage, inequitable distribution and political influence that denies water supplies to tail-end farmers whose lands are fed by perennial canals like Nara and Rohri.

Besides, farmers are also not inclined to use efficient irrigation systems involving drips, pivots and sprinklers that are the norm in developed countries.

Small and medium-sized farmers can opt for smaller, short-duration crops in addition to major ones during winter and Kharif seasons. But this requires serious attention from the government, which should encourage growers to go for drought-resistant and short-duration crops.

This can be done under the agriculture policy that the Sindh government approved in April. The provincial agriculture research department has not been able to produce varieties of seeds for crops like cotton that farmers may otherwise opt for.

"Farmers had shown interest in Bt cotton as it requires less water and is a vital crop in terms of earning foreign exchange. Growers promoted its cultivation in the left-bank areas of Kotri Barrage, which was once known for paddy cultivation," says Mahmood Nawaz Shah, a progressive cotton producer.

But cotton sowing didn't remain sustainable even though Sindh produced over 4.2 million bales around nine years back, he adds. Its seed was brought by growers from a foreign country. Now it has lost its vigour and become susceptible to pests. The crop is hit by lower per-acre productivity issues for want of quality seeds. But the research department has not been able to address this problem, he contends. So growers have switched back to paddy cultivation in the command area of Kotri Barrage.

Sindh is also losing its otherwise rich cotton zone in Ghotki district to sugar cane production, he says. "Now Ghotki is home to at least five sugar mills," he adds.

In addition to cotton, sunflower is also facing similar issues. At the time of 2010 super floods, sunflower looked like a viable option for farmers in the winter season. But its area under cultivation has dropped to 60,000 hectares from 260,000 hectares.

It is a drought-resistant and short-duration crop. But its declining yields discouraged growers as they have almost given up its cultivation. Being a major oilseed crop, sunflower's cultivation is vital to meet the demand for edible oil whose import constituted $1.9 billion out of the total food import bill of $6.13bn in 2016-17, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Smaller crops, like maize, bajra and gram, can be productive for their short duration and grown in those areas where groundwater is marginally saline. These crops can be cultivated despite seasonal variations in water flows. But they only account for negligible acreages, thanks to the farmers' reliance on major crops.

Another factor that discourages growers from opting for alternative crops is the problem with value chain, marketing and production technology. As far as major crops are concerned, growers are able to at least sell them one way or another. When growers opt for smaller crops, they find it hard to market them.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture Vice President Nabi Bux Sathio points out that agriculture land in Sindh is already divided in zones suitable for particular crops. He says growers could use precious water resource carelessly in the past. But every drop of water should be used efficiently now, he adds.

He believes that farmers need to switch over to less water-consuming crops as they are getting smaller per-acre yields despite excessive use of water.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 15th, 2018.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1439040/resisting-the-lure-of-cash-crops

INFLATED PRICES: FARMERS DEMAND FEDERAL SUBSIDY FOR RAW MATERIAL
By Our Correspondent

Published: October 15, 2018

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has asked the federal government to provide subsidy on those agricultural inputs for which prices are inflating in the wake of the rupee depreciation against the dollar.

The chamber's officer bearers, in a meeting in Hyderabad on Sunday, expressed concern over the rising prices of fertiliser, pesticides, hybrid seeds, diesel and other agricultural inputs.

The meeting also deplored delay by the provincial government in calling Sindh Sugarcane Board's meeting to fix the price of the sugarcane crop, a bone of contention between the sugar mills and sugarcane farmers for the last decade. The SCA asked the government to immediately call the meeting, in which farmers, sugar mills' management and the government officials will participate, and fix the crop rate at Rs250 per 40 kilogramme. "If the provincial government continues to ignore the farmers, the sugarcane cultivation in lower Sindh will plummet over the next two years," warned SCA President Qabool Muhammad Khatian.

The chamber demanded the Pakistan Peoples Party Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to appoint a full-fledged minister for irrigation as the department has failed to manage the water shortage and supply water to tail-end areas.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 15th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1825918/1-inflated-prices-farmers-demand-federal-subsidy-raw-material/

GOVT ALLOCATES RS2.57BN FOR AGRICULTURE
Bureau Report October 16, 2018

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has allocated Rs2.57 billion for 40 projects in the agriculture sector, out of which 30 are ongoing with allocation of Rs2.21 billion and 10 are new with allocations of Rs355 million.

According to the documents for the budget for session 2018-19, some of the major projects include provision of offices for newly-created directorates and repair of buildings damaged in terrorist attacks.

The other schemes include procurement of earth-moving machinery for land reclamation, eco-friendly management of fruit flies, database development through information and communication technology in crop reporting service, establishment of trout villages in Malakand and Hazara divisions, control of livestock diseases of economic importance and solarisation of agriculture tubewells.

It was stated that the agriculture and livestock contributed around 24 per cent of the provincial GDP, which engaged more than 50 per cent of the labour force of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The statement said diversification of horticulture (with its potential to provide more income per acre at higher labour inputs) and rural-based agriculture processing units offered promising avenues for increasing the income of rural households.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1439284/govt-allocates-rs257bn-for-agriculture

WORLD FOOD DAY
Minà Dowlatchahi October 16, 2018

TODAY is World Food Day; a day commemorated each year to call for an end to world hunger. This year's theme — "Our Actions are our Future; A Zero Hunger World by 2030 is possible" — reminds us of the need to ensure that everyone has access to safe, affordable and nutritious food at all times to live a healthy, happy life.

According to the 2018 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report, there has been a rise in world hunger for the third year in a row. The absolute number of undernourished people (ie those facing chronic food deprivation) has increased to nearly 821 million in 2017, from around 804m in 2016. These are levels from almost a decade ago. Pakistan in 2015-17 had a 'prevalence of undernourishment' (also one of the indicators of SDG 2) in the total population of 20.5 per cent. This has barely improved since 2004-06, when it was 23.3pc, and has actually risen since 2014-16, when it was 19.9pc, reflecting a worldwide trend of increasing hunger. This means the number of undernourished people in Pakistan increased from 35.5m to 39.5m (three year average).

On the 2017 IFPRI Global Hunger Index, Pakistan ranked at 106 among 119 countries, with a score of 32.6. This level is described as 'serious', and is on a par with Afghanistan, which ranked 107. In comparison, Bangladesh was ranked 88 and India was ranked 100.

Food security is a fundamental element of poverty alleviation. However, achieving food security is a necessary but not sufficient condition to prevent malnutrition and ensure adequate nutrition for all. Understanding the pathways from inadequate food access to malnutrition is important. When there is an uncertain access to nutritious, safe and varied food for a household or an individual, that household or individual is 'food insecure'.

How can we achieve zero hunger in Pakistan?

Food insecurity can cause child wasting, stunting and micronutrient deficiencies; both directly through compromised diets and indirectly through impact on infant feeding. Recurrent infections and disease are serious contributing factors to wasting and stunting in children. Nutritional knowledge and food habits, as well as improved sanitation, may play a role by moderating the effects of household food insecurity on diet, health, and nutritional outcomes.

The link between food insecurity and obesity also passes through diet, which is affected by the cost of food. Nutritious, fresh foods often tend to be expensive. Thus, when household resources for food become scarce, people choose less expensive foods that are often high in caloric density and low in nutrients. The negative effect of food insecurity on diet quality has been documented in low, middle and high-income countries alike, particularly in urban settings.

So what should be done? There is need for implementing and scaling up interventions aimed at guaranteeing sustainable production and access to nutritious foods, breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition perpetuated by undernourished girls becoming undernourished mothers, at risk of giving birth to infants with low birth weights. Any action plan or policy implementation must pay special attention to the food security and nutrition of infants and children under five, school-age children, adolescent girls and women.

The first National Food Security Policy and Water Policy provide the framework for action, putting emphasis on agriculture diversification and value addition, resilient climate-smart agriculture and water management, improved livelihoods of small-holder farmers and tenants, safe drinking water and a National Zero Hunger Programme.

The key pillars of a Zero Hunger Programme are school-feeding programmes combined with educational modules on nutrition, hygiene, food preparation, and homestead kitchen gardens in rural and peri-urban areas; conditional income support targeting women in the most vulnerable households; knowledge, technology and asset creation (such as quality seeds, modern irrigation systems, processing equipment) and market linkages. Further pillars such as nutritional supplements, essential basic services would also be required in the most vulnerable and poor areas. Close inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination among the ministries of food security, water, health and climate change, and a strong alliance with civil society, is also needed.

Zero hunger is a definitive call for a transformation of the rural economy (where the majority of the poor are), of food systems, coupled with a change in the diets of households and individuals.

What can you do to help? You can start by looking at what you eat in one day and compare that with the Pakistan Dietary Guidelines for your age group to check if there is anything you should change; seeing how much food and water goes wasted in a day in your home and what you can do to reduce it; buying directly from small-holder farmers; and advocating for zero hunger in Pakistan.

The writer is the FAO Representative in Pakistan.

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PAKISTAN, CHINA MAY SIGN DEAL FOR INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE
By Shahbaz Rana

Published: October 16, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China may sign a legal framework agreement under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), aimed at bringing investment in the neglected agriculture sector and exporting surplus produce to feed the growing Chinese population.

Both sides were aiming to sign the deal during the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China early next month, said officials in the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of National Food Security.

If finalised, it would be a government-to-government sovereign deal, developed on the parameters of legal framework agreement in the energy sector, officials added. The major thrust of the agreement will be on enhancing production of the agriculture sector and exporting the surplus produce to China, they added.

Chinese companies may give buy-back guarantees to farmers for the purchase of grains and food aimed at protecting them from losses, the officials said and added that Chinese investment would be allowed in joint ventures but they may not be allowed to buy land.

The development comes at a time when the $60-billion CPEC deals are increasingly becoming the subject of western criticism and may soon be opened for scrutiny by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The quantum of investment in the agriculture sector has not yet been discussed, but it will be “huge”, according to an official in the Ministry of National Food Security.

A Chinese delegation, led by MA Aiguo, Vice Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, is currently visiting Pakistan to finalise modalities for the framework agreement. The delegation met with Federal Minister for Planning and Development Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtyar on Monday.

Joint ventures, value addition, cold chain management for fruits and vegetables, marketing and branding would help Pakistan overcome weaknesses and increase agriculture exports to China and other countries, said Bakhtyar. He emphasised that there was a massive potential for developing Pakistan's agriculture sector and achieve a win-win situation.

China and Pakistan should give full play to their own competitive advantages to strengthen agriculture infrastructure construction with CPEC coverage and play their roles in agriculture personnel training, technical exchange and cooperation, says the CPEC Long Term Plan (2017-30).

Under the plan, both countries have committed to cooperate in areas of biological breeding, production, processing, storage and transportation, infrastructure construction, disease prevention and control, water resources utilisation, conservation and land development and remediation.

They have also committed to market agricultural products for the promotion of systematic, large-scale standardised and intensified construction of the agriculture industry, according to the plan.

Pakistan's agriculture sector employs 45% of the manpower, contributes about 24% to gross domestic product, provides livelihood for 64% of the country's rural population and contributes 20% to total exports, according to Bakhtyar.

The minister said Pak-China agricultural cooperation had to focus on the vertical increase in productivity of existing crops, transfer of knowledge and technologies, seed and plant protection as well as disease control.

He also underlined the importance of value addition and marketing of agriculture products, including dairy, livestock and fisheries. Mutual cooperation should cover the whole basket of the agriculture sector, he added.

MA Aiguo said agricultural cooperation should set a new and important direction with focus on areas as well as level of cooperation and finalisation of specific plans, according to a statement issued by the planning ministry. He said China was ready to share its expertise and successful agriculture models with Pakistan.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 16th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1826543/2-pakistan-china-may-sign-deal-investment-agriculture/

'MILLIONS OF PEOPLE UNDERNOURISHED IN PAKISTAN'
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent October 17, 2018

HYDERABAD: Speakers at a programme said that the world's 2.5 billion small farmers and forest-dependent communities derive their food and income from renewable natural resources. In Pakistan, there are 18 million small growers and 14.6 million herders.

They were speaking to participants of a programme titled 'Our Actions are Our Future' on World Food Day 2018 organised by UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) at a local hotel here on Tuesday evening.

The report on "the 2018 state of food security and nutrition in the world" was launched in the presence of academia and civil society organisation representatives. It is a joint effort of the FAO, IFAD, WHO and Unicef. UNFAO representative Abdul Waheed Jamali moderated the event.

"We must take action quickly while there is still time to halt the erosion of our hard-won gains in ending hunger. Building climate resilience head-on is one action that will help put us back on track towards meeting the goal of zero hunger," FAO first policy officer Genevieve Hussain said while delivering the detailed presentation.

Focusing on Pakistan regarding undernourishment, she said that while 34 million people were facing undernourishment during 2000-2002, 40 million were undergoing the same during 2015-2017.

She said that around the world the alarming signs of increasing food insecurity and high levels of different forms of malnutrition were a reminder that "we need to continue with our efforts". She said the FAO landed in Pakistan just after its independence. It worked with the federal and provincial frameworks, she said, warning that food security was a global challenge.

PPP leader and Senator Taj Haider said the government planned to reduce the price of grains by providing transportation cost as there were three stages, including storage of wheat, transportation and distribution. He said the Sindh government was building 122 small dams and out of them, 70 dams were completed.

"Thar is on the verge of agriculture revolution," he said.

He said 350,000 trees with seven species were planted in Thar in collaboration with visitors and local community over 100 acres land.

He emphasised that small farmers should be supported with special focus on women peasants and how they should be uplifted from poverty.

He said the Benazir Kisan Card would help them reduce their cost share. In addition to that grain-purchase mechanism would be lined with zero hunger. He also said the present government planned to open and clean the natural waterways; it would help to revive the delta, and stop sea intrusion.

Sindh Agriculture University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Mujeebuddin Sahrai called for practical steps as actions spoke louder than words. He said data must be implemented so that people could benefit. He said that it was sad that feudal lords in Sindh preferred luxury vehicles to agriculture technology and machinery. "Youths of Sindh are more talented and more educated in this modern era; they are hope for the best," he said.

GEF-UNDP national programme manager Masood Lohar said the situation of Pakistan lagged behind in achieving the set targets. He mentioned the case of Phulelli Canal which was the longest cannel and was being polluted by waste of various types. He said that survival of waterways needed silt and water.

"If silt is stopped, then delta will die, and it has reciprocal effects with the monsoon pattern of the country. Therefore, Indus needs water, and must be in such capacity as to carry silt," he said.

Ending hunger means availability of nutritious food for human beings, especially mothers and pregnant women, World Food Programme representative Syed Khadim Hussain Shah said. He said inequality, unjust distribution of resources and wastage nowadays were big threats to the nation.

“There is availability of food in Pakistan, but question of [nutritious] food, and access to it more important to consider,” he said.

Rights activist Prof Mushtaq Mirani said that because of poor policies, strategies and approaches, hungry people could not have access to food.

Others who spoke on the occasion included Dr Mazhar Iqbal, Noor Ahmed Baloch, Hidayatullah Chhajro, G.N. Mughal, Suleman G. Abro and Prof Dr Ghulam Ali Jariko.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1439441/millions-of-people-undernourished-in-pakistan

WORLD FOOD DAY: MINISTER VOWS TO REDUCE HUNGER TO ZERO BY 2030
ABDUL RASHEED AZAD OCT 17TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Muhammad Sultan has said that the government will utilise all means to meet the zero hunger target set by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for member nations by 2030. He said this while speaking as a chief guest at an event, organized by Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), FAO of the United Nations (UN) in collaboration with National Agriculture Research Council here on Tuesday, to mark World Food Day.

Sultan said that the day is celebrated every year for raising awareness about food security and demonstration of solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The minister said that the theme of the day “Our Actions are our Future. A Zero Hunger World by 2030 is Possible” is relevant to the mandate of Ministry of Food Security and Research. He added that the idea demands strong commitment of multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize means of implementation.

The minister further added that the present government has given top priority to uplift agriculture and conserve water in its first 100 days. Certainly, the initiative of the present government will be geared towards reducing hunger to the zero level in Pakistan by the year 2030.

Mina Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan in her address highlighted the completion of 40 years of FAO in Pakistan. She said that FAO along with all other partners will have to continue to play respective roles for achieving zero hunger in Pakistan.

She said that it is encouraging to see Pakistan is taking steps in the right direction for reaching this goal. She hailed the steps taken by the government of Pakistan including National Food Security Policy and the Water Policy, putting emphasis on agriculture diversification and value addition. She said that the action taken towards resilient climate smart agriculture and water management, improved livelihoods of small farmers and tenants, safe drinking water and a National Zero Hunger Program show that the country is moving on right direction.

Federal Secretary for MNFS&R, Hashim Popalzai said that peace, progress and prosperity are greatly linked to the food security in a country. He said that to achieve the set targets, the government, researchers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and communities must join hands to achieve this goal. He added that to achieve the target, the government has formulated suitable policies, strategies and actions which can be revised accordingly.

Agriculture researchers should increase their efforts to cope with the emerging challenges like climate change. Climate change adaptation has significant importance for poverty reduction.

Finbarr Curran, Country Director and Representative, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Pakistan, said on the occasion that ending hunger will require investments in agriculture, rural development, nutrition, social protection and gender equality.

Chairman PARC Dr Yusuf Zafar said that World Food Day is celebrated every year to review, monitor and strengthen efforts for food security. Eradicating hunger and malnutrition is one of the great challenges of the present time, he said. Not only do the consequences of not enough-or the wrong-food cause suffering and poor health, they also slow progress in many other areas of development like education and employment.

Messages from the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan were read at the ceremony in which the longstanding partnership of government of Pakistan and FAO was highlighted.

Other speakers on the occasion highlighted the plus and negatives of the food and hunger related situation in Pakistan.

They said the country stands at 106th out of 119 developing countries in Global Hunger Index, however it is the third highest global producer and exporter of chickpea; fourth highest of rice and mango; fifth highest of milk, sugarcane, and date palm; sixth highest of apricot and citrus; and seventh highest of wheat and onion.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181017416050/

GOVERNMENT URGED TO INCLUDE SUGAR IN FTA-II WITH CHINA
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN OCT 17TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) has urged the federal government to include sugar in duty free items to be exported to China to improve trade imbalance, well informed sources told Business Recorder.

According to Prime Minister”s Advisor on Commerce, Textile, Industries and Production and Investment, Pakistan has sought unilateral concessions on 330 items from China prior to finalizing the Free Trade Agreement-II (FTA-II) as FTA-1 was poorly negotiated by the Pakistani side.

In a letter to the Prime Minister”s Advisor, the PSMA stated that last year Pakistan produced a bumper crop of 6.6 million tons with a carry forward from 2016/17 of nearly 2 million tons, making total availability of sugar in the country at 8.6 million tons.

The country"s consumption or annual demand is around 5.6 million tons accounting for a surplus of 3 million tons (2 million from year 2016/17 and 1 million ton from 2017/18).

For this surplus the previous government took an initiative and announced a subsidy based export of 2 million tons. Of the total subsidy due, 60% of the balance subsidy is still unpaid. If this subsidy is not cleared, mills will not be in a position to start the new crushing season.

The Association argues that average cost of sugar production for 2017/18 was Rs.63.50 per kg whereas the wholesale price has been Rs.51.50/- per kg in October 2017 and has been steadily declining due to a bumper production with a carryover stock at the rate of Rs.48.50/- per kg in October 2018; with Rs 6/kg paid as sales tax it leaves only Rs.42.50/- per kg with the mills.

"At this low price the mills ability to pay for the sugarcane would be Rs.100/- per mound (40 kg); this is an extremely alarming situation as growers would not plant sugarcane which would lead to a shortage in sugar in the country. Currently, landed cost of sugar at zero import duty and inclusive of sales tax is around Rs.60/- per kg," the Association added.

The letter further states that the current situation needs immediate correction where the price of local sugar needs to be rationalized with the cost of production which is Rs.63.50/- per kg, the equivalent support price of sugarcane of Rs.180 per mound (40 kg).

The Association claims that "if cane price of Rs160/- per mound (40 kg) has to be achieved, then the cost of produced sugar will be Rs.57/- per kg. Both these prices are higher compared to current price of sugar in the market which is Rs.48.50/- (inclusive of Rs.6/- sales tax).

Since Pakistan has sought unilateral concession on more than 300 items from China, PSMA has suggested sugar which is surplus in the country be included in the FTA-II with China for tariff free exports from Pakistan which would help stabilize the trade imbalance with China.

Local mills can export 1 million tons of sugar duty free to China. This effort not only will stabilize local sugar market but also help mills to pay the support price and earn valuable foreign exchange for Pakistan.

The Association has also shared initiatives given by the Government of India to its sugar industry in the form of in-land freight subsidy and export subsidy.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181017416021/

PLAN FINALISED TO SET UP LIVESTOCK MARKETS IN BALOCHISTAN

By APP

Published: October 17, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Balochistan government has finalised a plan to establish livestock markets at divisional level across the province to increase the number of animals and meat productivity, Livestock and Dairy Development director general says.

Talking to APP on Tuesday, Dr Ghulam Hussain Jaffar said, “The government has already approved a plan for establishing livestock markets at divisional level to help improve the standard of marketing of the huge livestock sector, which has the potential to change the lives of farmers for the better.”

He said the aim behind establishing the livestock markets was to eliminate the role of brokers and facilitate the livestock keepers directly. Lack of proper marketing of livestock and dairy development was the main issue and for this purpose, the department “has approved a project to establish livestock markets across the province”.

He said the main aim of approving the plan was to increase livestock production in Balochistan and boost the vital sector as per directives of Prime Minster Imran Khan.

Expressing best wishes for the livestock sector, he said, “The province has the potential to export domestic animals to gulf countries to earn precious foreign exchange.”

Replying to a question, he said, “Balochistan is environmentally different from other provinces of the country and businessmen are being encouraged to promote livestock farming in Naseerabad.”

The DG said, “The livestock markets will have the facility of veterinary dispensary, vaccination and will provide proper treatment to ailing animals brought to the markets for sale or purchase.”

He said the animals should be handled with care in an appropriate manner according to their variety and should be fit for sale in the market.

He said, “Vaccination is also being provided to animals through mobile dispensaries on the routes of nomads, who come from Afghanistan to overcome the threats of different viruses.

“The government is formulating long-term policies to increase meat production.”

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1827534/1-plan-finalised-set-livestock-markets/

LIBERAL IMPORT POLICY HURTING BALOCH FARMERS
Mubarak Zeb Khan Updated October 18, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce suggested government to take effective measures to counter cheaper food imports as well as smuggling of fruits and vegetables from neighbouring countries.

The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce also recommended Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) to purchase fruits and vegetables from farmers of Baluchistan.

Passco was also suggested to fix minimum prices for fruits and vegetables produced in Balochistan analogous to the pattern adopted in other provinces.

The Senate Standing Committee convened a special session to discuss the issues raised by Senator Mir Kabir Ahmed Shahi who highlighted the issue of vegetables and fruits prices in Baluchistan in the wake of cheaper imports in August.

Senator Shahi while briefing the committee complained that the government has adopted policies which are directly and indirectly hurting Baloch farmers. He added that the government adopts an open border policy and allows imports of fruits and vegetables from India, Afghanistan and Iran during the seasonal arrivals of these produces.

He urged the government to impose restrictions on imports to help fruits and vegetables farmers in Balochistan.

Highlighting the unchecked smuggling of fruits and vegetables, the committee was told that 22 un-registered trucks loaded with fruits and vegetables were confiscated in Gujranwala with labels from Afghanistan.

Senator Shahi also informed the committee that approximately 1.2 million tonnes of apples were produced annually in Balochistan against the total requirement of 1m tonnes adding that the north eastern province also produces 0.3 m tonnes of grapes, 0.5m tonnes of onions and 0.5m tonnes of dates every year.

He said that despite sufficient local production, Iranian dates are being routinely smuggled into local market.

Senate Committee's Chairman Shibli Faraz said the government will take every measure to support Baloch farmers adding that he would suggest government to establish cold storages in the province to overcome wastages.

Representatives of the commerce ministry informed the committee that a high level Afghan delegation visited Pakistan after the government banned imports from Afghanistan. He said that the delegation was informed that only fruits and vegetables produced in Afghanistan will be allowed in to the country.

The committee was briefed that Pakistan imports tomatoes worth $29.5m, onions worth $14m and apples worth $33m from Afghanistan and Iran. The committee was informed that imports of fruits and vegetables are subject to laboratory testing. However, Senator Shibli Faraz questioned the capacity and quality of Pakistani laboratories to accurately test the quality of fruits and vegetables at imports stage.

On the other hand, Pakistan also imported tomatoes worth Rs17bn from India last year but the government has banned its import in 2018, the committee was informed.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1439723/liberal-import-policy-hurting-baloch-farmers

MINISTRY COMES UP WITH STEPS TO OVERCOME UREA SHORTAGE
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN OCT 18TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

The Ministry of Industries and Production (MoI&P) has reportedly proposed different measures to meet the shortage of urea fertilizer in the country, well-informed sources in fertilizer industry told Business Recorder.

Giving the background, the sources said, in the meeting held on August 30, 2018 under the chairmanship of Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile, Industries & Production and Investment, Abdul Razzak Dawood it was anticipated that there was a possibility of urea shortage to the tune of 391,000 tons (including buffer stock of 200,000 tons) by the end of January 2019.

A meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee (FRC) was held under the chairmanship of the Advisor on October 5, 2018 wherein it was anticipated that despite implementing the decisions of the ECC of the Cabinet of September 10, 2018 closing inventory by the end of January 2019 will be as low as 97,000 tons. It was also discussed in the FRC meeting that Pakarab Fertilizers Limited be operationalised immediately, besides Agritech and Fatimafert that are already in operation, to meet the shortage and avoid further costly import of urea.

The sources said, fertilizer industry can bear up to Rs 729 per MMBTU of gas cost. Effective gas price under the arrangement of operation on RLNG, according to decision of ECC of the Cabinet, to two fertilizer plants (Agritech Limited and Fatimafert Limited) comes out to Rs 1058/MMBTU at revised gas prices. Urea production gets economically unviable as gas cost rises to Rs 1586/bag.

The ECC, in its decision of September 10, 2018 allowed import of 100,000 tons of urea. Average international price of urea is $304 FOB and $ 325 CFR and is on the rise. Imported cost per bag including 25% incidentals comes to Rs 2702. If Dealer Transfer Price (DTP) is Rs 1532 subsidy of Rs 2.30 billion would be required on import of urea.

The ECC also raised gas price fuel stock by 30% to Rs 780 per MMBTU and of feed stock by 50% to 185 per MMBTU. The impact per bag comes to Rs 128 which as directed by ECC is not to be passed on to the farmers. In the FRC meeting held on October 5, 2018 the industry unanimously stated that it would not be possible to share the cost of subsidizing the farmer. The total subsidy required to offset the impact of gas price revision from October, 2018 to March, 2019 comes to Rs 7.5 billion.

Keeping in view the position, the Ministry of Industries and Production has proposed the following measures to the ECC: (i) ratio of gas blend be changed from 62% system gas and 38% RLNG to 75% system gas and 25% RLNG for October and November 2018 with retrospective effect, from the date of restoration of gas supply to Fatimafert Limited and Agritech Limited, as this would require no subsidy;(ii) RLNG price for fertilizer industry be capped at Rs 729 per MMBTU and the remainder be subsidized by the government. Total impact of subsidy to run two plants, Agritech and Fatimafert, from 3rd week of November, 2018 to end March, 2019 comes to Rs 7.30 billion to produce 300,000 tons urea; (iii) Pakarab Fertilizer Limited be made operational immediately for 60 days. (v) subsidy amount of Rs 7.5 billion be allocated to avoid passing on impact of gas price increase to farmers for Rabi season (October, 2018 to March, 2019) for total domestic Urea offtake of 2,935,000 tons.

http://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181018416322/

COTTON PRODUCTION EDGES UP
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana October 19, 2018

KARACHI: The country’s cotton production crawled a little over one per cent to 6.044 million bales over 5.984m bales in the corresponding period last year.

According to fortnightly (Oct 1-15) figures issued by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners' Association (PCGA), the country could not make any major breakthrough in production this season as production grew by a nominal 59,708 bales.

With Sindh's production shrinking due to initial setback caused by water shortage during sowing, there are dim chances that any substantial growth could be witnessed this season.

The figures issued by ginners' body figures on Thursday disclosed that Sindh produced 2.920m bales, down 1.06pc from 2.951m bales in same period last year — decreasing by 31,210 bales.

However, there was a modest nominal improvement in production from Punjab but it would not be sufficient enough even to match last year's output, cotton analysts said.

The output of cotton in Punjab (up to Oct 15) stood at 3.123m bales, higher by 3 per cent, from 3.032m bales in same period last year – an increase of 90,918 bales.

During the last fortnight, around 2.023m bales were processed by ginning units, showing an uptick of 30,310 bales over 1.993m bales in the corresponding period of last season.ss

Other details show that textile mills have so far purchased a higher quantity of cotton at 4.331m bales compared to 4.232 million bales in the same period last year. However, exporters lifted fewer at 75,797 bales as against 180,602 bales last season.

Ginners, on the other hand, are holding slightly greater quantity of unsold cotton stocks at 1.636m bales versus 1.571m bales in corresponding period last year.

There was also a decrease in the number ginning units currently operating in the country with Punjab at 622 units and Sindh 287 factories, down from Punjab 686 and Sindh 294 units in same period year.

Published in Dawn, October 19th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1439970/cotton-production-edges-up

SMALL GROWERS WANT CANE PRICE FIXED AT RS220-250 PER 40KG
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent October 19, 2018

HYDERABAD: Small growers have appealed to federal and provincial governments to fix new rate of sugar cane at Rs220-Rs250 per 40 kilogramme for 2018-19 season, order sugar mills to clear growers' dues and resolve nagging issue of water shortage.

Sindh Agriculture Research Council president Ali Palh advocate, Jamal Mehmood Khuhro, Murtaza Otho, Dr Shahnawaz Dall and representatives of two sugar mills said at a programme titled 'Dialogue on shortage of water and repeated sugar cane crises' at press club here on Thursday that acute shortage of water had seriously affected farmers as well as other members of general public but the nagging issue was not being resolved.

They said that growers were facing “financial murder” because of water shortage and unfair price of sugar cane. Moreover, sugar mills delayed them payment of their produce and did not pay them fairly for four consecutive years, they said.

They urged the federal government to play its role in ensuring fair distribution of water to Sindh and Punjab so that growers could be saved from economic murder.

Published in Dawn, October 19th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1439897/small-growers-want-cane-price-fixed-at-rs220-250-per-40kg

FISHERMEN RALLY FOR PROTECTION OF LIVELIHOOD IN GWADAR
Behram Baloch October 20, 2018

GWADAR: A large number of people from the coastal community on Friday took out a procession in this port city to press the government to protect their rights while constructing the Gwadar East-bay expressway that the fishermen said would affect their livelihood.

A large number of fishermen, women activists, workers of different political parties and civil society members took part in the protest, which was organised by an alliance of fishing community.

Holding banners and placards inscribed with their demands, the protesters marched from Dhoria, a settlement of the fishing community, to the main roads. They chanted slogans in favour of their demands.

They believe construction of a major highway will adversely affect their lives

Leaders of Fishermen Alliance Khuda Dad Wajo, Malik Khuda Bakhsh, Rais Akbar Ali, Rasool Bakhsh, Faiz Nagori, Gwadar district presidents of the National Party and Balochistan National Party-Mengal and Begum Allah Bakhsh a female leader while addressing the participants expressed their apprehension about the construction of the expressway.

They said that it would affect fishing on the eastern coast of Gwadar. The authorities concerned had not taken steps to remove their apprehension regarding their centuries-old livelihood. “Fishing is their only source of earning money,” they said, adding that it was their constitutional right to protect their livelihoods.

They vowed to continue their peaceful struggle till their demands were accepted.

Published in Dawn, October 20th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1440145/fishermen-rally-for-protection-of-livelihood-in-gwadar

GOVT URGED TO GIVE INCENTIVES TO RICE SECTOR
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) has requested government to provide some relief measures for the 2nd largest foreign exchange earner rice commodity

In a letter written by Chairman REAP Safder Hussain Mehkri to Ghazanfar Bilour, President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry on Friday has urged for taking the rice export matter with the Finance Minister Asad Umer, who is visiting FPCCI on Saturday to discuss trade issues.

Safdar Mehkri highlighting the discrimination with rice export sector has said that government of Pakistan has continued incentives to 5 leading export sectors, however, rice-the 2nd largest foreign exchange earner has completely ignored.

Members of REAP contributing in the national exchequer some $ 2 billion annually through exports of rice, but remained somehow ignored by the government, he added.

“I would like to draw your kind attention towards a notification recently issued by OGRA, in which they notified incentive on energy prices to the selective sectors of export i.e. textile including jute, carpets, leather, sports and surgical goods, we fail to understand the neglect of government towards rice export sector to have the same incentive as five export sectors,” he added.

He said that rice is 2nd largest forex earner after textile and only agricultural crop which is produced for exports, as net surplus with 60 percent exported.

The five sectors given incentive, four of which are far lesser in export earning to the extent that rice approximately 10 times or more in exports to carpet and 6-8 times more than the sports & surgical, Chairman REAP added. He has informed that in a meeting with Abdul Razzak Dawood, Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce & Textile at Islamabad, Advisor has assured REAP team that MINCOM is stand by REAP demands and same incentives to be given to rice sector as was given to other sectors.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/20/3-page/745006-news.html

PFA LAUNCHES OPERATION AGAINST ILLEGAL SLAUGHTERHOSUES
By Our Correspondent

Published: October 21, 2018

LAHORE: Following a successful operation against adulterated milk and rotten eggs, the Punjab Food Authority has once again started operation against illegal slaughterhouses and the sale of unwholesome meat in the metropolis.

The provincial food watchdog, on Sunday, conducted raids at six illegal slaughterhouses operating in the vicinity of Bakra Mandi. According to PFA vigilance cell, the authority officials conducted raids at dawn and sealed these illegal slaughterhouses. They also seized and discarded over 6,500 kilogrammes of unwholesome meat, 1,000 kilogrammes of animal fat and 800 litres of oil extracted from animal waste.

PFA Director General Captain (retd) Muhammad Usman highlighted that six illegal slaughterhouses, slaughtering sick animals, were closed down in Bakra Mandi. He pointed out that these facilities had stored huge quantities of unwholesome meat in rusty and moldy freezers. He added these were being supplied to local butcher shops in different areas of the city by printing fake stamps of legal slaughterhouses.

Usman said meat was a fundamental food group of diet, like milk, egg and other staple grains. The authority had directed its enforcement teams to ensure the sale of safe and healthy meat across the province by taking strict action against illegal slaughtering.

On Friday, PFA officials conducted a province-wide crackdown against adulterated milk and collected milk samples from each district of the province. PFA dairy safety teams set up checkpoints at various entry and exit points of the city. They confiscated and discarded over 5,751 liters of tainted milk being carried on 37 vehicles from different farmhouses, farms and factories.

Throughout the province, the PFA discarded a total of 15,833 liters of adulterated milk, whereas samples for screening tests were taken from over 0.25 million litres. PFA officials disclosed that adulterated milk was being preserved by huge blocks of ice in containers.

The authority also discarded thousands of litres of adulterated milk over proved contamination of harmful chemicals, powder, polluted water, urea, and water which was added for the purpose of thickness and to increase the quantity of milk.

PFA officials also unearthed a cold store in the surrounding areas of Gujranwala and seized over 210,000 rotten eggs. The operation was carried out after six days of careful observations made by the vigilance cell of the PFA.

The authority discarded all seized putrid eggs after bringing them at the dumping site of Lakhodair. So far, the food regulatory body has dumped over three million rotten eggs after confiscating them from various cities of Punjab, including Lahore, Chichawatni, Sahiwal, and Sheikhupura

Punjab Food Minister Samiullah Chaudhry said that these rotten and decayed eggs were being added to people's diet through a corrupt channel. He appreciated the authority and underlined the need to devise a comprehensive policy for a permanent ban on the sale of substandard hatchery eggs. According to this policy, no sale and purchase of hatchery eggs will be made in the market.

Chaudhry said that throughout the province, no cold store will be allowed to store rotten eggs. "Our aim is to control this wicked practice and ensure the provision of quality eggs in the market by busting rackets which are involved. If anyone, in their surroundings, sees any kind of malpractice related to adulteration, they must immediately report to the PFA, he advised.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1830610/1-pfa-launches-operation-illegal-slaughterhosues/

FISHERMEN MARCHING AGAINST KALABAGH DAM TO REACH KARACHI ON OCT 25
By Our Correspondent

Published: October 20, 2018

HYDERABAD: The fishermen, one of the key stakeholders of rivers and waterways, who embarked on a long march against the proposed construction of Kalabagh dam to Karachi earlier this month will reach the city on October 25 to stage a demonstration. Hundreds of fishermen, led by Pakistan

Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) Chairperson Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, marched through Thatta district on Friday on their way to Karachi.

“There is a conspiracy under way to dry up Sindh by caging [the] Indus River by building dams and canals in the upper riparian province [Punjab],” said Muhammad Ali, while speaking to the media in Thatta. “The rulers are stubborn over building the dams citing shortage of water as an excuse,” he said.

Muhammad Ali asked the federal government to present statistics detailing shortage of water in Punjab and how many thousands of acres of cultivable land has turned arid in the province. He maintained that only Sindh has remained a victim of water scarcity and a new dam will further deprive the province of its share of water.

The PFF head also condemned Federal Minister for Water Resources Faisal Vawda’s statement.

The minister had threatened that Sindh’s water share would be reduced if the Pakistan Peoples Party’s Sindh government did not stop the water mafia from stealing water from Hub canal in Karachi. “This [the minister’s threat] is an attempt to stifle the voice of Sindh. Its repercussion will be bad for all,” Muhammad Ali warned.

He emphasised that the life of millions of people living in the coastal districts and the delta is dependent on river water, adding that sea intrusion has already consumed millions of acres of land due to a decrease in the release of river water into the sea. “Tens of thousands of families have migrated from the coastal areas and the process still continues as the water shortage has deprived them of their livelihoods.”

Muhammad Ali warned that the sea will consume large swathes of Thatta, Sujawal and Badin districts in the coming years if the discharge of river water in the sea further dropped. According to the 1991 Water Accord, the Indus River System Authority has to release 10 million acres feet of water in the downstream of Kotri barrage towards the sea.

Meanwhile, Gulab Shah of PFF said en route Karachi, the march’s participants are reaching out to the local people in different districts of Sindh to enlist their support for taking part in the resistance against any move to build the Kalabagh dam.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 20th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1829723/1-fishermen-marching-kalabagh-dam-reach-karachi-oct-25/

NBP URGES SC TO ALLOW SUGAR MILLS TO RESUME WORK
Nasir Iqba lUpdated October 21, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) on Saturday approached the Supreme Court with a plea to order constitution of a committee for operating eight sugar mills in Sindh, owned by the Omni Group, to prevent default on payment to sugar cane farmers or banks.

The crushing season will begin in November and if the mills do not start operation immediately it will not only hit cane growers but also render the NBP and other banks unable to recover the loans given to the group, argued senior counsel S. Naeem Bokhari in an application moved on behalf of the Omni Group of Companies.

According to the applicant, the banks would have no other option but to sell plants, machinery, buildings and land of the entities to recover the loans in such case.

At a time when the national economy has already slowed down, non-crushing of sugar cane in the eight mills would aggravate the situation, the applicant argued.

Says banks would have to sell plants, buildings and land to recover the loans

The application was submitted to a three-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar, which was seized with a money laundering case through fake accounts worth Rs35 billion.

Recently, the court had appointed a special Joint Investigation Team, headed by Additional Director General of Federal Investigation Agency Ahsan Sadiq, to probe if the eight sugar mills were owned by the Omni group or held as “Benami”.

On Aug 15, Khawaja Anvar Majeed and Abdul Ghani Majeed of the Omni Group of Companies and Husain Lawai, former chairman of the Pakistan Stock Exchange, were arrested by the FIA on the SC premises in the fake accounts case.

The apex court later also rejected their applications and ordered the FIA to shift them to the prison from hospital where they had been under medical treatment.

In its application, the NBP explained the relationship between the Omni Group and the NBP in wake of a fifth report filed by the JIT and reported ‘negligence’ on part of bankers.

The bank explained that the Omni Group became its client/customer in 2003 by opening accounts and availing various financing facilities. The relationship continues till date as the group continued to pay mark-up regularly till March 2018 when the company accounts were blocked by the FIA through its order of July 31.

‘Not a single default in 15 years’

Between 2003 and 2018, the NBP said it earned around Rs7 billion as a mark-up from the Omni Group with not a single default or write-off.

The applicant also cited the names of different sugar mills and other entities believed to be owned by the Omni Group such as Tando Allah Yar Sugar Mills (Pvt) Ltd, Ansari Sugar Mills Ltd, Bawany Sugar Mills Ltd, Khoski Sugar Mills (Pvt) Ltd, Naudero Sugar Mills (Pvt) Ltd, New Dadu Sugar Mills (Pvt), Dadu Energy (Pvt) Ltd, Larr Sugar Mills (Pvt) Ltd, Chamber Sugar Mills (Pvt) Ltd etc.

The NBP said there were regular withdrawals and deposits in a normal course of business in the accounts of the Omni Group before the accounts were blocked. The withdrawals related to general working capital requirements of the companies, the applicant added.

Published in Dawn, October 21st , 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1440334/nbp-urges-sc-to-allow-sugar-mills-to-resume-work

BALOCHISTAN GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS FISHERMEN'S DEMANDS
A Correspondent Updated October 21, 2018

GWADAR: The government has assured fishermen that their livelihood will not be affected and their rights will be fully protected after the construction of East-Bay Expressway and the implementation of Master Plan.

Balochistan Information Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi held out the assurance at a press conference after Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani met a delegation of fishermen in Gwadar on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by Senior Minister for Local Bodies Sardar Muhammad Saleh Bhootani, Finance Minister Arif Jan Muhammad Hasni, Home Minister Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa, Minister for IT Sardar Abdul Rehman Kheitran, Chairman Gwadar Port Authority Dostain Khan Jamaldini, Chairman District Counsel, Commissioner Makran division and chairman of the Alliance of Fisherman.

Mr Buledi said the apprehensions and reservations of fishermen were discussed in the meeting. He said legislation was under way for the protection of rights of local population and soon revenue act would also be amended. He said breakwaters would be built on the eastern coast of Gwadar for fishing boats.

Besides, the meeting also decided to construct residential colonies at every tehsil and 200 acres will be allocated in Gwadar, Pasni, Ormara and Jewani areas for the purpose, he said.

Published in Dawn, October 21st, 2018.

https://www.dawn.com/news/1440365/balochistan-government-accepts-fishermens-demands

WORKSHOP ON SAFE USAGE OF PESTICIDES HELD
RECORDER REPORT OCT 21ST, 2018 LAHORE

Pakistan Agriculture Technology Transfer Activity (PATTA) organised a one-day training workshop on "Safe use of pesticides" for the capacity building of those imparting technical know-how to the growers and other stakeholders of the farming sector. Model Farm Project along with its implementation partners, Value Chain Technical Assistant Team (VCTAT) in collaboration PATTA and the Agriculture department organized the workshop.

Fatima Benish Sahi, Additional Secretary (Task Force) inaugurated workshop while it was attended by Dr Asif Khan Horticulture Specialist, Kashif Jamshaid, Project Coordinator Establishment of Model farm project, Dr Waqar Director Agriculture Technology PATTA, Charles Bruce Williams PATTA International Expert and master trainers nominated by DGA (Ext & AR) and DGA (Pest Warning & Quality Control of Pesticides) Punjab.

Speaking on this occasion, Fatima Benish Sahi said that aim of the workshop is to build and enhance capacity for hands-on training to understand the safe use of pesticides with focus on safety, hygiene, health, handling practices and technical of agro-chemicals.

She further stated that this workshop will prove a milestone for safe use of pesticides and those who get trained from this session will spread their knowledge to farming community/ stakeholders. Kashif Jamshed, project coordinator said it will improve management practices and increased adaption of agricultural technologies by the small farmers.

The project supports the establishment of mechanization centers across the province to provide technical services to area farmers. The significance of Punjab is primal. 80% of the contribution to Pakistan's agricultural GDP comes from Punjab province.

Given that the agricultural sector employs 42.3% of the labor force means that any mechanization intervention significantly alters the contribution to GDP overall and the increase in income of farmer communities, especially in Punjab where over 60% of the land is cultivated.

During session, these more than 35 Master Trainers discussed the case for safe usage of pesticides in agriculture sector they also identified several factors to make technology effective, appropriate and affordable for farmers.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181021417636/

TASK FORCE ON WATER, BODY FOR AGRICULTURE IT PROPOSED
RECORDER REPORT OCT 21ST, 2018 ISLAMABAD

A task force should immediately be set up on water, besides forming an appropriate body through an effective legal framework to levy and collect agricultural income tax throughout the country, it was recommended in a declaration adopted at a two-day conference on water scarcity, organised by Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan under the auspices of Supreme Court of Pakistan.

It further declared that potential of Pakistan's part of the Indus Basin has to be realised through priority actions that need to be taken on an immediate basis. It stressed the need for investment in supply augmentation (dams and reservoirs) and ensuring better utilisation of groundwater, adopting appropriate water technologies (water recycling, desalinisation, and water harvesting) and managing consumption and use of water (controlling water demand and pricing) and doing all of this under the principles of mutual trust and benefit sharing.

It recommended that Pakistan should consistently put forward its perspective before various international forums taking advantage of International Water Law and Pakistan's strategy regarding implementation of the Indus Water Treaty should be reconsidered and revisited to bolster its case. It called upon the government to introduce water accounting based on modernised water data collection methods to assess, amongst other things, the water availability per capita, in order to build trust amongst the provinces regarding water apportionment, particularly considering the requirements of the Indus Delta and lower riparian areas.

"Effective salinity and sedimentation management techniques must be adopted to protect Pakistan's agricultural land and the storage capacity of dams and reservoirs respectively," it said, calling for construction of numerous small and large size dams and reservoirs on a priority basis, besides fast-track feasibilities, adding innovative solutions regarding storage facilities for low gradient plains (flat areas, coastal areas, hard rock, barani areas and desert areas) must be adopted.

“The Indus Basin irrigation network has to be extended which would bring several million acres of land under irrigation, and design water allocation right down to the district level,” it suggested.

It also emphasised on employing traditional and non-traditional financing methods ie direct investment, corporate finance, portfolio investment, bonds, upfront tariff, crowd funding and public private partnership arrangements to meet the huge financial requirements for construction of water storage facilities.??

Various measures for conservation of water need to be taken which include saving and better management of storage of groundwater to prevent its unrestricted extraction, it said, adding that steps need to be introduced for flood risk reduction through flood plains and hill-torrent management, groundwater recharge, wetlands restoration and community based natural resource management. “Other measures to control wastage, encourage productivity and ensure sustainability of scarce resources need to be considered…an appropriate legal framework should be available to strengthen institutional arrangements for proper environmental hazard tackling,” it said.

It is no longer feasible to allow unfettered access to the valuable resource of water with no incentives to check usage and therefore, it is essential that a fair water pricing model is formulated and implemented by the competent regulatory institutions.

?It said that the Indus Basin, one of the largest contiguous irrigation systems in the world, is at risk of reduced flows, climate change, population explosion, outdated agricultural practices, financial crunch and other challenges, which need to be addressed immediately.

“The rain-fed areas, deserts, mountain catchments, and coastlines also face challenges relating to water availability and water uses. The recently articulated national water policy is a step towards remedying these issues which should be implemented by the government,” it said It further said that the institutional capacity of WAPDA being the main water stakeholder should be strengthened for the urgent development of dams and reservoirs on the model of the Indus Basin Replacement Works.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181021417616/

SINDH FARMERS DEMAND RS1B SUBSIDY FOR OILSEED FARMING
By Our Correspondent

Published: October 21, 2018

HYDERABAD: Sindh’s farmers have asked the provincial government to subsidise cultivation of oilseed crops to help mitigate the effects of water shortage on agriculture and reduce the country’s import bill.

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA), a farmers’ lobbying group, demanded on Saturday a Rs1 billion subsidy, similar to the amount being provided by the Punjab government for the last two years, for cultivation of crops on 200,000 acres.

"By promoting oilseed crops and by subsidising the sector, only Sindh can help reduce the country's annual import bill of $3 billion by $1 billion," claimed Nabi Bux Sathio, the senior vice president of the SCA, at the chamber's meeting. A sum of Rs5,000 per acre has been suggested by the SCA.

According to Sathio, the sunflower or soybean farming plummeted during the last decade due to low price of the crop. "The cost of growing these crops is more than Rs20,000 per acre and farmers get almost the same price after selling their crop." The crop is sold for around Rs2,000 to Rs2,200 per maund while the yield is around 10 maunds per acre, he shared.

Last year, the oilseed crops were grown on 65,000 acres in Sindh while a decade ago more than 300,000 acres of land was dedicated to these crops, he added. According to him, the country required 3.27 million tons edible oil every year but the local farmers contributed only 0.24 million tons to the national demand.

An official of the Imperial Chemical Industries Pakistan Limited, which produces agricultural inputs and seeds, Abdul Ghaffar Khanzada, briefed that the sunflower crop could be grown with less water yet the crop's yield remained high. He said that the Punjab government was subsidising this crop besides also carrying out a campaign for oilseed farming.

The SCA's Mir Abdul Kareem Talpur observed that Sindh's farmers are already coping with a shortage of water. "It will be timely for Sindh government to promote oilseed crops and provide subsidy so that the farmers can grow less water intensive crops," he said.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 21st, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1830487/1-sindh-farmers-demand-rs1b-subsidy-oilseed-farming/

PEASANTS STAY CHAINED IN SINDH AS HARI MOVEMENT GRINDS TO A HALT
The News, October 21, 2018

HYDERABAD: Forcefully evacuation of a 22-member peasant family of Ghulam Ali Leghari is linked to the end of the hari movement, which was launched in 1950 for seeking crop share, safe shelter and livelihood, judicial distribution of water, and nature conservation.

Ghulam Ali Leghari continued working at the agriculture farm near Sinjhoro, Sanghar District as a sharecropper for 32-years (1982-2014). But influential landlords, enjoying political backing, forcefully deprived the family of their right to cultivate a piece of land.

According to Leghari, "It was a nightmare. Not only armed men attacked my family, they also burnt houses and forced us to leave the standing crops without taking anything from home or crop share."

Not only have the influential landlords threatened Leghari, those who supported him or sympathised with him have also been pressurised to abandon the activist.

"Initially, all people, hari activists, human rights campaigners, lawyers, and those claiming to have been in social movements came to express sympathy with me. But later when pressure came up, I saw all the friends parted ways one by one, leaving my family in a helpless situation," he said. "Since then

I am being threatened by certain landlords and influential persons, nobody from anywhere is here to console me at this difficult time."

Mir Hassan Mari, a peasant rights activist of Sanghar district praised Ghulam Ali Leghari for being at the forefront in the recent struggles, including the "anti-dam and free rivers movements", distribution of judicious water share, land rights, activism against encroachment of freshwater lakes, rehabilitation of forests land, and proper implementation of environment laws to avoid habitat loss in the province.

However, he was not aware why now Leghari had been left alone by his friends and his family forced to leave their abodes by the landlords.

He recalled the devastating floods of 2010, 2011 and 2012, which had caused colossal loss to peasant families, many of whom had to live an isolated life in relief camps for several months. The floods washed away each and everything available at the homes of those peasant families.

Mari said billions were spent by non-government organisations (NGOs) under various projects to rehabilitate the flood victims, especially the peasants in Sindh, but when one looks around no difference could be attributed to the billions spent. The projects undertaken by NGOs to lend a helping hand to peasants could not be justified, as neither has there been any change in the conditions, nor even a slight improvement in the peasant status.

"At a time when haunting issues like water scarcity, land degradation, price hike, drought-like situation and increasing poverty are visible, the people in frontline struggle (peasants) look missing," he added.

Hassan Askari, president of Small Farmers Association and central leader of Awami Workers Party (AWP), saw this as the end of the hari movement, which was launched by people in 1950s to support farmers and defend the rights of the poor.

"All trade unions and left-wing political parties have changed their agenda of struggle and left lower class communities in a helpless situation. They seemingly advocate the issues of the middle-class people, instead of the poor segments of the society," he said.

He lamented the approach adopted by such campaigners, and said it had created a wide gap between peasant workers and their supporting organisations.

Askari said activists associated with trade unions, farmers' bodies, forest community and those working in agriculture fields as daily wagers always stayed at the forefront in the struggles for the cause. But now these haris, agriculture labour and poor fishermen were not in the struggle.

He accused the political leaders of adopting an approach that was exploitative of the cadre.

The recently launched report, "The state of peasants' rights in Sindh" by Hari Welfare Association (HWA) in Hyderabad Press Club discovered realities on the ground and noted that "NGOs are not representative bodies of peasants because these are project-based and follow donor agendas. Thus, little has happened in terms of land reforms or controlling the corruption in the revenue and irrigation systems".

Akram Khaskheli, president, HWA, said the bonded labour in agriculture sector still existed and faced the worst form of exploitation, however, the social movements look shattered due to pressure, lawlessness and fear.

In four years, from 2014 to 2017, 1,148 bonded labourers were released or escaped from the custody of the landlords in different parts of Sindh, the report said.

"Not only NGOs, the current Hari Committee (HC) does not represent peasants, who played inspiring role in all struggles, launched time to time in the past. The haris body seems representing the middle class and has changed their agenda to encompass the new tunes of nationalism and democracy, and deviated from the genuine peasant movement that engaged in sustained activism."

The report called for the return of HC to its pre-1970s form to provide a genuine platform to the poor farmers.

The report showed that more than 60 percent population of Sindh depended on agriculture, but flawed policies of the government left the poor peasants at the mercy of landlords. It pointed out that the growing trend of corporate farming and heavy prices of pesticides and fertilisers have also pushed the farmers to withdraw from cultivation, which ultimately lead to starvation and malnutrition among the families.

Dr Ghulam Hyder Malokani of Green Rural Development Organisation (GRDO), who claims to have got freed more than 20,000 haris from private confinements through legal ways, seems afraid of the threats he received.

"I saw myself alone in the struggle. When I received treats of life, nobody came to offer any help. That is why I do not like to do anything to help these poor people," he said.

Like GRDO many other organisations have adopted cruel silence because of haunting feudalism.

During the 1950s in Sindh, the hari movement attracted a large number of agriculture workers to join this common platform.

The issues the movement took up, included seeking proper share of crop, defending right to continue work in fields, and building shelters at agriculture fields.

The movement made history through struggle when the provincial government introduced famous Tenancy Act 1950 to ensure protection of rights of this major economic sector.

Setting up tenancy tribunals to facilitate peasants in all the districts to avoid any problem for the government was the part of this campaign. But despite this legislation, agriculture workers still face difficulties for survival.

The report said that the entire social, cultural, and political fabric was dominated by a feudal and landlord system. "In many cases the majority of elected representatives come from their influential families to decide and form legislation. They have captured, manipulated, exploited, and enslaved the revenue and irrigation departments and the peasants," it noted.

It is for the first time that peasants' rights activists have realised that there is no strong platform in Sindh to mobilise agriculture workers and rescue the oppressed people languishing in illegal confinements in different areas.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/383353-peasants-stay-chained-in-sindh-as-hari-movement-grinds-to-a-halt

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 8TH TO OCTOBER 14TH 2018
TRASHING COTTON IN A QUALITY-CONSCIOUS WORLD
Amjad Mahmood October 08, 2018

Bringing down the trash content in local cotton to the globally acceptable level remains a distant dream. Stakeholders are indecisive about how to overcome the menace that is creating a negative image of Pakistan's silver crop in the quality-conscious world.

Thus, the largest cotton producer after China, United States and India is ranked second in terms of contamination.

Punjab Cotton Research Institute Director Dr Sagheer Ahmed claims that cotton supplies are comparatively cleaner so far this season. Trash content is four per cent on average, he said. But he expressed fear that the rate is likely to go up as cotton picking comes to an end.

Stakeholders blame each other for high trash content while the government mulls changing the law to hold ginners responsible for impurities in cotton

Cotton contaminants include common shopping bags, hair of women who pick cotton manually, threads of nylon bags used for storing cotton, sand, dust and stalks and leaves of the cotton plant itself.

These contaminants not only affect the quality of cotton, but also make it expensive for textile mills. A survey by the International Textile Manufacturers Federation puts the global figure for contamination-related losses to $200 million a year.

Instead of devising a strategy, half-hearted efforts are being made to overcome the problem in Punjab, which accounts for almost 80pc of the yield.

Last year, provincial agriculture authorities tried to make cotton contamination-free by offering growers proper training and providing them with grey cloth for transporting the produce.

At least 416,000 female cotton pickers were to be trained before the start of the picking season along the lines of a similar (unsuccessful) attempt in 2002. They were also to be provided with grey cloth without any charge because they usually use plastic bags or dupattas to collect cotton. The project halted midway for the want of funds that the department concerned did not release.

With no alternative plan at hand to ensure clean cotton, the authorities are mulling an amendment to the Cotton Control Act to hold the ginners responsible for impurities.

"We're thinking about amending the law to take action against those ginning units that have cotton containing trash over and above the permissible level," a senior official says. "They have been asked not to accept phutti or raw cotton (which is) contaminated more than the set standards."

He says textile mills and the ginners are being asked to fund the campaign for creating awareness about the importance of contamination-free cotton and the training of pickers.

Punjab Cotton Ginners Association representative Chaudhry Akram says the agriculture authorities are 'threatening' the ginners with fines and the sealing of premises in case foreign matter totalling more than 3pc is found in cotton bales. He lamented the fact that the ginners were being held responsible for the fault of growers.

He says the ginners as well as the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association have assured the authorities that they will fund the awareness drive and the training of pickers. He added that they were not ready to directly shoulder the responsibility for the training as that job should best be left to the officials of the agriculture department.

Some observers, however, believe that low prices, and not a lack of training, are the reason behind the high level of contamination.

Dr Zahid Mahmood of the Central Cotton Research Institute, Multan, asserts that the growers resort to the mixing of trash in phutti when the ginners deny them a fair rate for their produce. "If you give them the right price, you'll get the quality you desire."

Refuting the impression that the farming community resorts to contamination, the growers blame middlemen for the high trash content.

"Arhtis (middlemen) and ginners mix water and other contaminants with cotton to increase its weight. Growers are paid less and their produce is subjected to a weight cut of 2kg per maund by arhtis if they ever indulge in it," says Pakistan Kisan Ittehad General Secretary Mian Umair who is also a cotton grower.

"This leaves no incentive for the growers to mix contaminants with cotton," he said, adding that the officials of the agriculture department seldom visit the growers.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 8th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1437533/trashing-cotton-in-a-quality-conscious-world

APTMA URGES GOVT TO ALLOW COTTON IMPORT THROUGH WAGAH PORT
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN

ISLAMABAD: All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) has sought duty free import of the shortfall in raw material to enable it to increase exports, capture new markets, and expand and modernize production facilities, sources close to Secretary Textile told Business Recorder.

The industry, sources said, had argued that over the last five years cotton production had decreased from 13.86 million bales to 11.98 million bales, witnessing a decrease of 14 percent which had caused a loss of Rs.535 billion (almost 2pc of total GDP) to the economy.

APTMA argues that to meet domestic demand of 14.5 million bales Pakistan heavily relies on cotton imports. Under these conditions 11 percent duty, other taxes and Non-Tariff Barriers (NTB) worsen the situation and leave Pakistan globally uncompetitive, and has requested the government to allow import of cotton through Wagah Port to save time and transportation costs. APTMA pointed out that import of yarn is allowed through Wagah at zero duty under DTRE and 5% under SAFTA.

Textile industry has also sought opening of special line of credit for new investment possibly from China, joint ventures with foreign firms under pay as you earn scheme on buying back basis to encourage investments and exports, in addition to establishment of technical training institutes for producing skilled work force for textile value chain to cover latest technology, automation, work ethics and multi-tasking aspects for producing skilled supervisory level workers.

According to the textile industry, world market consumption of manmade/synthetic fibers against natural fibers has shifted to a ratio of 70:30 while a decade back it was 30:70 and yet Pakistan is sticking to the old cotton strategy. Manmade fibers like Polyester Staple Fibre (PSF) which is the basic raw material for synthetic textiles is burdened with regulatory duties which is as high as 20% (seven percent import duty and 2.9 to 11.5 percent anti-dumping duty), such irrational duties should be immediately removed.

Resultantly imported PSF (input to our spinning mills) becomes more expensive relative to international prices. This anomaly in regulatory duties is making domestic Manmade Fibre (MMF) yarn production uncompetitive, even in our own domestic market. MMF yarn is imported directly and faces a lower import duty of five percent (under SAFTA) to 10 percent, under chapter 55 for MMF yarn import, leading to an unsustainable synthetic yarn industry. This accounts for a reduction of 36 percent of domestic MMF yarn production capacity in the last one year alone.

Pakistan has imposed these duties in the hope of protecting PTA and PSF plants in Pakistan. If the government wants to provide protection to these plants, this should not be done at the cost of the entire textile value chain, but policies like in 2003, of deemed duty drawback may be reintroduced. The whole textile sector should not be forced to cross subsidize PTA and PSF plants in Pakistan, the sources quoted APTMA as saying.

Textile industry further argues that the working capital of the textile sector remains blocked in delays in sales tax refunds, custom duty drawback and income tax refunds. All pending refund claims should be lodged immediately and paid within a reasonable time to provide much needed liquidity for expansion of the export base and investment in expansion and modernization of the industry.

The current system of revenue targets for individual RTOS is net of any refunds lodged. This breeds the tendency of RTOs to raise petty issues and delay the entry of the claims in order to boost their collection figures. Currently the amount of refunds pending is Rs 169 billion.

Talking about Duty and Tax Remission Scheme (DTRE), the industry says that a government's temporary importation scheme, which allows manufacturers to import duty-free goods, only if they re-export them, needs revision and expansion. The scheme at status quo is only provided to direct exporters to facilitate them in import of raw material required to produce quality export products which should be expanded to indirect exporters as well.

"It is not appropriate to allow the DTRE scheme to only those exporters, having end-to-end facility to meet the export orders as this curtails growth in manufacturing sector," they added.

"Expanding DTRE to indirect exporters will result in surplus raw materials available to direct exporters even locally putting off some of the import burden of processed raw materials. In order to encourage domestic production of intermediate products the quantum of Duty Drawback should be limited to the value added in Pakistan," the sources quoted the industry as further saying.

Commenting on long Term Financing Facility (LTFF) scheme, the industry says that it enables borrowers to avail loans to build their infrastructure or technology through purchase of required equipment and machinery. Currently, the maximum borrowing limit for a single export oriented unit is Rs 1.5 billion under LTFF and that is only for machinery excluding building costs which constitute more than 50 pc of costs. The scheme is also not available to indirect exporters.

The industry has suggested that LTFF scheme is expanded to the entire value chain of the textile sector to enable a wholesome expansion of the industry for sustained export growth. Further the maximum limit of Rs 1.5 billion under LTFF should also be increased or removed in full to incentivize exporters to expand their operations and modernize their production units to capture a larger share from the world textile and apparel market.

The industry has suggested that in order to fully develop the value chain in the domestic market all future DLTL schemes may only be applicable on value added in Pakistan. Further in order to encourage the value added sector the DLTL rates may be designed to favor end products. "We suggest a gradual shift in DLTL rates towards the value added sector," sources quoted the industry as stating.

Seeking exemption from 1.25 per cent turnover tax, the industry argues that regressive taxes like turnover tax on export items act as a disincentive for exporting industry so exporting industry should be exempted from any such tax. All taxes should be collected on the basis of profitability.

APTMA has proposed setting up of 1000 garment plants, each consisting of 500 stitching machines for an investment of $9 million each. Each plant would be able to produce garments for exports of $20 million, while generating employment for 700 workers. The total investment would be $9 billion generating exports of $20 billion per year and providing employment to 700,000 workers.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/09/19-page/743173-news.html

TIGHT SUPPLY PUSHES COTTON PRICES HIGHER
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Tight supply position pushed the rates further higher on the cotton market on Monday in the process of trading activity, dealers said.

The official spot rate went up by Rs 150 to Rs 8000, they added. Prices of seed cotton in Sindh were at Rs 3600-3900, in the Punjab seed cotton prices were at Rs 3700-3900 and in Balochistan, rates of seed cotton were at Rs 3800-4000, they said.

In ready session, volume of business came down as around 15,000 bales of cotton changed hands between Rs 7600-8300, they said.

According to the market sources, the mills were trying to finalise as much as they can, because they don't want to waste any time. Many in the market were expecting that the dollar would expand further ground in terms of the rupee in the near future.

Cotton analyst, Naseem Usman said that reports of likely Hurricane in the US also an adding factor behind the persistent rise in the cotton rates. If supply of quality cotton not improves, prices may increase in the coming days, he added.

In the meantime, the ginners were not looking so happy in new deals on expectations of more increase in the prices, locally, other brokers said. Prices moved slightly higher in the international market, they said.

The following deals reported: 1200 bales of cotton from Shahdadpur at Rs 7900, 1400 bales from Sanghar at Rs 7600/8000, 1000 bales from Nawabshah at Rs 8050, 400 bales from Mirpur Mathilo at Rs 8200, 2000 bales from Saleh Pat at Rs 8200/8300, 1600 bales from Rohri at Rs 8200/8225, 4000 bales from Khairpur at Rs 8100/8250, 600 bales from Khanewal at Rs 8200/8225, 800 bales from Rajanpur at Rs 8200, 600 bales from Layyah at Rs 8100, 200 bales from Mianwali at Rs 8150, 200 bales from Tonsa Shareef at Rs 8150 and 600 bales from Haroonabad at Rs 8150/8200, they said.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/09/16-page/743137-news.html

MINISTER ORDERS ACTION AGAINST FLOUR PRICE HIKE
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter October 11, 2018

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Agriculture Ismail Rahu on Wednesday ordered action against those responsible for allowing 'sudden' and unwarranted hike in the prices of wheat flour, saying Sindh was not facing any wheat crisis.

Officials in the agriculture ministry said as reports reached the minister about increase in the price of wheat flour, he expressed his dismay and ordered action against those who allowed the hike. "There is no wheat crisis in Sindh, we have large stocks of wheat in our stores," said the minister.

He said that it was great injustice with people to sell wheat flour at prices higher than the official rates. "Strict legal action will be taken against those who are selling flour at higher prices," he warned.

Published in Dawn, October 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1438139/minister-orders-action-against-flour-price-hike

COTTON PRODUCTION TARGET LIKELY TO BE MISSED BY 3.52M BALES
ABDUL RASHEED AZAD

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is feared to miss cotton production target by 3.52 million bales as production of 10.847 million bales is expected against the set target of 14.370 million bales, said Cotton Commissioner Dr Khalid Abdullah.

While briefing the Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research here on Wednesday, Abdullah said that the farmers in cotton belt have reduced the area for cotton cultivation due to serious water issues. He further said that as a result, the output of the crop drastically reduced and was estimated at 10.847 million bales against the set targets of 14.370 million bales.

The committee met here under the chairmanship of Senator Syed Muzafar Hussain Shah and was briefed about the water availability for irrigation, output of major Kharif and Rabbi crops.

The cotton commissioner informed the committee that more than 80 percent cotton seed was certified by the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department and fake and illegal companies were de-registered, whereas seed dealers are being trained for marketing of quality seed.

Dr Abdullah said that all water supplies for irrigation from April-July 2018 was 31.273 MAF against last year’s 42.191 MAF, creating a deficit of 10.92 MAF as compared to the last year.

Chairman Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Sher Zaman Khan while briefing the panel said that the country is facing about 38 percent of water shortfall anticipated for the Rabi crop season due to below normal rainfall during the monsoon season.

The chairman Irsa further said the situation would be improved and shortfall would be reduced by the months of November and December as rainfall is expected during these months.

The chairman Irsa briefed the meeting about the current water situation in major water reservoirs, difficulties and implications in sowing of different cash crops during the coming season and remedial measures required for this regard.

The committee was informed that extraordinary shortage of water during the current Kharif season has adversely affected cotton sowing. However, Punjab achieved 85 percent of the target and Sindh achieved 68 percent target.

The committee was also informed that during last Kharif season agriculture sector had faced 35-45 percent water shortage, which had contributed in reduction in area under different crops, particularly cotton crop, major cash crop of the season.

In Kharif season Sindh province faced 15 percent water shortage as against its allocated share, Punjab faced 20 percent, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 34 percent, and Balochistan faced 41 percent water shortage.

The committee was also briefed by the secretary Pakistan Central Cotton Committee on expected shortfall in the production of cotton for Kharif season in 2018. He also told about reasons why Pakistan failed in evolving quality certified seeds after the Plant Breeders Act 2016, which can enhance production.

Briefing about the water storage situation, the chairman IRSA said that water availability was recorded at 4.899 million acre feet as against the 6.896MAF of same period of last year. Currently water availability in mega reservoirs including Tarbela was recorded at 2.690MAF compared 3.025MAF of last year, Mangla's 2.116 MAF as compared to 3.846 MAF and Chashma's at 0.093 MAF against 0.0093MAF last year, he added.

The committee expressed its serious concern over the poor performance of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council and National Agriculture Research Center and asked its chairman to submit details of the seed varieties developed there.

The meeting also expressed its annoyance over 20 foreign tours of the chairman PARC to different countries and asked him to share the lessons he learnt from these foreign trips and how they would benefit the farming community in the country.

While discussing reasons why Pakistan has failed to produce quality certified seeds, the committee was informed that BT cotton varieties contain the boll gourd gene that is losing effectiveness. The cotton crop has a number of new challenges such as high temperature, unexpected rains and resistance to new pests and diseases.

Discussing progress after the passage of the Plant Breeders Act 2016, it was revealed that a meeting was held with multinational companies and their association Crop Life at the ministry on September 26, 2018. The committee was informed that the companies showed no interest in setting up cotton seed business in Pakistan.

Chairman Committee Senator Muzaffar Hussain Shah directed the chairman NARC to submit a report to the committee on the contribution made by the institute on seed research on various crops. He said that even the Prime Minister has shown concern that Pakistan is falling back on Indian imports for the seeds of major crops. He directed that this report must be submitted within a week.

One of the major reasons for the shortage of the cotton crop against the target is higher pesticide prices. He asked the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee to make recommendations to address the issue so that the cost of production in cotton cultivation may be contained.

The chairman committee directed the IRSA to submit the terms of reference regarding its meeting with the Council of Common Interests (CCI). He further instructed that the meeting of Committee of the Attorney General, which is due soon, must deliberate on the issue of flood canals and their opening in the wake of acute water shortage in the system. He also stressed the need to inquire whether the opinion of the Lower Riparian was sought while opening these canals which affect growers in the region.

Senators Muhammad Ali Shah Jamot and Imamuddin Shouqeen also attended the meeting, besides senior officials of Ministry of National Food Security and Research and allied departments.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/11/19-page/743533-news.html

COMMITTEE SETS LOWER WHEAT TARGET
Amin Ahmed October 12, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Anticipating massive shortfall in irrigation water for the upcoming Rabi season, the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) on Thursday fixed the wheat production target at 25.6 million tonnes, which is 3.25 per cent lower than last year's 26.46m tonnes.

The country produced 25.49m tonnes of wheat during the last Rabi season mainly due to delayed sowing in Punjab and Sindh owing to late start of cane crushing, water shortages and heatwave in March.

Federal Secretary of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Dr Muhammad Hashim Popalzai, chaired the meeting which was attended by officials of provincial agricultural departments and all other stakeholders. Federal Minister, Sahibzada Muhammad Mehbub Sultan could not attend the meeting.

The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) informed the meeting that an allocation of 23.322m acre feet of water has been made for the Rabi season.

The prevailing weather conditions are not promising and shortage may exceed, it warned.

However, the water position will be reviewed in the first week of November, and measures will be taken to manage the shortage.

Production achievements of wheat, gram, potato, lentil, onion, tomato and chillies were also discussed in the meeting. The committee proposed the provinces to focus on oilseed and pulses cultivation with a view to reduce the import bill.

The maize production target was set at 5.5m tonnes from an area of 1,194,600 hectares.

The committee was informed that the urea supply will remain comfortable during the coming Rabi season due to enhancement of local production and import.

It was noted that the supply of urea and DAP fertilisers was satisfactory for 2018-19 Kharif season.

The committee reviewed the Kharif crop performance, and was informed that sugarcane and rice production was estimated at 68.25m tonnes and 7.1m tonnes, respectively, for for 2018-19.

A State Bank official informed the meeting that during FY18, banks achieved the target of Rs972.6 billion against target of Rs1,001bn. Total 3.7m borrowers were served during 2017-18 by 50 commercials banks, microfinance banks, Islamic banks and other microfinance institutions.

Agriculture Credit Advisory Committee set a target of Rs1,250bn for 2018-19. As of August, banks achieved a target of Rs121bn which is around 10pc of overall target.

Published in Dawn, October 12th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1438506/committee-sets-lower-wheat-target

CANE COMMISSIONER
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter October 12, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court on Thursday directed cane commissioner to check whether the sugar cane growers were being paid at the rate of Rs160 per 40kg.

A two-judge bench had directed the commissioner during the last hearing of the case to decide applications of cane growers regarding non-payment of dues after the Sindh Growers' Alliance and others complained to the court that around 300 applications had recently been filed with the commissioner against non-payment of dues by sugar mills.

On Thursday, the commissioner informed the bench that he had received 1,012 applications from growers which had been sent to the sugar mill owners for comments and clearance of dues if not paid earlier.

Published in Dawn, October 12th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1438401/cane-commissioner

GOVT STRIVING TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY
By Our Correspondent

Published: October 13, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The government is striving to eliminate hunger and all forms of malnutrition in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 2.1 and 2.2, said Planning, Development and Reform Secretary Zafar Hasan.

He said the launch of the national food security policy and multi-sector nutrition strategy showed the government's resolve towards addressing the challenge of zero hunger in Pakistan under the SDGs.

He was addressing a roundtable conference on "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World", organised by the Centre for Rural Economy Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Speaking to the conference participants, Hasan said Pakistan recognised the importance of food security. Pakistan had produced surplus wheat and sugar, but still approximately 18% of the population was facing food insecurity.

Several factors like lack of awareness of healthy food and poor access due to low income and geographical barriers are the main reasons that upset the dietary system of households. As a result, stunting is 42%, which is one of the highest in the world, and this phenomenon is not only in the rural areas of Pakistan but even the urban sectors are suffering from this.

The secretary remarked that despite being the least contributor to climate change and global warming, Pakistan was amongst the worst sufferers. "Availability and storage of water has now become one of the most critical issues."

He shared that the country's agriculture sector had already witnessed floods in 2010 and 2011, which caused losses of $7.6 billion, a hefty amount for an economy like Pakistan.

Therefore, realising the threat of climate change, Pakistan is one of the first signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) and is now going to actively participate in COP-24 Katowice 2018.

He said, “We are formulating the 12th Five Year Plan to reduce hunger which includes the establishment of a food security information system, improving food accessibility and creating awareness of food consumption.”

Published in The Express Tribune, October 13th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1824546/2-govt-striving-address-food-insecurity/

SINDH DELAYS WHEAT SALE PRICE NOTIFICATION
Aamir Shafaat Khan October 14, 2018

KARACHI: Flour millers on Saturday urged the Sindh government to issue the delayed wheat sale price notification.

Punjab government has already announced the wheat sale price 15 days back.

Talking to Dawn, Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) Sindh Chairman Jawed Yousuf said that last year the provincial government had fixed the issue price of wheat in August and started releasing the grain from early September. This year the Sindh Food Department has yet to declare any wheat sale price, he added.

To resolve the issue, a PFMA delegation had met with Secretary Food Department Nawaz Shaikh two days ago. The secretary said that he had sent the summary of wheat issue price of Rs3,150 per 100 kg bag (with polypropylene bag) and Rs3,250 (with jute bag) to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah for approval, said Mr Yousuf. The food department would provide one million tonnes of wheat to flour millers this season due to sufficient stocks of 1.7m tonnes, he added.

Mr Yousuf said millers were procuring wheat from the open market which is arriving from interior Sindh and Punjab. However, wheat stocks in the open market are drying. As a result, the price of 100 kg bag wheat bag has soared to Rs 3,450 from Rs 3,350 a month back. Millers have also increased the price of flour no 2.5 to Rs38 from Rs37 per kg, followed by price of fine flour and maida (super fine flour) to Rs40 from Rs39 per kg.

“Flour price may further come under pressure in case wheat issue price is not notified and released to millers,” he said. The PFMA chief said the overall wheat storage capacity of provincial food department godowns is 640,000m tonnes.

Published in Dawn, October 14th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1438913/sindh-delays-wheat-sale-price-notification

RULES FOR UREA IMPORT RELAXED
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN OCT 14TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

The federal cabinet has relaxed Public Procurement Rules for immediate import of 0.1 million tonnes of urea through Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) for Rabi season 2018, official sources told Business Recorder.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) in its meeting held on September 10, 2018 had directed Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to import 100,000 MT of urea immediately to meet the requirements of Rabi crops. Subsequently, TCP floated tender for urea procurement ending on October 22, 2018. In case of normal tendering, the first shipment is expected to arrive by end of November. However, TCP requested PPRA for relaxation of Rule 35 of the PPRA Rules, 2004 to reduce the duration between announcement of procurement committee evaluation report and award of contract from 10 days to one day, so as to bring forward the arrival date of first shipment which will be around mid of November to first week of December,2018.

According to sources, considering the urgency and importance of the matter, the case was presented to PPRA Board members for perusal and approval. PPRA Board in their Resolution of September 28, 2018 recommended relaxation in Rule 35 for reducing the duration from 10 days to one day. The Resolution is as follows “PPRA recommends the federal government in the wider national interest to grant exemption to the extent of reduction in duration between the award of contract and issuance of evaluation report from at least 10 days to one day for import of urea fertilizer by TCP on the basis of….(i) wheat is widely grown Rabi crop and it”s sowing seasons starts in the last quarter. There is apprehension of reduced wheat production in case of delay in import of urea and consequently, it may have adverse effects on the nation and agrarian economy. So, the Authority is of the opinion that exemption may be granted in the best interest of the country”.

Section 21 of the PPRA Ordinance, 2002 provides that “the Authority may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, recommend to the federal government that the procurement of an object or class of objects in the national interest be exempted from the operation of this Ordinance or any rule or regulation made there under or any other law regulating public procurement and the federal government on such recommendations shall exempt the objects or class of objects from the operation of the laws and rules and regulations.

TCP maintained that it floated international tender for urea procurement giving 30 days response time ending on October 22, 2018 and the supplier was required to ensure shipment of the entire quantity in four weeks time (excluding voyage time) from the date of opening of Letter of Credit (LC). The first shipment of 50,000 tonnes has to be ensured within two week (excluding voyage time). If normal tendering process is pursued, arrival date of the first shipment is expected to be by end of November to middle of December, 2018 depending on loading port. This time can be shortened by 10 days if hoisting time of bid evaluation report on PPRA website is relaxed to 24 hours from 10 days. In that case the arrival date of the first shipment will be around mid November to first week of December, 2018.

TCP further stated that adherence to Rule-35 of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 is not only expected to delay shipment but also increase the import price of urea, since price in the commodity market in general and urea market in particular are volatile and supplier may abstain from participation in the tender with validity of 11 days. Also, supplier hedging the risk of market volatility in case of a bid validity of 11 days may quote higher prices which will not be a true reflection of the price of the urea market (FMB price).

Acting Chairman TCP, Syed Tariq Huda/Additional Secretary Commerce, in a letter to Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research argued that the objective of efficient and economical process with value for money as enunciated in Rule 4 of the PPRA rules 2004 may end up being difficult to achieve. The tender award committee in case of lowest evaluated bid with overstated price that Forward Mounting Base (FMB), may refuse award of tender and in such eventuality the entire exercise may be rendered futile.

http://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181014415068/

'INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO BE GIVEN TO SMALL FARMERS'
The News October 14, 2018

LAHORE: Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar has said that the mission to bring about prosperity for the poor will be accomplished, and a programme will be launched to give interest-free loans to small farmers.

Speaking at a meeting at the CM's Office, Usman Buzdar said the farmers of South Punjab would be given loans on priority.

He said, "We are considering a programme to give interest-free loans to build small houses."

He said the opportunities for stable jobs would be created due to interest-free loans. He also said the rich should share their blessings with others.

Akhuwat Chairman Dr Amjad Saqib briefed the chief minister on interest-free loans.

The additional chief secretary and the secretaries of agriculture, industry and other departments were also present.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/380699-interest-free-loans-to-be-given-to-small-farmers

USAID RESEARCH: AGRICULTURE RUNOFFS CREATING DRUG-RESISTANT BACTERIA IN FRESHWATER

The News October 14, 2018

HYDERABAD: Industrial effluents and agricultural runoffs are begetting antibiotic resistant bacteria in ground and surface water, terminating the efficacy of medicines to fight off diseases, researchers and academicians said.

Rasool Bux Mahar, deputy director of US-funded water centre at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro said the presence of antibiotic resistant bacteria (ARB) in different water sources lessen the efficacy of antibiotic medicines prescribed by doctors to the patients.

"The presence of ARB is found in the groundwater, surface water, and wastewater in Hyderabad and its surroundings due to industrial wastes, agricultural runoff, and wastes of humans and animals," Mahar said, sharing findings of a research study at a seminar.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the project study on identification of antibiotic resistant bacteria in various sources of waters of Hyderabad city and its surroundings.

Mahar, who's also the principal investigator of the study, said ARB is a global public issue today. "If the problem of antibiotic resistance shall not properly be tackled then 10 million deaths will occur and Asian countries will mostly be affected," he added.

Mahar said presence of bacteria was observed in drinking water samples that showed a significant amount of heterotrophic plate count in which the most of the organisms isolated from the samples were pseudomonas, shigella, vibrio, and e-coli.

"Bacterial isolates identified in the study findings have a potential threat to the people living in Hyderabad," he added.

The deputy director said water distribution network has some technical flaws which deteriorate water quality and provide conditions for the flourishing of bacterial growth.

Mahar said community, government and relevant authorities might be sensitised through awareness campaigns and people should avoid self-medication and excessive use of antibiotics.

"Hospital waste and waste water should be treated properly before its disposal into water bodies because they contain a greater amount of antibiotics," he added.

"Researchers may develop innovative techniques to deal with antibiotic resistant bacteria more efficiently and the complete disinfection of antibiotic resistant bacteria will only be possible when there will be a proper disinfection system in water treatment plants and flaws in the water distribution network be eliminated or improved."

Zulfiqar Ali Mirani, the co-principal investigator of the research, said microbiological analysis showed that the majority of water samples were unfit for human consumption.

Mirani, who is also a scientific officer at Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, said the study found that 70 percent of water supplied by municipal and sanitation services authority and 87 percent of river/canal and groundwater samples were not fit for cooking, drinking and washing. "Majority of reverse osmosis water samples were declared unfit due to high bacterial load," he added.

Jeff Ullman from University of Utah said the existing environment and public behaviour should be changed according to the research-based findings.

The main purpose of the seminar was to bring government, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders together to share, deliberate, and brainstorm about the research and suggest protective measures.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/380469-usaid-research-agriculture-runoffs-creating-drug-resistant-bacteria-in-freshwater\

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1TH TO OCTOBER 7TH 2018
PFA SEIZES ROTTEN EGGS FROM PRIVATE STORAGE

The Newspaper's Correspondent October 01, 2018

A team of 'vigilance cell" and officials of the PFA conducted a raid at Faiyzan Cold Storage, Burewala Road, Chichawatni and recovered rotten eggs.

PFA Director General Muhammad Usman told reporters that these eggs were used in bakery item and also supplied to biscuit manufacturing factories in many parts of Punjab. The PFA arrested cold storage owner Ali and registered a case against him under Section 22 (1) of the Punjab Food Authority Act 2011.

IMPERSONATION: Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested four people for impersonation during the written test for police constable post.

The district police department announced the written test for hiring police constables under the supervision of DSP Humayun Iftikhar and Ghala Mandi SHO Sardar Muhammad Afzal.

Police conducted biometric verification of the candidates before the start of the test and found Zeeshan, Amir, Abdul Qadir and Shahbaz had appeared in place of the candidates.

Police registered a case under Section 2/3, Malpractices University Act 1999 (Amended 2012) and 419 of PPC on the complaint of Munir Ahmed.

Published in Dawn, October 1st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1436029/pfa-seizes-rotten-eggs-from-private-storage

FARMERS OF RANN MINOR RESUME PROTEST
A Correspondent October 01, 2018

MITHI: The farmers and villagers whose land was irrigated by Rann Minor, the only water channel of Thar, resumed their protest on Sunday at a camp erected at Wano Morr near Kaloi town to have their protest recorded against acute water shortage in the area not included in the drought-hit parts.

Protesters' leaders Moulvi Mohammad Ramazan Loond, Mohammad Essa and others told reporters that on one hand their area had not been declared drought-hit while on the other water flows in the channel had been stopped for the past many years, causing drought like conditions in three union councils as well as in Kaloi town and its outskirts.

They said they were not provided water even for drinking despite protests and subsequent assurances by the chief minister, head of the Supreme-Court mandated water commission and others.

The leaders alleged that whatever little water was released into the channel was stolen by farmers at the head of the canal and demanded that ample water be supplied to the only waterway of Thar so that people in the drought-hit desert region could get some respite.

They vowed to continue their peaceful protests till water was provided to the tail-end areas.

Issue of coal plant workers

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf MNA Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani visited the Underground Coal Gasification plant near Islamkot on Sunday and held out assurances to over 450 workers of the plant that he would take up the issue of non-payment of their salaries and regularisation of jobs with the high authorities concerned.

Published in Dawn, October 1st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1435976/farmers-of-rann-minor-resume-protest

HELPFUL TIPS FOR THE 'AGRICULTURE REVOLUTION'
From the Newspaper October 01, 2018

REINVIGORATING agriculture must be a top priority for the new government that came to power with promises of bringing about an agricultural revolution.

For a country mostly dependent on agriculture, the sector's share in the economy has seen a steady decline, without being compensated by industrial growth-led job-creation. Instead the services sector — which is not employment intensive — has become the largest contributor to the country's GDP.

Since accelerating industrial growth to the point where it creates mass scale jobs while keeping productivity and global competitiveness high is not an easy task, the only solution lies in making agriculture more productive.

Keeping this in mind, the PTI government has lined up huge foreign investment in agriculture, officials of the ruling party claim. They are counting on promised funds and technical cooperation from China, Indonesia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the US.

The PTI led governments in the federation, Punjab and KP will have to strike a smart trade-off between the party's electoral promises on agriculture and on-ground realities

When the Saudi delegation visits Pakistan in early October, Pakistan is expecting to sign investment deals in agriculture along with those in energy and trade, these officials say.

But foreign investment alone cannot help overcome the impediments to growth and its sustainable expansion in targeted areas.

Officials of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research say provinces and the federation need to build a consensus on priority areas of development in agriculture. "Job creation, higher food exports, import substitution, reduced pressure on water resources and environment are some of the main objectives that are very important for the federal government."

Alternatively, for the provinces the impact of the expected changes in the provincial politico-economic landscape, consistency in policies and their benefit to provinces is what matters more, along with the support the federal government can provide for pursuing agricultural development and provincial priorities, say officials of both Sindh and Punjab's agriculture departments.

The PTI led governments in the federation, Punjab and KP will have to strike a smart trade-off between the party's electoral promises on agriculture and on-ground realities.

Before coming to power, the PTI promised to (1) initiate institutional agricultural reforms (2) kick-start agriculture-based rural industrialisation (3) set up a small farmer support fund (4) ensure access to markets (5) accelerate supply of seeds and fertilisers (6) provide solar and wind-powered small tubewells to farmers and (7) guarantee jobs for the rural youth.

PTI officials used to claim they had a plan to make these things happen. Now that the party's government has settled in, one hopes that after the completion of its first 100 days it will tell the nation what it has so far done to ensure implementation of these lofty goals.

Prime Minister Imran Khan in his first meeting of the Council of Common Interest on September 24 took up just one issue directly related to agriculture: water shortage in Sindh and Balochistan. He promised to make water distribution more judicious among provinces. If that promise materialises a great deal of agricultural woe can be minimised.

Whereas the PTI government's focus on building dams deserves appreciation, one must acknowledge the fact that in the short run judicious water distribution among the provinces, strict check on water theft within provincial limits and economisation of water use in agriculture are three important steps that can help the sector grow faster. This requires harmony among and between the provinces and the federation.

Next to water come agricultural inputs.

The recent increase in gas prices is sure to make fertilisers costlier. The price of fertilisers has already been on the rise due to several upward revisions by manufacturers in the past three months.

While presenting the revised budget for FY19, Finance Minister Asad Umar announced a Rs7 billion subsidy for stabilising urea fertiliser prices but farmers' lobby groups say this is too little and that the government should have introduced some measures to make imported seeds cheaper or announced incentives for local seed manufacturers.

The revised budget does not contain any other incentive for the agriculture sector.

A sliding rupee has added to the cost of imported seeds and the absence of incentives for local seed manufacturers makes it difficult for them to keep prices from rising amidst general inflationary pressures in the local economy.

The seed manufacturing sector has shown promising signs with local companies claiming a larger market share. One handy example is that of Faisalabad-based Yuksel Seed (Asia) company.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 1st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1435959/helpful-tips-for-the-agriculture-revolution

COTTON YARN EXPORTS GROW BY 6.52PC IN TWO MONTHS

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cotton yarn during first two months of the current financial year grew by 6.52 percent as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-August 2018, about 79,733 metric tons of cotton yarn valuing $224.145 million was exported against 81,064 metric tons worth $210.418 million last year.

Meanwhile, about 1,988 metric tons of yarn other than cotton yarn valuing $5.065 million was exported during the period under review as compared to 1,725 metric tons worth $4.925 million during the same period of last year, according to data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

However, during the period under review, exports of raw cotton came down from $8.695 million in July-August, 2017 to $3.292 million during the same months of current financial year, recording decrease of 62.14 percent.

The country exported about 21,440 thousand dozens of knitwear worth US $488.815 million during the first two months of current financial year as compared to 16,992 thousand dozens valuing US $439.224 million during the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-August 2018, the exports of knitwear grew by 11.29 percent as compared to those during the same period of the last year.—APP

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/01/2-page/741782-news.html

FFC CREATING AWARENESS ABOUT APPLE FARMING
By News Desk

Published: October 1, 2018

Where the Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) is fulfilling its duty of providing farmers with quality manure, it is also creating awareness about the use of latest agricultural technology in obtaining better output from crops, the deputy manager says.

"Farmers can avail benefits from FFC's services and increase the output of their crops," said Muhammad Zahid Aziz while addressing a seminar on profitable harvest of apple trees in Sibi on Sunday. The seminar was organised by FFC and attended by farmers and Pishin Agriculture Department officials.

Aziz said, "Before using the manure, it is necessary to undertake a survey of the land to determine if there is lack of essential minerals and if so how to fulfil the deficiency.

"FFC is providing farmers of the country free analysis on the usage of land and water."

He said, "Our agriculture experts bring samples of mud to FFC's latest computerised laboratory for analysis and then provide the report to farmers so that they could follow it and increase their production."
On the occasion, Agriculture Department Research expert Zainullah Kakar apprised the farmers with better ways of looking after apple gardens.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1815335/1-ffc-creating-awareness-apple-farming/

RABI CROPS FACE 38PC WATER SHORTAGE, IRSA WARNS
The Newspaper's Staff Reporte Updated October 02, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Anticipating 38 per cent water shortage for Rabi season, the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) on Monday asked provincial agricultural authorities for better water management to minimise loss to crop output and rejected a call to subject Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces to water cuts.

The projected water shortage may hit the agriculture sector, which may lead to food security challenges. Wheat is the largest crop of the season. Gram, lentil, tobacco, rapeseed, barley and mustard are some of the other Rabi crops.

The meeting of the Irsa's advisory committee was presided over by chairman Sher Zaman Khan and attended by senior officials of Wapda, irrigation departments of four provinces and director- general Pakistan Meteorological Department.

The representatives of Sindh including member Irsa and secretary irrigation raised the issue of application of three-tier formula for distribution of water shares among the provinces and said it was in violation of the 1991 water accord. Under the formula, Rabi season is divided into three parts and provinces are given water shares on the basis of water availability in each part.

Sindh demanded that distribution should take place under para-2 of the water accord that set provincial shares on entire season basis. It also demanded that exemption from shortage being given to KP and Balochistan should be withdrawn and all provinces should face equal water shortage.

Irsa, however, decided with majority including three provinces of Punjab, Balochistan and KP and the federal government to set provincial shares under three-tier basis. The majority held that Balochistan and KP were exempt from water shortage because of their capacity constraints under the accord and has always been in place for almost three decades.

Also, Irsa told the Sindh government that it had taken up the issue application of three-tier formula at the level of Council of Common Interests (CCI). The CCI in its meeting on May 27, 2018 had constituted a committee under the chairmanship of attorney general of Pakistan to look into the legal aspects and interpretations of the water accord. Therefore, Irsa could not take a decision on a matter that was under consideration at a higher forum and would maintain status quo until final resolution.

Irsa also concluded that distribution of provincial water shares under three-tier formula was very much within the water accord. Also, distribution of shares under para-2 of the accord was not possible until development of another storage reservoir as required under para-6 of the accord.The advisory committee estimated 18.99 million acre feet (MAF) river inflows during the Rabi season and carryover storage of 5.89 MAF in dams. It estimated system losses at 1.73 MAF.

It noted that water flow below Kotri barrage would be 0.04 MAF and water availability at canal head had been estimated at 23.11 MAF.

DG Met told the committee that winter rains will be below normal. No major rains were expected in October and November. In late December and January may be rainfall but mostly in upper parts of the country.

The advisory committee asked provinces to use better management techniques to utilise the available resource and enhance vigilant monitoring to avoid theft and losses.

On the basis of total availability of 23.11MAF, the committee allocated 12.18 MAF water share for Punjab, 9.21 MAF for Sindh, 700,000 acre feet for KP and Balochistan 1.02 MAF.

Published in Dawn, October 2nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1436302/rabi-crops-face-38pc-water-shortage-irsa-warns

FARMERS ASKED TO PLUCK COTTON AFTER 10 AM
RECORDER REPORT OCT 2ND, 2018 KARACHI

The Met Office on Monday asked the farmers to pluck cotton after 10 am to ensure a maximum output, saying that the crops irrigation plans should be in place keeping in view the dry spell in the next 10 days. It warned the growers of a dry weather with a maximum temperature touching about 43 degrees Celsius in Lasbella, Balochistan, saying that crops watering mechanism should be in place.

“Farmers are advised to schedule the picking of cotton after 10 am to get the maximum yield,” it said. Weeds pose a dire threat to standing crops, which eat up a fair share of soil moisture and food to scale down production, it said that farmers should step up efforts to protect yield from a considerable loss.

Sargodha and Rawalpindi Divisions may receive a light rain and Upper Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan scattered falls. Sindh, Kashmir and Balochistan are likely to witness dry weather until October 10.

Daytime temperature is expected to remain slightly normal in the most parts of the country with nighttime below normal across the agricultural parts. A normal wind pattern may prevail over the most of agricultural plains over the period.

In the next 24 hours: mainly dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country with an isolated rain-thunderstorm in Malakand, Quetta and Zhob Divisions and Gilgit-Baltistan.

“Trough of westerly wave is affecting northern parts of the country,” it said.

Weather in Karachi likely to remain sunny with temperature up to 37 degrees Celsius and 75 percent humidity in the next 48 hours.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181002412021/

LIVESTOCK IS BACKBONE OF PROVINCIAL ECONOMY: MINISTER
By News Desk

Published: October 2, 2018

Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development Mitha Khan Kakar has termed livestock as the backbone of the provincial economy, saying decision has been taken to implement practical measures for the betterment of the department.

“The previous governments had very badly neglected the livestock sector, but the provincial government, under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan, is paying full attention towards improving the livestock offices, hospitals and dairy farms as well as providing workers their due rights,” said the livestock minister while addressing the officers of the Beef Production Research Centre Sibi and Cattle Farm Usta Muhammad on Monday.

Director General Livestock Balochistan Dr Ghulam Hussain Jaffar, Divisional Director Livestock Sibi Dr Sher Muhammad Khajjak, Divisional Director Quetta Dr Ghulam Rasool, Deputy Director Livestock Sibi Dr Jan Muhammad Safi, Dr Abdul Wahid Baloch and Dr Azam Kakar were also present.

Kakar said, “With chief minister’s advice, we have decided to take practical measures to bring a visible change in the livestock department.”

“Stopping discrepancies will not only curb financial losses but will also bring about improvement in the livestock department. I will not commit corruption and will not allow anyone to do it.”

He said that leader of the Balochistan Awami Party and Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan had started working in the right direction since day one and in the coming days the livestock department would witness visible changes.

Directing the livestock officers to implement financial discipline, the provincial minister said, “Violation of government rules will not be tolerated and strict action will be taken against careless officers.

“All measures for implementing transparency as well as merit should be ensured and government policies must be given due regard in the financial matters of the department.”

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1816163/1-livestock-backbone-provincial-economy-minister/

SUGAR EXPORT ALLOWED
Zaheer Abbasi Oct 3rd, 2018 Islamabad

The Eco-nomic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has allowed export of one million metric tons of surplus sugar without any freight or financial support from the government. A meeting of the ECC presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar after detailed discussion approved the proposal of the Commerce Division for export of one million metric tons of sugar.

The meeting also decided that no freight or financial support will be provided to millers/exporters by the federal and provincial governments in this regard and only those sugar mills will be allowed to export sugar, which have paid arrears to farmers for all the crops up to 2017-18. Moreover an inter-ministerial committee will have meetings fortnightly to review sugar stock, export and price situation.

Sources said that the meeting was informed that according to PBS data, average sugar price in domestic market was Rs 55.02/kg as of 27th September 2018 and yearly price average of sugar in fiscal year 2017-18 was Rs 53.70/kg as opposed to Rs 64.99/kg in previous fiscal year of 2016-17. The ECC was told that international sugar price was US $320.10 per ton as of September 28, 2018, according to International Sugar Organization.

The inter-ministerial committee's recommended on September 17, 2018 to the advisor on commerce during a meeting on export of one million metric tons surplus sugar on conditions that included: (i) no freight or financial support will be provided to millers/exporters by the federal /provincial governments; (ii) the inter-ministerial committee will meet fortnightly to review sugar stock, export and price situation; (iii) and in case of any abnormal increase in the domestic price of sugar, the committee would recommend to the ECC of the Cabinet for discontinuation of further exports.

The ECC was further informed that sugar export is banned under the Export Policy Order (EPO) 2016 to ensure price stability and local demand. The meeting was further stated that due to good production, export of surplus sugar is being allowed by ECC from time to time.

The meeting was cited the example of previous ECC that allowed subsidy on export of sugar and it was informed about the ECC decision dated 14.09.2017 that allowed export of 500,000 metric tons of sugar @ Rs 10.70/kg subsidy while ECC decision dated 28.11.2017 allowed 1,500,000 metric tons of @ Rs 10.60/kg subsidy. Total quantity allowed by ECC for export was 2,000,000 metric tons and entire quota was allocated by State Bank of Pakistan.

The ministry stated that a meeting of Sugar Advisory Board was held on September 11, 2018 and current position is that total production was 6.618 million tons by the end of current crushing season 2017-18 with Punjab having 3.865 million tones, Sindh 2.281 million tones, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (0.429+0.040), 0.470 million tons.

While carryover stocks of 0.541 million tons, total availability is 7.158 million tones, total consumption (12 months @ 0.433 mmt) is 5.2 million tons, strategic reserves (2 months) 0.866 million tones, and net excess difference will be 1.092 million tones.

On another proposal of Ministry of Commerce, the ECC accorded approval for revision of cess rates of tobacco for the year 2018-19 as determined by the Pakistan Tobacco Board. It may be added that prices of various types of tobacco are fixed every year and cess rates are also revised.

In consideration of proposal submitted by the Ministry of Privatization, the ECC approved disbursement of Rs 375 million on account of net salary for the employees of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) for the month of August 2018.

The meeting directed immediate formation of special committee comprising representatives from Finance, Power Division, Auditor General of Pakistan, Ministry of Petroleum and FBR to address various issues relating to transfer of shares of K-Electric. The Privatization Division was directed by the ECC on September 3 to deliberate upon the issues relating to the sale of K-Electric in consultation with Petroleum and Power Divisions. In order to further facilitate resolution of various issues, formation of the special committee has now been ordered.

The ECC was given a detailed briefing by Ministry of Petroleum relating to the LNG terminals and the meeting directed Ministry of Law to examine the legal agreements relating to the terminals to see whether the government could revisit the terms and conditions contained therein.

The ECC also directed the adviser on industries to have a meeting with representatives of cement industry on recent increase in cement price and let the ECC know of the causes of price increase and also suggest possible remedies.

The meeting also approved a proposal from the Ministry of Defense Production for a sovereign guarantee to back the export of JF-17 Thunder aircraft by PAC Kamra.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181003412261/

IMPORT OF PULSES SOARS TO $104.9M

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Pakistan's import of pulses grew to $104.9 million in July-Aug 2018-19, up by 2.24 percent as local demand for the commodity is increasing, importers said on Tuesday.

Increase in the pulses import now stands at $2.297 million in July-Aug 2018-19 from $102.603 million in July-Aug 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says.

Import volume of pulses also surged by 9.11 percent or 20, 823 metric tons to 123,426 metric tons in July-Aug 2018-19 from 102,603 metric tons in July-Aug 2017-18.

In Aug 2018, pulses import fell by four percent or $7.149 million to $49.011 million from $56.160 million in Aug 2017.

Pulses import volume, however, went up by two percent or 1076 metric tons to 57,236 metric tons in Aug 2018 from 56,160 metric tons in Aug 2017.

Importers anticipate a further increase in the pulses import in months to come as local demand for the key edible commodity is growing. The country relies on import of pulses from Australia, Burma, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Canada.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/03/18-page/742254-news.html

COTTON PRODUCTION EDGES UP
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana October 04, 2018

KARACHI: The cotton production edged up during the last fortnight (Sept 15 to Oct 1) mainly due to a substantial growth of production in Punjab.

According to latest figures released by the ginners' body, the country managed to produce 4.020 million bales, up 0.74 per cent from 3.991m bales produced in corresponding period of last season.

However, negative growth was recorded by Sindh as lesser area was cultivated owing to shortage of irrigation water. It is being estimated that no more than 11.5-11.20m bales would be produced this season, analysts said.

Sindh suffered heavily and produced 2.202m bales up to Oct 1 versus 2.312m bales in same period last year, reflecting a decline of 4.76pc or 0.11m bales.

But higher production in Punjab helped offset the shortfall as the province produced 1.818m bales as against 1.678m bales same time last year – up 8.31pc or 0.138m bales. There were some reports of pest attack in several districts but didn't have much impact.

"Without introducing new variety of seed and technology at ginning stage, the cotton economy cannot improve," observed a cotton analyst, Naseem Usman.

The cotton crop for the last three consecutive seasons had been short and dwindled to around 10-11m bales after hitting peak in 2014-15 around 14.50m bales, he added.

There is an urgent need that the government focus on cotton crop if GDP is to be improved and more jobs created. This year, around 4m bales would be imported to meet the shortfall.

Production in Balochistan went up 5.88pc to 67,718 bales — higher by 3,763 bales.

However, it is a matter of concern that the fortnightly flow of cotton (Sept 15 to Oct 1, 2018) was slow at 1.503m bales as against 1.625m bales (for 18 days flow) in same period last year – a shortfall of 122,392 bales.

On the consumption side, textile industry has purchased more cotton stock so far at 2.991m bales versus 2.96m bales last season. The exporters, however, lifted lesser quantity at 65,012 bales as against 145,886 bales last year.

The ginners are currently holding a higher quantity of cotton at 963,772 bales from 885,322 bales but fewer ginning factories are operating in Punjab and Sindh this season.

Published in Dawn, October 4th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1436712/cotton-production-edges-up

UREA SHORTAGE LOOMS LARGE
RIZWAN BHATTI

KARACHI: The closure of three urea plants due to non-availability of gas could lead to shortage of the commodity besides price escalation in Kharif season.

Industry sources told Business Recorder Tuesday that urea is expected to be in short supply starting May 2018 and may have a major negative impact on the agriculture sector – the backbone of the economy.

Presently, three urea plants operating on the SNGPL network are shut for the last 6 months due to lack of basic raw material – natural gas. There is no natural gas left to allocate to the urea producing plants on the SNGPL network, resulting in short production of some 85,000 tons urea every month or cumulatively over 0.6 million tons in the last few months, they added.

Sources said urea plants operating on the SNGPL network are even unable to operate and start production on LNG as it is much expensive compared to natural gas. The continued closure of these three urea plants could lead to the shortage of this essential commodity as well as price escalation in Kharif season, they added.

As per market estimates, with 2.79 million metric tons domestic production and about 270,000 metric tons opening inventory, overall some 3.060 million tons of urea stocks will be available in Kharif season against the expected offtake of 2.96 million tons. The domestic urea production estimates are excluding production of three SNGPL-based urea plants, which are presently closed and despite requests unable to get gas for urea production.

Sources said that the country is required to maintain at least 200,000 tons of urea stocks at all times to avoid any shortage in the domestic market. However, urea stocks are expected to go down to some 100,000 tons in Kharif, if National Fertilizer Development Centre (NFDC) monthly urea offtake forecast will be matched and gas supply to SNGPL-based plants could not be restored.

“This will spell disaster not just for the economy of Pakistan but also will be a major embarrassment for the government since they will take the blame for not averting a major urea shortage starting by May,” they added.

Against the industry estimates, NFDC claimed that Kharif 2018 is expected to begin with 307,000 tons of opening inventory. Total available urea would be about 3.229 metric tons including 2.922 metric tons of domestic production. Offtake is estimated around 2.959 metric tons. Thus there will be 270,000 metric tons of urea stock at the end of the season.

Sources said that the NFDC’s domestic production estimates are higher than actual production; therefore it is showing an inventory of some 270,000 metric tons end of season.

“The only ways for the government to avoid this shortage is through urgent imports of around 200,000 tons of urea or allocation of LNG at low rates to the three plants or restoration of gas supply to SNGPL-based fertilizer producers on priority basis to enhance the local urea production,” they suggested.

Fertilizer dealers are also taking full advantage of expected shortage and started hoarding the urea, of which panic has already been created in the market and prices of urea are gradually increasing in the domestic market. Presently, 50-kg urea bag is available at Rs 1,430 to Rs 1,450 against the Minimum Retail Price (MRP) of Rs 1,400 per 50-kg bag. The costly urea will be burden on the pockets of poor and small farmers which are in majority in the country.

Sources said urea export was allowed in a very ideal situation, when local production was on increase with massive stocks. Increase in urea production and exports were claimed as a big achievement by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in January. He approved additional 35,000 tons export of urea.

An export of 184,000 tons of urea has been reported since October 2017 including some 64,000 tons of urea exports in March 2018 alone.

Overall, urea production capacity in the country stood at 6.5 million tons annually, however with the closure of three plants on SNGPL, overall production has declined to 5.5 million annually against the demand/consumption of 5.5 million to 6 million tons annually.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/04/5-page/708665-news.html

SEAFOOD EXPORT SLUMPS TO $29.536M
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Pakistan's seafood export slumped to $29.536 million in July-Aug 2018-19, down by 17 percent, which exporters linked to the two-month summer fishing ban. They said the two-month ban on fish hunt in June and July this year scaled back the seafood export bill by $6.026 million in July-Aug 2018-19 from $35.562 million in July-Nov 2017-18. They hoped that seafood export will grow in months to come marking a new high this fiscal year. In term of volume, the country's seafood export plunged to 13,301 metric tons in July-Aug 20181-9 from 14,704 metric tons in July-Aug 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics shows a fall of 10 percent or 1403 metric tons.

In Aug 2018, Pakistan exported 22.33 percent or $5.087 million less seafood to the world markets to $17.699 million comparing $22.786 million of fisheries exported in Aug 2017. Fishermen said impacts of the lean fishing spell of June and July on seafood export may continue for about two more months.

Seafood export volume posted a fall of 14 percent or 1242 metric tons to 7,849 metric tons in Aug 2018 from 9,091 metric tons in Aug 2017. Fishermen said a full- throttled fish and shrimp hunt continues with a better catch since new fishing seasons has begun.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/04/2-page/742305-news.html

INSTALLATION OF ETPS: SWC ASKS SUGAR MILLS TO SUBMIT EMP, IEE REPORTS
TANVEER AHMED OCT 4TH, 2018 KARACHI

Sindh Water Commission (SWC) on Wednesday sought reports of Environment Management Plant (EMP) and Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) from sugar mills viz-a-viz installation and functioning of Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs). The SWC headed by former Justice Amir Hani Muslim asked Pakistan Sugar Mills Association to submit the reports of the last five years on EMP and IEE.

PSMA's counsel Abdul Sattar Peerzada told the commission that it would not be possible for the association as consultants hired for installation of ETPs may not agree to this as they want themselves to take the samples and submit a fresh report. "There is a time constraint on part of the commission," Justice Hani told Peerzada.

Peerzada said that he has to go back to his client for taking further instructions as far as timeframe is concerned and would be able to persuade them to submit fresh report in the first week of December 2018. The hearing would be held on October 11, 2018. The PSMA's counsel also submitted a statement on behalf of the association in the commission in compliance with its orders issued in mid of last month.

The PSMA's statement categorized the sugar mills in three categories – category "A" pertains to sugar mills, which have already installed ETPs, category "B" pertains to sugar mills, which have initiated the installation process of ETPs and category "C" pertains to mills, which are still without ETPs. It said that installation of ETPs involves two phases. And to make ETPs operational before the crushing season 2019-2020, all the aspects of these two phases have to be completed, it added.

During the proceedings, the commission said that arrangements have been agreed upon between Sindh Solid Waster Management Board and M/s Changic Kangjic Sanitation Engineering Company Limited for Districts South and East. As per the agreed formula, door-to-door collection of garbage would immediately be started on the same pattern of District Malir. It would also procure additional machinery for district East and ensure the operations of the machinery within 15 days.

It would also procure 15000 more dustbins with e-chips and their placement within one month and would improve in Command and Control System within 20 days so that requisite reports may be generated as well as improvement in Complaint Management System. It would also repair of 20% machinery given by the DMC East as done in DMC South and would undertake manual sweeping of internal streets/ roads and mechanical sweeping of main roads as per the contract.

It would also ensure timely clearance / emptying of dustbins in organized and proper way and their repairing. About the security threats to Chinese Contractor, the commission ordered Sindh Home Secretary to take care of the issue as far as the security issue raised by the contractor through his counsel. The commission ruled that a crush plants in Kashmore should be relocated away from the locality so that they should not pollute the atmosphere.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181004412592/

BALOCHISTAN CM VOWS TO BOOST LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES SECTORS
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated October 06, 2018

QUETTA: Balochistan's future is linked with developing and utilising natural resources and paying attention to boosting the livestock and fisheries sectors, and negligence towards these areas will put brakes on the province's progress.

This was stated by Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani on Friday while speaking at a seminar organised by the livestock department in connection with the World Animal Day.

Adviser to the Chief Minister for Livestock Department Mitha Khan Kakar, environmental experts and officials of the department concerned also spoke on the importance of livestock and its promotion in the province.

"The economic growth of the province is badly affected as previous governments did not pay due attention to these three vital sectors," Mr Alyani said.

He said that Balochistan was not only the biggest province as far as the area was concerned, but it was also the biggest province in terms of livestock as the province has 48 per cent sheep, 42 per cent camels and 30 per cent goats, but still the provincial livestock department had been facing crisis.

He said the present government had started its earnest efforts to provide maximum facilitate to the people linked with the livestock sector by providing them with modern machinery, installing digital meat processors and packaging machinery.

“We can be a major exporter of meat to south Punjab and Gulf countries by promoting livestock sector as it will give a boost to the provincial economy,” Mr Alyani said.

Referring to fast depleting water level in the province, the chief minister said that it was major problem and decreasing water level was a major cause of devastation of the livestock sector in the province.

He appealed to international donor agencies to provide help for reviving the livestock sector in the province.

He said the government could not provide jobs to the jobless youth of the province unless provincial agriculture and livestock sectors were developed on modern lines.

Published in Dawn, October 6th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1437163/balochistan-cm-vows-to-boost-livestock-fisheries-sectors

COTTON PRICES RISE ON FALL IN SUPPLY OF QUALITY LINT
RECORDER REPORT OCT 6TH, 2018 KARACHI

Cotton prices improved on the local market on Friday owing to decline in supply of quality lint in the process of trading activity, dealers said. The official spot rate recovered Rs 150 to Rs 7800, they added. Prices of seed cotton in Sindh rose by Rs 200 to Rs at Rs 3700-3850, in the Punjab seed cotton prices were at Rs 3600-3850 and in Balochistan, rates of seed cotton were up by Rs 100 to Rs 3700-3900, they said.

In ready session, around 20,000 bales of cotton changed hands between Rs 7450-8100, they said. Market sources said that the mills don’t want to miss the chance of buying quality cotton at their psychological levels. The supply of quality cotton is diminishing with the passage of time, and on the other hand quantity is falling, creating concern among buyers.

Besides, International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) reported that cotton sowing is 2 percent less and production may decline 4 percent. At the same time, the other motivating factor in the local market is rumours of further increase in the dollar’s value versus the rupee, they said.

Cotton analyst, Naseem Usman said that a bunch of factors is pushing the prices higher and it is an indication that prices to go up in coming days. Reports showing that cotton prices were mixed in the international market, they added.

The following deals reported: 400 bales of cotton from Shahdadpur at Rs 7450, 400 bales from Tando Adam at Rs 7500, 800 bales from Nawabshah at Rs 7700, 400 bales from Moro at Rs 7700, 400 bales from New Saeedabad at Rs 7700, 1000 bales from Saleh Pat at Rs 7900/7950, 1000 bales from Rohri at Rs 7900, 600 bales from Ghotki at Rs 8000, 2000 bales from Khairpur at Rs 7850/7900, 1500 bales from Fazilpur at Rs 8000/8100, 1600 bales from Rajanpur at Rs 8000, 800 bales from Sadiqabad at Rs 8000, 400 bales from Liaquatpur at Rs 8000, 400 bales from Rahim Yar Khan at Rs 8000, 400 bales from Sadiqabad at Rs 8000, 200 bales from Donga Bonga at Rs 7900, 400 bales from Shadan Lund at Rs 7900, 1200 bales from Tonsa Sharif at Rs 7900, 1600 bales from Yazman Mandi at Rs 7800, 200 bales from Head Bakani at Rs 7800, 200 bales from Layyah at Rs 7750, 200 bales from Chichawatni at Rs 7750, 1200 bales from Hasilpur at Rs 7675/7750, 600 bales from Haroonabad at Rs 7725, 200 bales from Faqeerwali at Rs 7725 and 100 bales from Jhang at Rs 7685, they said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181006413173/

INDIA RAISES WINTER CROP PRICES AHEAD OF 2019 ELECTIONS
RECORDER REPORT OCT 6TH, 2018 NEW DELHI

India raised state-mandated prices for winter crops such as wheat and rapeseed on Wednesday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi tries to defuse discontent among farmers ahead of elections in 2019. The government announces minimum support prices (MSPs) for most crops yearly to set a benchmark, although state agencies usually buy limited quantities of staples such as rice and wheat at those prices due to a lack of storage and funds. Market prices for many crops typically run well below MSPs.

This year, Modi’s cabinet raised the MSP on wheat by 105 rupees ($1.44) to 1,840 rupees per 100 kg. The 6 percent rise compares with a 7 percent hike the previous season. The increase will widen the difference between local and overseas wheat prices and make exports from the world second biggest producer of the grain unviable, said a Mumbai-based trader with a global trading firm.

The south Asian country also raised the minimum price of rapeseed and chickpeas by 5 percent to 4,200 rupees and 4,620 rupees respectively, Farm Minister Radha Mohan Singh said. Low crop prices and protests by farmers are bad news for Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of three big state elections this year and a general election early next year.

Indian police on Tuesday fired teargas and water cannons to halt and scatter a march by thousands of protesting farmers heading for New Delhi to demand better prices for their produce. The farm ministry’s Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) estimates that the average cost of production for wheat this season would be 1,339 rupees, according to a government document reviewed by Reuters.

The CACP said that MSPs alone do little for farmers as market prices for all winter crops last season were below the government recommended rates. “This trend essentially shows that a high MSP is not the only policy instrument to sustain higher production and income but it should be backed up by an effective procurement mechanism to arrest the prices falling below MSP,” CACP said.

“This emphasizes the importance of public procurement machinery and adequate preparatory measures for establishment of a proper procurement system along with adequate modern storage and warehousing facilities with active participation of state agencies.”

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181006413175/

UREA PRICES INCREASED BY RS130 PER BAG
By Bilal Hussain

Published: October 6, 2018

KARACHI: Urea manufacturers have raised prices by around Rs130 per bag in an attempt to pass the impact of gas price hike on to consumers despite government assurances that the state will pay subsidy to them.

According to Pak-Kuwait Investment Company AVP Research Adnan Sami Sheikh, the manufacturers have raised urea prices by Rs130 per 50kg bag following the increase in natural gas prices by the government.

“In a bid to provide relief for farmers, the government is considering a price subsidy again. But the size and mechanism of it is yet to be determined,” Sheikh told The Express Tribune.

“Considering past subsidy is still outstanding, the manufacturers did not wait for the government and raised prices by the full amount,” he added.

Industry officials also confirmed the urea price hike.

“Some manufacturers with gas supply at concessionary rates are likely to benefit as the cost increase for them will be lower,” Sheikh said. “However, the price hike, especially the subsidy, usually hampers market dynamics as dealers try to extract maximum benefit from the situation. So, abnormal sales can be expected.”

Another Research Analyst Shankar Talreja of Topline Securities said the urea price had jumped from around Rs1,570 to Rs1,700 per bag.

In a notification, Fauji Fertilizer Company announced that the dealer transfer price of its Sona Urea would be Rs1,700 per bag while the retail price would be Rs1,740.

According to an industry official, other fertiliser companies follow Fauji Fertilizer in increasing or decreasing fertiliser prices. Meanwhile, officials have also confirmed price increase by Engro Fertilizers.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 6th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1819258/urea-prices-increased-rs130-per-bag/

FERTILISER INDUSTRY CALLS FOR SEARCHING NEW FEEDGAS OPTIONS
By Shahram Haq

Published: October 6, 2018

LAHORE:New feedgas options for producing urea should be explored immediately as gas deposits in Mari field, which runs 90% of the country's fertiliser plants, will start depleting in the next six to eight years.

Of the country's annual urea production of 6.2 million tons, Fauji Fertilizer Company, Fatima Fertilizer and Engro Fertilizers produce approximately 5.2 million tons. They are situated in a radius of about 60km and are dependent on Mari gas field.

Earlier, Mari gas field had reserves of over 6 trillion cubic feet, however, these have now come down to just two trillion cubic feet, which may last for another eight to ten years.

Although gas exploration is an ongoing activity and there are new discoveries as well, the fertiliser industry is of the view that the department concerned should seriously look for gas exploration and other options for a smooth supply to urea manufacturing plants.

Addressing the media during a visit to the fertiliser plant in Deharki, Engro Fertilizers Senior Vice President Asif Tajik said Ghotki district was one of the most revenue-generating regions of Sindh. It houses fertiliser plants that produce 90% of the national urea production and also produces over 600MW of power through gas-fired independent power plants (IPPs).

Stressing the importance of urea, he said if there was no urea to support crops half of the world population may not find enough food.

He said urea fertiliser was given special importance and priority by governments across the globe because it helped ensure food security.

Explaining the reasons for exporting surplus urea last year, Tajik said the fertiliser industry had a huge inventory, which was difficult to store and handle while there was very little demand in the market at that time.

"It was a right decision, which was taken from the perspective of inventory management given the realities of that time," he added.

He pointed out that the government was now importing 100,000 tons of urea because earlier a few plants were shut down due to gas shortage.

Commenting on LNG as an option for urea production, the official said though LNG was an expensive option, it would be the government's decision if it wanted to subsidise it for local production or import urea. Currently, urea is available at a price of $280 per ton in the international market.

He informed the media that local urea was available at Rs1,600 per bag while imported urea cost approximately Rs2,600 per bag for which the government had to give a subsidy of approximately Rs1,000 per bag.

"If we produce urea locally, we generate employment, taxes, duties and also contribute for the communities around us. But if we import urea, we not only drain our foreign exchange but we also deprive our exchequer of billions of rupees in taxes and duties each year."

Talking about Engro Fertilizers' plants in Deharki, Tajik said the new plant of Engro Fertilizers, Engro Enven, was far more efficient than the old plant and was running at capacity of over 95%.

He said Engro Enven was producing approximately 1.2 million tons of urea per annum, while the total annual production from both its plants is two million tons.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1819262/fertiliser-industry-calls-searching-new-feedgas-options/

FIVE PERCENT GST ON COTTON IMPORT MAY BE WITHDRAWN
MUHAMMMAD ALI OCT 7TH, 2018 KARACHI

The government may withdraw 5 percent sales tax on the import of cotton, it is learnt. According to the sources, the import of cotton (raw and ginned) was subject to reduced sales tax rate of 5 percent, ie, under S. No 5 of Table-I of Eighth Schedule to the Sales Tax Act 1990. Subsequently, in pursuance of package announced by the then Prime Minister on January 10, 2017 to incentivise Pakistani exports, zero-rating of sales tax on import of cotton was granted through SRO 36(I)/2017 whereas exemption from customs duty on import of cotton was granted through SRO 39(I)/2017.

Later, zero-rating of sales tax and customs duty on the import of cotton was withdrawn through SRO 584(I)/2017 and SRO 557(I)/2017, respectively in compliance with decision of ECC of the Cabinet on a summary moved by finance division.

However, the ECC of the Cabinet as per the decision contained in case No ECC January 4, 2018 decided to withdraw the sales tax and customs duty on the import of cotton with effect from January 8, 2018, which was implemented by FBR through the insurance of SRO 46(I)/2018. Thereafter the imported raw and ginned cotton was again subjected to sales tax by amending SRO 1125(I)/2011through SRO 881(I) 2018.

They said that FBR after examining the draft summary of ministry of commerce and textile for the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet regarding exemption of sales tax and customs duty on the import of cotton has now expressed no objection to the said proposal.

On the other hand, the FBR has also suggested allowing zero-rating of sales tax on import of cotton instead of exemption to restore the position existing prior to July 13, 2018, which could be done through further amendments in SRO 1125(I)/2011. Therefore, the government has strong reason to accept the proposed summary and withdraw 5 per cent sales tax on the import of cotton, sources said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181007413321/

GOVT WARNED AGAINST EXPLOITING GM TECH IN MAIZE CULTIVATION
October 7, 2018

LAHORE: Agriculture experts warned the new government against experimenting hazardous genetically modified technology into cultivating maize, which is a main cash crop, as it is likely to suppress its yields.

Hafiz Wasi, a well-known dairy expert said there is no need to further experiment into enhancing maize production, keeping in view the present demand and supply scenario.

“Maize is abundantly available throughout the year with introduction of silage to meet fodder requirement of dairy and livestock sector,” Wasi, who is also associated with a public sector department, said.

Surge in maize yield has been exponential in the last decade, showing an aggregate 61 percent growth. The national production of maize jumped to 6.3 million tons in 2017 from 3.26 million tons harvested in 2009, indicating an annual average growth of 6.14 percent.

Maize is the third most important cereal crop in the country after wheat and rice. It is the fifth biggest crop in terms of its economic value.

An average yield of maize currently hovers around four tons / hectare, which is one of the highest in the whole region.

“Progress in maize production over the years has given Pakistan distinction in achieving one of the highest per acre yield across South Asia,” an expert said.

The federal government planned to introduce imported genetically modified (GM) maize seed in near future. The seed is expected to have protection against some pests and show tolerance against lethal weedicides.

The new technology, the experts said will, however, prove detrimental to local maize varieties as it will contaminate them due to cross pollination. Adverse effects of deadly weedicides are already in the limelight globally with recent developments about litigation over serious health issues.

Local seed producers, however, asked the government to pressurise multinational companies to locally produce hybrid maize seeds.

A spokesman of Seed Association of Pakistan said the Seed Amendment Act, 2015 and the Plant Breeders’ Rights Act 2016 are already in place to protect seed producers, which has been the main precondition of foreign companies to come to the country.

“They should now be bound to ensure local seed production of hybrid seeds, which will reduce import bill and benefit farmers,” the spokesman added.

The country currently spends millions of dollars in importing hybrid maize seeds from various countries.

Ibrahim Mughal, chairman of Agri-Forum Pakistan argued that government should not allow cultivation of GM maize in Pakistan if it wants to protect interests of local farmers.

Mughal said exports of value-added products from maize will adversely be affected due to introduction of GM as they will require the tech labeling.

"This development will negatively affect the export price of the produce and will fetch lower value to the farmers," he added. "The farmers will end up bearing a higher cost of production at the expense of negligible yield increase while Pakistani maize products will be banned into non-GM countries."

Mughal further said there will be no chance to revert to non-GMO maize once the technology introduction due to GM contamination.

"With concentrated efforts, the share of locally produced high quality maize seed has increased to 30-35 percent of the total national seed requirement," he added.

"Scientific researches have proven negative effects of GM seeds and weedicides on consumers of corn, fodder and feeds. We should not ignore this important aspect as well."

Analysts said growth in maize output was owing to availability of good quality hybrid seeds.

Multinational companies enjoy major share in seed imports and marketing. However, their share has been on the decline in the recent years as local seed technology companies are showing promising results in producing high quality, disease-resistant and relatively cheap seeds.

Khaleeque Arshad, ex-chairman of Pakistan Poultry Association said locally-produced high quality maize is sufficiently meeting requirements of the sector.

Poultry feed mainly comprises of maize as a major quality ingredient.

"We are satisfied with the pace of growth in corn yield," Arshad said. "Corn prices are mostly stable."

Agriculture experts said public-private partnership could help attain self-sufficiency in establishing supply chain of quality and economical maize seeds.

"In fact, Pakistan is ideally poised to become self-sufficient in corn seed output given splendid progress shown by local companies," an expert said.

"Local maize seed companies have outperformed foreign competitors in research and development, producing highest-yielding corn varieties, especially which are being grown in spring."

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/377490-govt-warned-against-exploiting-gm-tech-in-maize-cultivation

November 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 19TH TO NOVEMBER 25TH 2018

ECC TO ALLOW WHEAT EXPORT TOMORROW

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated November 19, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The government has called a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet on Tuesday to allow export of wheat for earning some foreign exchange and disbursement of about Rs1.6bn to Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) for settlement of minuscule gratuity and provident fund liabilities.

To be presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar, the meeting is also expected to grant exemption from re-lending policy of the government for funds to be provided as grant to the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and consider a report on sugarcane price and cost of production of sugar.

Sources said the ECC had in a recent meeting advised prime minister’s adviser on commerce, industries and production Abdul Razak Dawood to work out a plan for export of surplus wheat to boost the country’s declining foreign exchange reserves and free up storage.

PSM to get Rs1.6bn for settlement of gratuity, provident fund liabilities

The sources said Mr Dawood had held discussions with all the agencies concerned and concluded that substantial surplus wheat stocks were available in the public sector — both with provincial governments and the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation — that were creating storage problems and causing hardship to the farming community because of financial constraints. Therefore, the proposal for export will help boost foreign exchange reserves, reduce storage cost and ease financial problems of farmers.

The sources said a summary would be presented to the ECC seeking export of public sector stocks. The quantities and export mechanism would be determined in the summary that has not yet been circulated to the ministries concerned as required under the rules of business.

The government has already announced increasing wheat support price by Rs50 per 40kg to Rs1,350 in view of complaints that bumper crop last year did not yield early payments and hence good results to the farmers which could discourage them next year.

There are indications that the government may allow the export over one million tonnes of wheat with more than $100 per tonne subsidy.

The sources said the ECC was also expected to approve disbursement of Rs1.6bn provident and gratuity liabilities to deceased employees of PSM even though total liabilities on these two fronts had been estimated at Rs67bn, including Rs52bn provident fund and Rs15bn gratuity.

Another Rs8bn is payable to dealers, suppliers and contractors of PSM, besides huge sums of the National Bank of Pakistan and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited which have already approached the high court for recovery of dues as the company’s total losses and liabilities exceed Rs470bn, including about Rs13bn accrued during the tenure of the present government. The government has not been able to consider a plan for revival of the PSM in three months in office even though it has decided not to privatise it.

In the proposal for payment of gratuity and provident fund to families of the deceased employees after a recent ECC meeting, an additional secretary of the industries ministry holding the additional charge of chief executive of PSM was directed to visit the mill following humanitarian calls from some families.

The acting CEO along with the PSM ad hoc management visited the mill and had meetings with some representatives of the retired and serving employees, besides a marathon session with top management of Hub Power Company.

The ECC is also expected to give exemption from the re-lending policy of the government for funds to the PPAF as grant. Under the existing uniform re-lending policy, the government secures cheap funding for public sector organisations, including non-profit organisations, and re-lends them at 12-14pc mark-up. Given PPAF's role in social protection, it is always given exemption to ensure cheaper grants to it without building mark-up.

Published in Dawn, November 19th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1446483/ecc-to-allow-wheat-export-tomorrow

WHEAT: TEMPORARY GLUT OR OVERPRODUCTION?
Ahmad Fraz Khan Updated November 19, 2018

With the country reeling under the massive financial and administrative cost of carryover wheat stocks — currently close to nine million tonnes — for the last few years, policymakers are coming under pressure to divert a part of the area under wheat cultivation to other crops like pulses, canola and sunflower to diversify the crop sector and help reduce the burgeoning edible oil import bill.

Apparently, this makes sense. The federal government plans to spare half a million acres currently under wheat cultivation for others crops. In fact, the plan is already underway: the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) kept the national production target of 25.5m tonnes, unchanged from last year, but reduced the area under cultivation to 8.83m hectares from 8.98m hectares a year ago.

The FCA is the body that fixes national production targets and assigns areas to the provinces.

Punjab launched a campaign, wheat for food and canola for profit, last year and lost 2pc of area: 16.21m acres in 2017-18 against 16.45m acres in 2016-17. However, it lost 4pc production — from 20.46m tonnes in 2016-17 to 19.17m tonnes in 2017-18 — because of multiple factors.

In response to a temporary glut created by a wrong set of policies rather than overproduction, the federation and Punjab, which has an 80 per cent share in agricultural products, look to be on the same page vis-à-vis reduction in the area under wheat cultivation.

The commodity may be in abundance today, but climate change can wipe out the minor surplus within a year

However, one can deliver a word of caution in this policy rush hour. The crop, which meets 80pc of national dietary and 38pc caloric intake, is too important to suffer a policy reversal due to the temporary mismanagement of stocks. As a matter of theory, the area under any crop can be adjusted any time if some prerequisites are in place. The federation and the provinces need to look at those requirements first and then go for area adjustment.

In order to compensate for the reduction in area, the federal government promises an increase in production by seven maunds per acre in the next few years. How? No one knows! At the current level of production, which is around 25m tonnes, Pakistan is left with hardly any surplus if 120 kilograms per capita for 207m people, 1m tonnes for seed requirements and 1m tonnes for strategic reserves are taken into consideration. Given climate change, even this minor surplus could be wiped out within a year, plunging Pakistan back into deficits.

Its requirement is also increasing by the year. If the population increase of 1.8pc (unofficially it may be higher) is taken into consideration, the wheat requirement goes up by half a million tonnes every year. This takes the total demand to over 30m tonnes by 2025.

In order to meet this requirement, the country has to increase either the area or the per-unit production. Since area supply is fixed, an increase in production remains the only option. Right now, Pakistan is producing wheat at a rate of 2.89 tonnes per hectare. It has to be taken to more than 3.2 tonnes per hectare by 2025 if food security is to be ensured. If the country wants to take around half a million acres out of wheat cultivation for diversification in the next five years, a further increase in the per-unit production will be required accordingly.

The drivers of wheat production are in deep disarray. Currently, there are around 152 wheat varieties in the market. In the last 10 years alone, Punjab has released 69 varieties, Sindh 25, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 44. Balochistan has released eight varieties and the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) came up with six varieties. None of these varieties has been able to gain any acceptability. Most of them disappeared within three to four years of their introduction because none of them met the standard.

For the last many years, Pakistan has been losing out on seed development. Instead, it has been caught up in the seed selection exercise: randomly selecting a better performing seed from dozens of imported ones instead of cross-matching strong characteristics of many of them to develop a seed according to its own ecological requirements. This has left the seed and crop sectors grossly compromised.

The seed replacement hardly merits any discussion: official agencies boast of 38pc certified seed availability whereas hardly 5pc seed is actually being replaced. Punjab has been running a programme for seed replacement for the last four years and providing 100,000 bags to farmers for free. This year, even that plan was scrapped.

All kinds of fertilisers have also experienced a 20-40pc increase in prices following the hike in feed gas rates. With their prices spinning out of the farmers’ reach, general fertiliser application is bound to suffer and so is wheat production. However, the long-term issue is of soil health as farmers lose interest in balancing fertiliser according to soil and crop health.

The availability of water is declining like never before. For the last few seasons, its shortages hovered between 20pc and 60pc during crop cycles.

Wheat area diversification is a politically catchy slogan, but it may not actually work.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, November 19th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1446389/wheat-temporary-glut-or-overproduction

12 INDIAN FISHERMEN HELD
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 19, 2018

KARACHI: Pakistan Maritime Security Agency on Sunday apprehended 12 Indian fishermen on charges of illegal fishing in the territorial limits of Pakistan, according to an MSA spokesperson.

During the action in the open sea, the MSA seized two boats also. Later, the held fishermen were handed over to the Docks police for further legal action.

Published in Dawn, November 19th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1446479

TWO IRRIGATION OFFICIALS INJURED IN GROWERS' ATTACK
A Correspondent November 19, 2018

BADIN: The sub-divisional officer (SDO) and sub-engineer (SE) of Khairpur Gumboh sub-division were injured in a mob attack when they tried to close a water channel ahead of its scheduled closure.

SDO Zulfikar Ali Lashari and SE Shahjahan Mughal were taken to the Pangrio rural health centre (RHC) for first aid and then taken to the Hyderabad Civil Hospital for further treatment.

Reports from the area suggested that a large number of growers argued with the officials present at the sub-division office over closure of Khoski minor (irrigation channel) on Sunday ahead of its scheduled closure.

According to the officials, the growers were told that the early closure was aimed at diverting water to the Oilpur outlet in order to provide water to the shrine of Syed Saman Shah Sarkar and its surrounding areas. The Sufi saint's urs begins on Nov 22. They claimed that the growers did not allow the officers to close the channel much ahead of the urs and when the irrigation officials went to the head regulator of Khoski minor near Pangrio to close it's gates, enraged growers attacked them causing injuries to the SDO and SE.

The officials' version of the episode was contested by local leaders of growers' association as 'concocted story' to blackmail the growers. They said growers had already been holding protests against water shortage and demanding release of adequate supply into the minor. "The Syed Saman Shah Sarkar shrine falls within the commandment area of Kotri barrage and has nothing to do with Khoski minor," they pointed out, and alleged that the officials used to openly sell water and had to close irrigation channels abruptly in order to divert it to the "buyers' lands".

Meanwhile, the area police went behind some of the growers and raided their houses in different villages. Seven suspects were picked up for interrogation.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1446467/two-irrigation-officials-injured-in-growers-attack

PAKISTAN HAS TO IMPORT OVER 4M COTTON BALES

TAHIR AMIN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has to import over 4 million cotton bales that would cost around $1.5 billion, owing to declining production of cotton this season, sources revealed to Business Recorder.

Officials said imports of such a large quantity would not only increase the country's import bill, but also the cost of production. Currently customs duty, additional custom duty and sales tax have been imposed @ 3 percent, 1 percent and 5 percent respectively on the import of cotton.

Pakistan has produced around 10 million bales of cotton on average for the last several years against consumption of over 14 million bales. Additionally, 1 to 1.5 million bales of Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton per annum is also imported, as this quality is not produced in the country.

Cotton Commissioner Dr Khalid Abdullah said that as of 1st November 7.706 million bales of cotton have arrived against 8.134 million during the same period of last year i.e. a decline of 0.428 million bales -5.26 percentage decline.

Seed cotton in Punjab in the current season declined by 8.3 percent to 4.27 million bales as against 4.658 million bales during the previous season. Seed cotton arrival in Sindh recorded at 3.434 million bales in the current season showing a decrease of 1.2 percent as compared to 3.476 million bales last year.

Most of the farmers in Punjab and Sindh have started cutting their cotton crop and are preparing their lands for sowing of wheat crop, an official told this correspondent and added that the situation is not satisfactory and the production will be very far behind the target.

The Cotton Crop Assessment Committee (CCAC) has revised downward cotton production target by around 25 percent i.e. to 10.847 million bales against the initial target of 14.37 million bales set for the current season 2018-19, after missing the sowing target by over 8 percent.

The official said that the country had missed cotton sowing target by over 8 percent due to extraordinary shortage of water. Cotton was sown on 6.632 million acres against the target of 7.28 million acres.

Sources said that due to increased sugarcane cultivation in the cotton areas, delay in harvest of wheat and shortage of water were factors that contributed to a decline in cotton sowing.

The government fixed cotton area and production target for the year 2018-19 was as follows: Punjab was expected to cover 5.70 million acres and to produce 10 million cotton bales, Sindh had to cover 1.53 million acres and produce 4.2 million cotton bales, Balochistan had to cover 0.074 million acres and produce 0.15 million bales and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had targeted to sow cotton on 0.005 million acres and produce 0.02 million bales of cotton.

The decline in cotton sowing was recorded in Sindh which is the second major cotton producing province. Sindh has covered 0.973 million acres in the current season against the target of 1.53 million acres and missed the target by around 35 percent. Sindh province produces around 32 mounds of seed cotton per acre compared to 21 mounds in Punjab.

The target for cotton seed sowing for 2018-19 in Punjab was 5.7 million acres and the sowing was on area of 5.65 million acres.

Extraordinary shortage of water during the Kharif season, has badly affected the cotton sowing in early season. However, in Punjab, 99% of sowing target was achieved, whereas in Sindh, only 64% of the target area could be sown.

According to the revised estimates, Punjab is projected to produce 8.077 million bales, Sindh 2.6 million bales, Balochistan 0.150 million bales and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 0.020 million bales.

Officials said that sugarcane crop has overtaken the cotton rich areas of the province including Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Muzaffargarh and Lodhran, which is another reason for decline in cotton areas.

Further there is low investment in seed quality in Pakistan and measures need to be taken to give incentives to international companies to invest in Pakistan. Due to uncertified cotton seeds production is being affected every year.

During a presentation given to Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile Industry and investment Razzak Dawood, textile division listed several reasons for not achieving the targets which include lack of skills development, infrastructure, product and market diversification, compliance, cotton standards, cluster development, cost of doing business & ease of doing business, combined effluent treatment plant, revitalization of textile and garment cities, unnecessary import of textile goods, increase in cotton yield and production of long staple cotton, SME development, pending liabilities, tariff rationalization and regulatory regime.

Textile division has proposed very ambitious plans including introduction of latest seed technology, improving cotton staple length, up-gradation of ginning machinery, cotton standardization, introduction of hedge trading, research and development grant fund for new and existing markets, introduction of new fibers, new products and new blends.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/19/1-page/750149-news.html

GOVT MAY ALLOW WHEAT'S EXPORT TO THE TUNE OF 3.1M TONNES
recorder report

ISLAMABAD: The government is expected to allow export of 3.1 million tonness of wheat from PASSCO, Punjab and Sindh stocks with freight subsidy of Rs 40.317 billion or $302 million, official sources told Business Recorder.

Giving the background, sources said, Provincial Food Department of Punjab and Sindh have submitted their requests to offload their surplus wheat stocks at the tune of 2.5 million tons (2 million tons from Punjab and 0.5 million from Sindh) by providing freight support from the federal government.

A similar request by the Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Services Cooperation Ltd (PASSCO) has also been submitted for export of 0.6 million tons with freight support of $115 per ton. Overall a quantity of 3.1 million tons of wheat and wheat products have been proposed by the Punjab, Sindh and PASSCO at freight support to be shared equally between the federal and provincial governments.

In this regard a meeting of the Working Group on Wheat Export Freight Support Programme was convened under the chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Oct 22, 2018 in which the proposals of provincial Food Departments of Punjab, Sindh and PASSCO were evaluated in wake of WTP requirements.

In pursuance of the decisions a draft working on wheat freight support was prepared and circulated to the provincial governments and PASSCO for obtaining consent of respective governments.

In the meeting, it was deliberated that this year, Punjab, Sindh and PASSCO have procured wheat stocks of 3.596, 1.400 and 0.900 million tons respectively. With the addition of carry-over stocks of 3.596 million tons with Punjab, 0.456 million tons with Sindh and 1.623 million tons with PASSCO, the overall available stocks at the start of the Food Year (May 1,2018) were to the tune of 11.931 million tons. After a negligible release of wheat, so far, current wheat stocks are now at the level of 10.178 million tons. Slow releases of wheat from the public stocks and heavy mark-up encouraged the provincial government to submit their requests for immediate export of their stocks. The procurement cost with the addition of incidental charges, have reached at the level of Rs 42,000 per ton for Punjab, Rs 39,206 per ton for Sindh and Rs 39,079 per ton for PASSCO.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/19/15-page/750265-news.html

FARMERS DEMAND PUNJAB RETURN SINDH’S STOLEN WATER
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 19, 2018

HYDERABAD:As water shortage for irrigation of winter crops has reportedly surged to as high as 70% in parts of Sindh, the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has demanded that Punjab should return water stolen from Sindh’s share over the last 10 months. The demand was raised at a meeting of the SCA in Hyderabad, which farmers’ representatives from Karachi, Sukkur, Sanghar and other cities attended through a video link, on Sunday.

SCA President Qabool Muhammad Khatian said the Sindh government should ask Punjab to return water of the province’s share which was stolen during the last 10 months. Citing a report by the Sindh irrigation department, he claimed that 23% of Sindh’s water is still being taken by Punjab between Taunsa and Guddu barrages.

“The severe shortage has made cultivation of winter crops difficult,” he said. The SCA also complained about problems in water distribution within Sindh where the tail end farmers are always made to suffer from the shortfall.

The SCA, which is one of the leading lobbying groups of agriculturists, rejected Rs1,300 per 40 kilogramme price of wheat crop set by the Sindh government. “The rate of wheat has remained static since 2014 but the cost of cultivation during all these years has increased by 100%,” said Khatian.

The SCA called to enhance the rate by Rs200 per 40kg to Rs1,500. He contended that the persistent low price will discourage the farmers from cultivating wheat which may result in a drop in production and subsequent food insecurity which existed around 10 years ago when wheat was being imported.

With the provincial government delaying notifying the sugarcane crushing season and fixing the crop's price, which according to the law has to be done by mid-October every year, the chamber raised the alarm. The farmers deplored that over a month has already passed since the deadline for notifying the season but the Sindh government has stuck to its pro-sugar mills policy to the detriment of the farmers. The SCA demanded Rs200 per 40kg rate for sugarcane.

Dejected by the delay in the crushing season, a farmer in Benazirabad district set his crop on fire. Wazir Detho, who owns a farm in Qazi Ahmed taluka of the district, on Sunday burnt his sugarcane crop in protest. "We take loans to grow the crop and when its grown, we either don't get a reasonable price or delay in the crushing season damages the crop," he told the media.

Meanwhile, the SCA also asked the government to allow export of tomato and onion crops. They claimed the farmers of the two crops are suffering losses because of extremely low rates and production which is higher than the national demand.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 19th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1850114/1-farmers-demand-punjab-return-sindhs-stolen-water/

SINDH ASSEMBLY TOLD PROVINCE MAY NOT ACHIEVE THIS YEAR'S WHEAT TARGET
Tahir Siddiqui November 20, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was informed on Monday that target of wheat production in the province this year might not be achieved fully due to a nagging shortage of water in the province.

Minister for Agriculture, Supply and Prices Mohammad Ismail Rahu told the provincial assembly during its Question Hour that there was almost 38 per cent shortage of water in the province which would affect the crop's yield in Rabi season. However, he said, the wheat yield would be sufficient for the province's needs and there would be no need to import it.

In reply to a question, the minister said the expected production of wheat in the province for 2018-19 was estimated at 3.8 metric tonnes.

He said in answer to a query by an opposition member that the province had required capacity to procure wheat crop. The wheat yield witnessed gradual increase over the past years despite shortage of water in Sindh.

He said the provincial government and lawmakers of the Pakistan Peoples Party had kept raising the issue of water shortage at all forums including Council of Common Interests and Indus River System Authority.

Answering a question by Arif Mustafa Jatoi of the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), the minister said that 206 solar-powered water pumps and tube wells were provided to farmers at subsidised rates by the agriculture, supply and prices department in different districts of the province during 2017-18.

Mohammad Hussain and Javed Hanif of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan asked supplementary questions to which the minister said that farmers who owned up to 50 acres were entitled to avail themselves of the scheme under the Annual Development Plan.

The minister informed the house that all solar-powered water pumps and tube wells were functional and working to the satisfaction of farmers.

To another question, the minister said that no appointment was made in the agriculture, supply and prices department during 2017-18.

He said in answer to a supplementary question by a GDA member that applications were invited for the water pumps through advertisements in newspapers and proper procedure had been adopted for granting the facility.

Cane crushing

The minister said in reply to a question that sugar mills in the province procured a total of 21 million tonnes sugar cane during 2017-18 crushing season. A mechanism was being devised to ensure the sugar mills started crushing by Nov 30 every year, he said.

He said the process had to be halted as the members of Sugar Cane Board were being elected. Now all formalities had been fulfilled and all stakeholders had been taken on board. “The sugar mills will start crushing by the end of this month,” he added.

Mr Rahu said that growers’ interest was very important for the provincial government and it would ensure that adequate steps were taken to facilitate them.

Dr Mohammad Rafiq Bhanbhan of the GDA reminded the minister that crushing had been delayed last year and asked what steps had been taken against the persons who were responsible for the delay.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1446589/sindh-assembly-told-province-may-not-achieve-this-years-wheat-target

SINDH GOVT URGED TO FIX SUGARCANE’S SUPPORT PRICE
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: The opposition in the Sindh Assembly asked the provincial government to fix support price for sugarcane in a bid to protect the poor growers from financial losses, as delay in crushing frustrates the farmers.

Grand Democratic Alliance’s (GDA), lady legislator, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi feared the delay in start of cane crushing hurts the poor farmers, saying that the late fixing of cane rates frustrated the growers yesteryear.

The late crushing made the growers set themselves and their standing crops on fire in protest. She said that late cane support price announcement creates a devastating situation for the growers.

She said that Sindh government should step up announcing the sugarcane rate to protect the growers from financially losses, adding that the cane crushing should be started on time as well. In reply during question-answer session of the house, Sindh Agriculture Minister, Muhammad Ismail Raho said that his government is aware of the growers' problems and taking steps to solve them. He said that the government has earmarked a solar tube well and pumps scheme for growers, saying "the scheme" has been designed on a transparent ground.

The house discussed in length an adjournment motion that Muttahida Qaumi Movement's (MQM), Rashid Khilji had tabled against the unannounced electricity load shedding in the province. The debate echoed the house across the benches, as both opposition and treasury unanimously clamoured for the 'unjust' electric power supply to Sindh. Imtiaz Shaikh, Sindh Energy Minister, said that the province has the potential to generate electricity from wind resources to end the load shedding crisis.

He accused the federal government of 'hampering' wind power generating projects, saying the province has the key to end the electricity load shedding across the country. The minister claimed that the province has the potential to produce low-priced power through wind and solar resources. He complained that Sindh does not have any representation in the electricity supply companies, saying that the federal government executes the entire power transmission system. He also clamoured for Sindh is not getting to receive its due share of gas utility.

MQM's Khawaja Izhar-ul-Hasan said that despite Sindh produces about 70 percent of the country's total natural gas, the government is unable to receive electricity in return from the federal government for the province. He said that Karachi pays about 80 percent of power bills, asking the government to form an alternative electricity supply project. MQM's Kunwar Naveed Jameel urged the Sindh government to take the electricity load shedding issue to the Council of Common Interests to solve the issue.

Sindh Health Minister, Dr Azra Pechuho, said that the rising cases of active HIV patients in the province show that people are getting more aware about the diseases in the wake of the concerned department's awareness drive. She said, while replying to the call-attention notice by MQM's Muhammad Hussain, that the awareness drive by the health department is showing a better result. Muhammad Hussain showed concerned over the shifting of HIV aids patients from Hyderabad to Karachi. He said that the HIV aids centre in Hyderabad lacks basic facilities.

The House also adopted a resolution tabled by Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), Syed Abdul Rasheed to pay homage to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on the occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH). The second resolution adopted during the sitting that came from MQM's Wasim Uddin Qureshi paid tribute to the veteran scholar of Tableegi Jamaat Haji Mohammad Abdul Wahab on his death.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/20/19-page/750434-news.html

GOVERNMENT URGED TO DECLARE PULSES NON-GMO
RECORDER REPORT | NOV 20TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Chairman of Karachi Wholesale Grocers Association (KWGA) Anis Majeed has urged the federal government to declare pulses as Non-Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) while the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) should be immediately directed to relinquish the unnecessary condition to produce GMO certificates so that the poor masses could be provided cheaper pulses which is widely being used all over the country, being the basic nutritional need of every household.

While giving numerous suggestions for enhancement of country's tax revenue, he said that huge quantities of pulses and chickpeas were being imported with a view to overcome the local demand for these commodities across the country and it was a well-known fact that most the imports take place on the basis of Cash Against Documentation while hardly 5 percent of these commodities were being imported through the Letter of Credit (LC).

"If the government assures that imports of these commodities take place via LC only instead of Cash Against Documentation, this step would not only help in regularizing the imports but would also generate huge amount of revenue for the government," added Chairman KWGA said.

Anis Majeed further pointed out that during the last few years, substantial reduction has been witnessed in local production of pulses and the situation can be gauged from the fact that during the last 2 to 3 years, the local production of pulses has gone down to somewhere around 500,000 to 600,000 tons whereas the countrywide consumption of pulses hovers around 1.4 to 1.5 million tons per annum, leaving no other choice but to rely on the import of pulses to overcome nationwide demand.

"Around 700,000 tons of chickpeas and pulses were being imported from credible suppliers from USA, Canada, Australia, China, Russia, Ukraine, Myanmar and Africa but the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) demands unnecessary certifications from the importers, resulting in multiplying hardships in clearance of imported consignments," he added.

Referring to additional documents and unnecessary paperwork being demanded by DPP almost every day, he said that pulses are a Non-Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) whose seeds simply cannot be scientifically modified and they are produced naturally yet the DPP has imposed the condition to produce GMO certificate for the imported consignment, resulting in blocking a large number of containers at the ports and causing additional charges to importers on account of demurrage and detention. "Ultimately, it is the consumer who will have to bear the cost of the inflated commodities," he opined.

He further said that it was beyond their understanding that even the insect-free pulses were being referred to fumigation by the DPP which was absolutely not needed therefore, the department should be refrained from carrying out such unnecessary fumigations.

While sharing the formula for enhancing the exports of the country, Anis Majid said that exports of imported Chickpeas and Pulses after value addition should be allowed that would certainly promote the local value addition industries and also create a lot of employment all over the country, besides help in overcoming the local demand for these commodities.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181120425230/

MASSIVE TAX LEAKAGES FOUND IN SUGAR INDUSTRY, ECC TOLD
By Zafar Bhutta

Published: November 20, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has unearthed massive tax evasion by the sugar industry and is in the process of adding molasses to the list of goods that cannot be sold to unregistered persons in order to plug tax leakages.

Sources told The Express Tribune that it was brought to the notice of Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet in its recent meeting that sugar, according to the Revenue Division, was one of the major industries that had a significant tax potential.

Although sugar millers contributed substantially to the sales tax collection, there were still reports of massive tax leakages in the industry, the ECC was told.

It was pointed out that monitoring staff had been posted at sugar factories in exercise of powers under Section 40-B of the Sales Tax Act 1990. However, the results were not encouraging. Molasses is a major byproduct of sugarcane. It is either exported by the sugar industry, sold locally or converted into ethanol.

It was suggested that if the production and sale of molasses was properly recorded, the data could be used to gauge the actual sugar production. It would assist in documentation of the industry as well.

One way to capture sales of a product is to bind suppliers and people registered under the Sales Tax Act 1990 to sell taxable goods to registered persons only.

Sub-section (6) of Section 8 of the Sales Tax Act empowers the federal government to notify goods or the class of goods which a registered person cannot supply to a person who is not registered.

Furthermore, the federal government in exercise of powers under clause (b) of sub-section (1) of Section 8 can also specify goods in respect of which input tax cannot be deducted.

In line with these provisions, the government issued SRO 488(1)/2004 dated June 12, 2004, specifying the goods that would not be sold to a person who was not registered under the said act and if sold such person would not be entitled to input tax deduction in respect of such supplies. The Revenue Division proposed that the government, in exercise of its powers, may add molasses to the list of goods mentioned in SRO 488(1)/2004 in order to stop its sale to persons not registered under the Sales Tax Act and the deduction of input tax in respect of sales made to such persons.

The ECC considered the suggestion for ensuring payment of due taxes on molasses and directed the prime minister’s adviser on commerce, industries, production and investment and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman to hold a meeting with the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) to seek its views on the proposals made by the Revenue Division.

The FBR may again take up the matter with the ECC only in the case of revision in the proposals, otherwise, the same proposals will be presented to the cabinet for its consideration.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1850774/2-massive-tax-leakages-found-sugar-industry-ecc-told/

ECC ALLOWS 0.5M TONNES OF WHEAT EXPORT WITH RS6.5BN SUBSIDY
Khaleeq Kiani November 21, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Amid 10.2 million tonnes of surplus stocks, the government on Tuesday allowed subsidised export of 0.5m tonnes of wheat.

This would cost $50m, or Rs6.5bn, to the national exchequer, a senior government official told Dawn. He explained the original proposal involved $305m subsidy or Rs40.5bn on proposed export of 3.1m tonnes of wheat or its products.

The decision was taken at the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet meeting, presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar, deferring all other summaries due to the concluding round of talks with the IMF and departure of Umar to Malaysia.

Informed sources said the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) had proposed export of 3.1m tonnes of wheat on the request of Punjab, Sindh and Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco), to reduce storage and maintenance costs.

It was proposed that Punjab be allowed to export 2m tonnes of wheat and wheat products followed by 0.6m and 0.5m tonnes by Sindh and Passco.

Rejects requests of freight support from provinces

The provinces had demanded that the subsidy on exports should be equally shared by the centre and the provinces. The finance minister rejected all such demands and approved export of only 0.5m tonnes, while ordered the MNFSR to settle shares of three parties, in consultation with ministries of commerce and finance.

He also decided that that any financial support for freight etc requested for export will be provided by the respective provincial governments. “The federal government will pick up such costs in the case of Passco only”, he said.

Further, a committee comprising senior officials from the ministries of commerce, finance and food security will review the situation in two weeks’ time and make recommendation for further exports, if required.

The provincial food departments of Punjab and Sindh had requested permission to offload their surplus wheat stocks to the tune of 2.5m tonnes and 0.5m tonnes, respectively, by providing freight support of the federal government. Passco also made similar request for export of 0.6 million tonnes with freight support of $115 per tonne.

Overall, a quantity of 3.1m tonnes of wheat and wheat products had been proposed by Punjab, Sindh and Passco, with freight support to be shared equally between the federal and provincial governments.

The working goup on Wheat Export Freight Support Programme, led by the secretary of MNFSR evaluated these proposals in wake of World Trade Organisation’s requirements.

It was agreed that Punjab, Sindh and Passco have procured wheat stocks of 3.623m tonnes , 1.4m tones and 0.900m tonnes, respectively, this year.

With the addition of carry-over stocks of 3.596m tonnes with Punjab, 0.456m tonnes with Sindh and 1.623m tonnes with Passco, the overall available stocks at the start of the food year in May stood at 11.931m tonnes.

It was reported that after a negligible release of wheat, so far, current wheat stocks stood at 10.178m tonnes.

Slow releases of wheat from public stocks and heavy mark-up have encouraged the provincial governments to submit their requests for immediate export of their stocks, as procurement cost with addition of incidental charges reached Rs42,000 per tonne in Punjab, Rs39,206 in Sindh and Rs39,079 for Passco.

Considering the benchmark of Passco's incidentals of Rs6,579 per tonne, the total cost of wheat was evaluated at Rs39,079 per tonne of local wheat, equivalent to $292.7 per tonne, at the rate of Rs133.5 to a dollar, as compared to international wheat prices of $218 per tonne, necessitating $75-80 per tonne. After adding $30 per tonne transportation cost and exporters' margin, the total difference worked out at $105 per tonne.

The MNFSR proposed that 70pc of 3.1m tonnes of wheat and its products should be exported through sea route, with $105 per tonne and remaining 30pc be exported through land route at the rate of $75-80 per tonne from Punjab and Sindh respectively.

The ministry also proposed that export of wheat and wheat products should be completed before April 30, 2019, while the export process should be completed upto June 30, 2019, in order to facilitate the exporters for completing their codal formalities.

Umar also directed that for further exports, the matter should be taken up afresh after two weeks.

Published in Dawn, November 21st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1446933/ecc-allows-05m-tonnes-of-wheat-export-with-rs65bn-subsidy

IMPORT OF PULSES SURGES TO $202M
Aamir Shafaat KhanNovember 21, 2018

KARACHI: Import of pulses, after witnessed a declining trend in FY18, bounced back from July onwards as lower prices in world market encouraged traders.

Imports soared to 316,324 tonnes costing $202 million in 4MFY19, from 192,942 tonnes valuing $172m in same period last year, up by 64 per cent in quantity and 17pc in value. The average per tonne price of pulses in 4MFY19 dropped to $639 from $893 per tonne.

Imports of pulses fell by 41pc in quantity and 44pc in value in FY18 to 723,843 tonnes ($535m) versus country's highest-ever of 1.225m tonnes ($952m) in FY17. The average per tonne price in FY18 came down to $738 per tonne from $777 per tonne, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics stated.

Contrary to the decline in world market in the last four months, the wholesale market recorded a slight increase in prices as massive devaluation of the rupee against the dollar diluted the impact of falling world rates.

The price of various pulses like gram, moong and masoor crawled up by Rs10 per kg from June onwards to Rs98-105, Rs100-110 and Rs72-75 per kg, respectively while mash price jumped to Rs105-120 per kg from Rs80 per kg this June.

At the retailers' end, consumers are paying Rs120-140 per kg for gram pulse while masoor and mung carry prices of Rs100 and Rs120 per kg, respectively. Mash rate is tagged at Rs140-160 per kg.

Karachi Wholesale Grocers Association (KWGA) Chairman Anis Majeed said in FY17 traders over-imported pulses that caused a surplus and kept prices almost stable, forcing traders to slow down imports in FY18. But by July this year, those stocks had depleted and hence, the imports grew in 4MFY19.

However, he said traders did not push up prices substantially in the last few months as arrival of low-priced imported pulses nullified the impact of rising transportation charges on account of diesel price hike and rupee depreciation against the dollar, while the market also witnessed slackness in demand.

Most of the imports take place on the basis of Cash Against Documentation (CAD) while hardly 5pc arrive through letter of credit (L/C). Imports via L/Cs can generate more revenue as against those through CAD, he claimed.

Overall production of pulses every year has plunged to around 700,000 tonnes in the last few years due to low crop of gram whole. Around 700,000-800,000 tonnes of chickpeas and other pulses are being imported every year from USA, Canada, Australia, China, Russia, Ukraine, Myanmar and Africa, while country's pulse consumption hovers between 1.4-1.5 million tonnes.

On imports, the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) demands unnecessary certifications from the importers, making it harder to get clearance of imported consignments, he added.

Referring to additional documents and unnecessary paperwork being demanded by DPP almost every day, he said that pulses are a Non-Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) whose seeds simply cannot be scientifically modified and they are produced naturally yet the DPP has imposed the condition to produce GMO certificate for the imported consignment, resulting in blocking of a large number of containers at the ports and causing additional charges to importers on account of demurrage and detention.

He urged the federal government to declare pulses as non-GMO while DPP should be immediately directed to relinquish the unnecessary condition to produce these certificates so the pulse prices can be brought down.

The insect-free pulses were being referred to fumigation by DPP which was absolutely not needed, he said.

Exports of imported chickpeas and pulses after value addition should be allowed, which would certainly promote the local value addition industries and also create employment, he added.

Published in Dawn, November 21st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1446931/import-of-pulses-surges-to-202m

17 WATER, NINE GHEE COMPANIES SEALED AS SFA DRIVE CONTINUES
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated November 21, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh Food Authority (SFA) on Tuesday informed Chief Secretary Mumtaz Ali Shah that 17 companies selling bottled water and nine commercial concerns dealing in loose ghee were sealed in Karachi as the drive against hazardous food continued.

Action against illegal abattoirs in the city was also initiated, SFA officials told a meeting chaired by the chief secretary.

They said that the bottled water companies were sealed in compliance with the relevant order issued by the chief justice of Pakistan.

The meeting was also informed that inspection of food being sold at school canteens, which had largely been ignored in the past, was being conducted and sale of cold drinks in schools was prohibited due to public health concerns.

A spokesperson for the provincial government said that the CS appreciated SFA's efforts and advised it to maintain coordination with the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) vis-à-vis authentication and registration of food items and commodities.

According to SFA officials, 40 food inspectors would soon be recruited in order to evolve an effective mechanism to inspect food outlets.

The CS called for a permanent campaign to keep people aware of dangers of hazardous/expired food.

The SFA director general informed the meeting that notices had been issued to 5,806 businesses asking them to improve quality of their food products. They included factories, restaurants and school canteens, he said, adding that fines to the tune of Rs1.6 million had been imposed on various restaurants found serving substandard food to consumers.

CS Shah said that necessary legal action be taken against those found marketing adulterated and substandard food products and include poultry products in their inspection. He said SFA would require a food testing lab of its own.

Food Secretary Mohammad Rashid informed the meeting that the SFA raided various places to check quality of commodities/items being produced at ice factories and confectionery concerns.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1446802/17-water-nine-ghee-companies-sealed-as-sfa-drive-continues

MILLERS, GROWERS FAR APART ON CONSENSUS CANE PRICE

By Mohammad Hussain Khan | 11/21/2018 12:00:00 AM

HYDERABAD: The Sindh government on Tuesday asked sugar millers to start cane crushing by Nov 30 and vowed to issue a notification fixing current sugar cane crop`s indicative rate for the 2018-19 season even without a consensus on it.
At a meeting chaired by Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu in Karachi, representatives of millers and growers did not agree on a consensus rate.

Speaking to this reporter by phone from Karachi, Mr Rahu said that the two sides took different positions. He said he told millers not to expect any subsidy from the provincial government.

`No subsidy is offered to millers,` he said while referring to last year`s subsidy of Rs9.30 per 1(g of sugar pitched in by the Sindh government.

Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) submitted its working paper for cost of cane production putting it at Rs198/40kg. The agriculture research department puts it at Rs180/40kg.

Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA)Sindh zone representatives said they could not afford even Rs180/40kg or so given the cost of per kg sugar production.

They also complained that the federal government had not yet paid to them the export rebate at the rate of Rs10.70 per kg as was committed by it in 2017-18 season. They said that Sindh government should help them get the payment calculated at Rs16 billion.

Millers also pointed out that around 1.5 million tonnes of sugar was available with them but the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) had not yet taken a decision regardingits export.

Agriculture secretary Agha Zaheer said that millers at the meeting offered Rs130Rs140/40kg rate this year. The minister argued that Punjab government had fixed the rate at Rs180/40kg.

Millers were told that Sindh government had cleared subsidy of Rs9.30 per kg announced for the previous season. `Only a fraction of it might be pending,` Mr Rahu said.

Federal subsidy linked with growers` dues The `federal subsidy` is shared by federal and provincial governments on a 50-50 basis. Since federal government has not paid its share of Rs5.35 per kg out of the Rs10.70 per kg federal subsidy, Sindh government has not paid it either.Federal government has linked payment of subsidy with clearance of farmers` dues and commencement of crushing by Nov 30.

The payment has remained withheld amidst reports that millers did not abide by the conditions.

`We told millers they should take up their case for subsidy with federal government as this has nothing to do with fixing of sugar cane rate. I told millers that when they themselves had capped payment of sales tax on sugar at Rs6 per kg during the tenure of prime minister Shaukat Aziz, why are they clamouring now,` contended SAB vice president Mahmood Nawaz Shah.

Sindh government had fixed the cane procurement rate at Rs182/40kg for the 2017-18 season but it led to litigation in Sindh High Court (SHC) after millers refused to accept it. The millers did win subsidies from federal and Sindh governments and in the meantime both sides agreed to a consensus rate of Rs160/401(g in court, which linked payment of Rs22 differential with a verdict by the apex court in millers` identical petitions.

According to Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) vice president Nabi Bux Sathio, farmers support millers` demand for payment of subsidy although ethically millers are not entitled to it. `Since millers didn`t start crushing by Nov 30 in 2017-18 season and delayed it till January, theymorally should not be asking for this subsidy. They even suspended crushing last year,` he said.

Sathio argues that while millers insist on payment of Rs16bn under the head of export rebate, why do they forget that they have to clear liabilities of growers towards differential amount which continue to accumulate since 2014-15 season.

`In each season, millers questioned notified price but neither the SC nor the SHC ever set aside the notification, which remains intact. We agreed to consensual agreement in Sindh High Court for payment last year when court linked differential payment with apex court`s decision in identical cases,` he said.

If millers, he said, demand export rebate they must remember they had to pay billions of rupees towards differential amount of sugarcanerate oflastfourseasons,starting from 2014-15 till the last crushing season.

Differential amount of Rs10 is to be paid for three seasons and Rs22/40kg for 2017-18.

`If we assume that around 400 maunds of sugar cane was crushed in each season, then Rs52/401(g is to be paid to us accordingly in each year,` he said.

SCA president Kabool Kathian and general secretary Zahid Bhurgari pressed the point that farmers would not accept any rate lower than Rs200/40kg for sugar cane crop this year.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=21_11_2018_117_004

GROWERS REJECT WHEAT PROCUREMENT RATE OF RS 1300/MAUND
ZAHID BAIG | NOV 21ST, 2018 | LAHORE

Various organizations of growers snubbed the government for its announcement of wheat procurement on old rate of Rs 1300 per maund in the coming season and urged the government to fix the wheat support price afresh in line with the increase in input prices and inflation rate.

They also urged the government to immediately announce whether it is going to procure wheat during the next season and what would be the procurement target in presence of a stock of 60 million wheat bags in storages of the Punjab and Sindh food departments and with the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Company (PASSCO).

Punjab Water Council's Chairman Farooq Bajwa while talking to Business Recorder on Tuesday said that wheat support price was Rs 625 per maund in year 2009 when the dollar was of Rs60. The prices were increased to Rs 950 per maund due to struggle of farmers which were later increased to Rs 1000 per maund in 2011, Rs 1200 in 2012 and Rs 1300 per maund in 2013. He said that dollar worth was Rs90 in 2013 and now it had reached over Rs135 and being pitched at Rs150 in 2019.

He said wheat prices were stagnant for the last five years while value of Pakistani rupee had declined by 50 percent which means that the buying power of the growers had also decreased by half because of not allowing them any hike in their produce price. Similarly, he said during this period input prices had also increased by 50 percent adding further financial burden on the growers. He questioned that how slogan of a prosperous farmers could be materialized when they are not getting proper rate of their hard labour.

Bajwa said wheat was sown over 1,700,000 acres of land in Punjab alone and they did not know whether the government would buy their next produce or not. He also claimed that wheat support price is always acknowledged in government procurement only and price in the open market remains lower than that.

He was of the view that Pakistani wheat is 25 percent higher in gluten and protein than the US and European wheat and it should be given more prices that the international prices which were fixed keeping in view the quality of US grains. He was of the view that if the government wanted to remain self sufficient in wheat it should fix the wheat procurement price at Rs 1800 per maund.

Similar views were expressed by Sindh Abaadgaar Board President Majeed Nizamani who was also curious about what would be the procurement target of the provincial governments for the next wheat season.

Kissan Board Pakistan (KBP) Central Secretary Information Haji Muhammad Ramzan while talking to this scribe also regretted that the government was unable to give any procurement policy yet.

He also dubbed the Rs 1300 per maund rate as insufficient and said that it should be fixed at least at Rs 1500 per maund. He claimed that sowing of wheat would be reduced this year as the sugar mills were yet to start the crushing season due to which fields were not empty for the next sowing.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181121425497/

SUGARCANE CROP: SINDH GOVT ORDERS MILLS TO START CRUSHING BY MONTH-END
By Usman Hanif

Published: November 21, 2018

KARACHI:The Sindh government has ordered sugar millers to commence crushing by November 30, but it has not yet set a minimum sugarcane price to be paid to growers.

Chairing a meeting of the Sindh Sugarcane Board, Sindh Agriculture Minister Muhammad Ismail Rahoo said the government would soon resolve the price issue but for the time being it had decided that sugar mills should start sugarcane crushing before November 30.

“We will soon issue a notification for the sugarcane price,” he said.

The meeting, held at the Sindh Secretariat Karachi, was attended by Agriculture Secretary Agha Zaheeruddin, members of the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture Kabool Khatian and Nisar Hussain Khaskheli, Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) Zonal Committee Sindh Chairman Asim Ghani and sugarcane board members.

Growers wanted the provincial government to fix the price at
Rs200 per 40 kg keeping in view their expenses while the board suggested a price of Rs180 to Rs182.

The Agriculture Department of the provincial government put the per-acre cost estimate for the crop at about Rs100,000. However, the growers argued that inflation had gone higher and with that the peracre cost reached about Rs130,000. An acre of land gives approximately 650 maunds of sugarcane.

In the meantime, the Punjab government has set the sugarcane price at Rs180 per 40 kg and according to the previous record, the Sindh government has mostly fixed a price that is higher by Rs2.

Highlighting their concerns, the sugar mill owners pointed out that although the Sindh government had given them subsidy, the federal government had not yet provided the agreed subsidy on sugar exports in the last season, which was creating hurdles in the way of entire chain of their business. Sugarcane is one of the major crops of the country, which provides livelihood to millions of households.

In fiscal year 2016-17, the production of sugarcane rose to a record 73 million tons. Sugarcane crushing reached 71 million tons, resulting in production of seven million tons of sugar, according to the 2017 annual report of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA).

Besides sugar, sugarcane produces some byproducts such as bagasse which the sugar mills use to generate electricity. Sugar is mostly used in confectionaries. Despite being an important crop of the country, in every season the price issue remains a main sticking point. Growers complain that sugar mills have made a cartel to manipulate the prices.

Sugar mills also intentionally delay the crushing process so that the sugarcane is dried thus it weighs less but gives the same amount of sugar.

Last year, there were strikes and clashes between the growers and mill owners on the issue, said Khaskheli. “Growers burnt about 20% of their crop when they did not get the right price.”

Growers at the board meeting called for fixing the price according to the Sugarcane Act, which states that mills will not buy sugarcane from middlemen (who can manipulate the price and can easily dodge law), he said.

Sugar mills will not pay in cash, instead they will pay through cheques so that the process of payment remains transparent and if mill owners delay payments they will have to pay 15% interest, he said. “Previously, they have held up our payments for one to two years.”

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1851725/2-sugarcane-crop-sindh-govt-orders-mills-start-crushing-month-end/

COTTON IMPORTS VIA TORKHAM CROSSING ALLOWED BY ECC
Khaleeq Kiani Updated November 23, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Thursday allowed cotton imports from Afghanistan and Central Asian States (CAS) via Torkham border provided that all sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures were fulfilled.

The ECC meeting, presided over by Minister for Finance Asad Umar, also approved sale of 200,000 tonnes of wheat to the poultry industry as well as payment of Rs1.066 billion dues to the families of deceased employees of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM). The meeting deferred gas load management for winter months until the next meeting.

The import of cotton via Torkham — a major border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan — was allowed on the request of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma). The committee directed that all SPS regulations shall be abided during the import process. The textile importers would also have to produce a certificate from the National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO) for the commodity’s origin.

SPS measures — also know as quarantine measures — are border control regulations necessary to protect human, animal, and plant life or health.

ECC approves Rs1.06bn grant for PSM workers

For the long run, the ECC directed all relevant ministries to engage with the textile industry for establishment of a permanent quarantine facility for cotton imported via land route for which the Federal Board of Revenue’s (FBR) Customs Department had proposed a site as an alternate dry port.

The meeting was informed that the textile industry consumed up to 15 million bales per annum. However, local production has be declining over the years and stood no more than 11-12m bales. This shortage has resulted in the country becoming a net cotton importer of the commodity.

Another issue faced by the textile industry was the short- to medium-staple length of domestic cotton. This led to the import of long- and extra-long staple cotton for production of finer yarn counts for subsequent transformation into high value-added finished products. Import sources for Pakistani industry include Afghanistan and CAS since procuring the commodity from these countries was cheaper (due to land route) as compared to the United States and other countries.

Given the sensitivity of the issue, Prime Minister’s Adviser on Commerce, Textile and Industries Abdul Razak Dawood held an inter-ministerial meeting including all the stakeholders.

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) was of the view that cotton was a sensitive crop and attracted a variety of pests, thus required pest scouting from importing country. In this regard, fumigation was a must to counter such threats, the ministry stressed.

The Plant Quarantine Act allows cotton to be imported via sea route only since quarantine facilities are available at Karachi at present. However, for majority of cotton imports, Afghanistan was only a transit route for which pest scouting from CAS was also required to avoid major threat of new pests harming domestic cotton.

Last year, the Plant Protection Department (PPD) undertook many SPS measures. However, the said facility was not available at the Torkham border. Meanwhile, Afghanistan did not arrange the pest scouting visit of PPD to its cotton growing areas and could not develop an English-based template.

Aptma was of the view that quarantine rules were applicable to American Cotton only and were not required for Afghanistan or CAS cotton.

The MNFSR disagreed saying the origin of such cotton was also American.

Aptma believed the term American Cotton was defined on area basis and not on genetics basis. The textile body offered to undertake fumigation process at Torkham border. It further agreed to build such facilities at Torkham border either by its own resources or through the Export Development Fund (EDF).

The ECC, after discussions, concluded that cotton has to be imported from Afghanistan and CAS for being economical and alternate choice to meet the shortage but this should be subject to fumigation at Torkham to abide by all protections required under the law and rules.

Grant for PSM

The ECC — in consideration of a proposal from the Ministry of Industries and Production — approved a grant of Rs1.066bn for payment of outstanding dues (provident fund, gratuity, and payroll dues) to the families of deceased PSM employees.

The meeting did not take up the issue of similar other PSM liabilities of Rs67bn, including Rs52bn provident fund and Rs15bn gratuity. The government has not been able to consider a plan for revival of the PSM in three months in office even though it has decided not to privatise it.

The ECC also considered a report on value chain of sugar prepared by the Secretary MNFSR. It did not agree to a proposal from some participants for allowing maximum sugar exports even if it required some financial support. Minister for Railways Shaikh Rasheed Ahmed opined this would create a scam when resultantly domestic prices go up. He said the product was available at below Rs60per kg in the market and a price increase due to export amid rising inflation caused by gas and power rates would be difficult to digest.

The ECC took note of the issue of pending payments to sugarcane growers as well as difficulties faced by the millers in view of surplus stocks, possibility of their export and redressal of liquidity issues and directed Minister for National Food Security Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan and Mr Dawood to hold meetings with the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association and resolve these issues.

The ECC also approved sale of 200,000 tonnes of wheat from the surplus stocks available with Passco to Poultry Association of Pakistan (PPA) at the rate of Rs1,300 per tonne — the official procurement rate for last year crop. The government has already allowed 0.5m tonnes of wheat export with $115 per tonnes freight subsidy and set Rs1,350 per tonne procurement price for next year crop.

Published in Dawn, November 23rd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1447156/cotton-imports-via-torkham-crossing-allowed-by-ecc

ILL-EQUIPPED FOOD AUTHORITY TO SET UP TWO MOBILE TESTING LABS

By Our Staff Reporter | 11/24/2018 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: The death of two minor boys in a suspected food poisoning incident has exposed the performance of the Sindh Food Authority (SFA) and also served as a wake-up call for the provincial government, which is now aiming to reorganise the ill-equipped regulatory body, it emerged on Friday.
Officials said that the SFA, which does not have its own laboratory, had decided to prepare two mobile labs with all modern facilities and technology to meet the immediate requirements.

They said that a proposal to build a state-of-art laboratory was alreadyinplanningphase.

`We are working to build two mobile laboratories which can help meet the current requirements of testing and all other formalities,` said SFA director (operations) Abrar Sheikh.

Recently, the SFA held various meetings that focused on seriousloopholes, lack of resources and shortage of manpower.

Operations to be expanded to Larkana While the authority is ready to hire technical people, it also decided to expand its operation to Larkana division within the next few months.

`During this fiscal year [ending June 2019] we will be expanding our operations to Larkana division and gradually move to other Sindh cities like Hyderabad, Sukkur and Nawabshah,` Mr Shaikh added.

Sindh Food Minister Hari Ram Kishori Lal directed the SFA man-agement to complete all legal formalities within shortest possible time.

A top official said that after a series of meetings and coordination between the institutions concerned, the authority was hopeful to start recruiting required number of professionals from next month.

50 food security officers to be appointed Another major decision to revamp the authority is about adding qualified human resources and the officials hope the process would begin in the next few weeks.`The good thing is that now we are going to hll the positions for our required manpower,` SFA director general Amjed Leghari told Dawn. `We have received the government`s nod and soon we will be looking for young university graduates having degree in food sciences. They will be recruited as food security officers in the first phase for our operations in Karachi.

When asked about the number of such positions sanctioned by the government in the first phase, Mr Leghari said: `It would not be less than 50 officers in the first phase and the number can even be higher than this [50].

The SFA chief said after the tragic incident, the authority had completed different tasks on a warfooting.

`We have finalised rules and regulations for the functioning of the authority,` said Mr Leghari.

`We have opted [for] the laws and rules of the federal government to make it compatible with authorities in other provinces and keep the rules at par with federal standards, which apply [to] other businesses. It`s been done to facilitate the business owners.

DCs to facilitate SFA`s teams in Karachi He said in a recent meeting with the Karachi commissioner, deputy commissioners posted in different districts of the city were also assigned the job to facilitate the authority`s team during their visits/raids on restaurants and eateries within their remit.

`Once the organisational structuring is done for Karachi we would move to other cities and districts of the province. The change and effective performance of the authority would be visible to everyone very soon,` Mr Leghari claimed.

The SFA was made functional in April this year but it has so far been working in Karachi alone with an aim to gradually expand its domain to other districts.

A board of governors headed by the food minister was also established for the authority. The health and food secretaries are the BoG`s vicechairman and convener, respectively.

Other members of the board include provincial secretaries of the culture, agriculture, social welfare, local government and public health engineering departments. Three nominated members of the Sindh Assembly and a representative of the chamber of commerce and industry are also part of the BoG.

Moreover, deputy commissioners posted in different districts of the province would also be members of the board.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=24_11_2018_115_003

ENGRO FOODS INKS MOU WITH IFC FOR DAIRY MARKET DEVELOPMENT
KARACHI: Engro Foods Limited, core purpose is to provide better nutrition to Pakistan, a good living to farmers, now and for generations to come. In lieu of the same spirit, EFL joined hands with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the prestigious World Bank (WB). The two corporate giants signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Dairy Market Development project in Pakistan earlier this month at the Engro Foods Limited Head Office in Karachi. The MoU was signed by Ali Ahmed Khan Managing Director, EFL and by Tania Lozansky, Senior Manager Advisory Manufacturing Agri business & Services, IFC.

The focal purpose of the memorandum was to initiate joint efforts to unlock the potential and strengthen the development of Pakistan’s dairy industry. Both the organization will work together to promote sustainable living for farmers and reduce poverty by enabling dairy farmer empowerment. The MoU promises to facilitate the farmer and other stakeholder access to knowledge, technology and financing and to empower women along dairy value chains.

Speaking at the occasion Ali Ahmed Khan, Managing Director Engro Foods Limited said, “Engro Foods purpose to provide better nutrition to Pakistan and a good living to our farmers remains the core of every initiative we undertake. We work with 250,000+ dairy farmers and have disseminated over 1 million trainings on best dairy farming practices. Our farmers have received Rs. 51 billion as direct incomes from Engro Foods since 2005. We have in the past and we will continue to play our role in creating a complete eco system to facilitate sustainable living for farmers through our dairy development programs. The signing of this agreement with IFC shows our commitment to strengthen the dairy sector of Pakistan.”

On behalf of IFC, Tania Lozansky, Senior Manager for Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Services, said “Dairy is a priority sector for IFC’s investment and advisory services globally as it has a significant positive impact on nutrition.—PR

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/24/17-page/750886-news.html

PFA destroys 1500kg germ infested meat
RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) destroyed 1500kg germs infested meat at Punjab Agriculture & Meat Company’s furnace on Friday and lodged FIRs against the butchers. PFA banned slaughtering of animals in Bakar Mandi area where it had discarded 60,000kg substandard meat during past two months

PFA vigilant teams also sealed eight canteens of different hospitals to ensure provision of healthy food to the visitors.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/24/5-page/750786-news.html

Exporter suggests capturing Malaysian kinnow market
By APP

Published: November 24, 2018

KARACHI:Kinnow exporters of the country have been advised to accelerate the export of citrus fruit to Malaysia as a sizable percentage of the Chinese-origin population is preparing for the New Year festival which is celebrated on February 5.

Traditionally, the Chinese present kinnow to each other during the New Year season as a holy fruit and it is the right time to market the fruit popular among the Chinese, who constitute almost 40% of the population of Malaysia, said horticulturist and fruit exporter Ahmed Jawad while talking to APP.

He was hopeful that prospects of trade would improve following Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to Malaysia. “Although citrus exports to Malaysia are already covered under a preferential trade agreement, the room for further growth in this market always exists,” suggested Jawad.

He was of the view that kinnow could be marketed in Malaysia profitably as the fruit enjoyed had a good demand due to its best quality. There is also sufficient cargo space for Malaysia while high purchasing power of consumers and value addition due to better marketing techniques are the factors that go in favour of Pakistan.

Jawad said it was important to avail themselves of the opportunity in the coming season, which would commence on December 1.

Pakistan is likely to set an export target of 270,000 tons whereas total production in the current season is expected to be around 2.2 million tons.

He emphasised that besides seeking more market space in Malaysia, concerted efforts were required to search for markets in Iran and Russia.

"Iran is a big market for Pakistani kinnow, however, due to non-issuance of import permit by the government of Iran, there has been no export of kinnow for the past few years."

The horticulturalist said authorities needed to take up the issue with the Iranian commerce ministry because the neighbouring country appeared to be interested in resuming kinnow imports from Pakistan.

Responding to a query, Jawad said citrus exports to China held a tremendous potential as special space had been given by the Chinese government under the Belt and Road Initiative.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1853180/2-exporter-suggests-capturing-malaysian-kinnow-market/

KP SUGARCANE GROWERS WARN TO PROTEST AGAINST DELAY IN CRUSHING SEASON

RECORDER REPORT | NOV 25TH, 2018 | PESHAWAR

Sugarcane growers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have warned that they will stage protest outside provincial assembly building in Peshawar and block main Indus highway on November 29, if the crushing season was not start forthwith in the province.

Speaking a news conference at Peshawar Press Club here, the Kissan Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Rizwanullah Khan said that crushing season is normally started from October 15 under the relevant sugarcane Act, which was amended to extend the crushing time to November 1. But, he said the ongoing talks between government and millers has further delaying the crushing season, which is an attempt to start the process by December. However, he feared that the cold response of millers to start the process will waste cultivation time of wheat crop in the province. So, he demanded fixation of per 40kg price of sugarcane at Rs 250 and commencement of crushing season without delay.

Flanked by Kissan Board provincial senior vice president, Haji Abdul Akbar Khan, general secretary Abdul Samad, former provincial minister Hafiz Hashmat Khan, Arbab Jamil, and others, Rizwan said that most of the problems being faced by the farmers were due to absence of agricultural policy in province.

Rizwan said that the price of sugarcane was fixed at Rs 180 per 40kg during the last season, which was insufficient to meet the increasing cost of production and others expenses. He also said that the government announced the support price of sugarcane was not implemented with letter and spirit in the province. He informed the millers in DI Khan procured the sugarcane at price of Rs 140 and Rs 150 per mound from the growers, which were yet not payout arrears to growers. He said millers were exploited the poor farmers due lack of any agriculture policy. Similarly, he said the government fixed price was not implemented in Mardan and parts of the province. He claimed the cost of sugarcane production remained up to Rs 220 per 40kg during last year, due to which the farmers had to face a loss of Rs 57 per 40kg.

He suggested fixation of uniform commission for gur, which could be acceptable to growers. He said that the gur commission agents should be bound to avoid imposing additional charges against the fixed commission. Rizwan said that sugarcane was a cash crop of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and being cultivated on around 293,450 acres in different districts, including Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda and Nowshera.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181125426336/
PFA SEALS ILLEGAL SLAUGHTERHOUSE IN BAKAR MANDI

By Our Correspondent Published: November 25, 2018
LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has seized over 1,500 kilogrammes of unwholesome meat and registered an FIR against the butchers involved in illegal slaughtering of the animals.

The PFA food safety team and vigilance cell officials sealed an illegal slaughterhouse in Bakar Mandi area and seized a huge quantity of inferior quality meat of emaciated animals, which was later burnt in the furnace of Punjab Agriculture and Meat Company.

On the direction of PFA Director General Captain (retd) Muhammad Usman, PFA officials registered a case with police, however, the accused involved in this heinous business managed to escape from the scene.

Usman said substandard and inferior quality meat was supplied to the local shops located in the surrounding areas of Lahore after slaughtering emaciated animals. He said the raiding team also found the slaughterhouse in pretty unhygienic condition. An abundance of creepy crawlies and insects, the presence of cats and a heap of offal and filth of animals were found there. He highlighted that the authority was strictly monitoring these areas which fall into the red zone category owing to received repeated complaints.

The authority had also declared Bakar Mandi area as the red zone due to the presence of illegal slaughterhouses. As many as 60,000 kilogrammes of substandard meat was discarded by the PFA in the last two months. The provincial food watchdog had accelerated crackdown against the butchers who were running an illegal slaughterhouse.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, a citizen Muhammad Asif said butchers were openly doing illegal slaughtering in Township area but neither the PFA nor the livestock department took any action against these illegal practices. He indicated that butchers were slaughtering animals at various points on main Abubakar Road near Barkat Chowk and Block-6 Chowk, especially on Sundays.

He said illegal slaughtering on the roadside was a reason behind the spread of different diseases in the areas as the butchers hardly ensure cleanliness of the space after slaughtering the animals. He demanded the food watchdog and the government agencies concerned to look into this issue as local of the area had complained on numerous times but in vain.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1853978/1-pfa-seals-illegal-slaughterhouse-bakar-mandi/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 12TH TO NOVEMBER 18TH 2018
EFFORTS ON TO UPLIFT LIVESTOCK, AGRICULTURE SECTORS IN BALOCHISTAN
Published on – November 14, 2018 – 1:01 am

By APP

QUETTA: Adviser to Chief Minister Balochistan for Livestock, Mitha Khan Kakar on Monday said that provincial government was taking all possible measures to ensure development of livestock and agriculture sectors.

Talking to APP, he said the livestock and agriculture departments were being affected by prolong existence of drought in the province which was also creating unemployment in the respective areas of Balochistan.

“Present government is paying special attention to all departments to ensure their progress for providing jobs to educated youth and provision of facilities to masses in the province”, he added.

He said livestock and agriculture were backbone of the economy, saying that people could get benefits from development of these departments in the area.

“Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) is busy to provide food and other edible items to drought affected areas, on the special directives of Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Jam Kamal Khan in order to serve needy people in the area”, he mentioned.

He also demanded federal government to provide special grant to the provincial government for livestock and agricultural sectors to improve them.

https://www.bexpress.com.pk/2018/11/efforts-on-to-uplift-livestock-agriculture-sectors-in-balochistan/

CHINA OFFERS TO SET UP DISEASE-FREE CATTLE ZONES IN PAKISTAN
By Zafar Bhutta

Published: November 13, 2018

ISLAMABAD: China has offered to set up foot and mouth disease-free zones in Pakistan in a bid to provide market access for the export of meat and its products.

At present, there is no direct access for Pakistani meat and meat products to the Chinese market due to strict health and safety standards. However, the Middle East is a big market for such products from Pakistan.

The foot and mouth disease proves fatal for the cattle and sheep that can cause a severe loss to the economy. The Ministry of National Food Security and Research is already working in collaboration with provincial governments to eradicate the disease in Pakistan. For that purpose, technical support is also being provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations.

Pakistan's meat exports are not encouraging as exporters mainly target Middle Eastern markets. Shipments of meat and meat preparation to overseas markets increased just 2.26% to $225.646 million in financial year 2017-18.

Kashif Akram, an exporter of meat and meat products, told The Express Tribune that China had not given Pakistani exporters direct access to its market because of its health and safety standards. He pointed out that different agreements were signed by previous governments, but no serious attention was paid to the matter. However, he revealed that the exporters were sending meat to China via Vietnam.

He emphasised that Pakistani exporters were meeting the health and safety standards and were exporting meat to markets of Middle Eastern countries. He suggested that as China was a big market, Pakistan could export an equal volume to it as that being exported to the Middle East at present.

According to officials, a Pakistani delegation is currently on a trip to China and it is expected to make some progress on getting access to the Chinese market. The Chinese side has already indicated its intention to provide market access for the export of meat and its products from Pakistan by establishing foot and mouth disease-free zones.

Provincial governments have endorsed China's plan of setting up disease-free zones as it will provide an opportunity to tap a huge export market.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 13th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1845956/2-china-offers-set-disease-free-cattle-zones-pakistan/

HEAT TOLERANT COTTON, WHEAT VARIETIES: XINJIANG AGRICULTURE VARSITY, UAF TO WORK ON JOINT PROJECTS
RECORDER REPORT | NOV 14TH, 2018 | FAISALABAD

Xinjiang Agriculture University China and University of Agriculture Faisalabad have agreed to work jointly on the projects of heat tolerant cotton and wheat varieties. It was discussed at a meeting of UAF Vice Chancellor Dr Zafar Iqbal Randhawa and Chinese delegation led by Vice Dean Faculty of Agriculture Xinjiang Agriculture University Dr Chen Quanjia. UAF Registrar Muhammad Hussain, Vice Chairman UAF Confucius Institute Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Chatha, Treasurer Tariq Saeed, Director Research Dr Zahir Ahmad Zahir. Director External Linkage Dr Rahseed Ahmad, Plant Breeding and Genetics Chairman Dr Hafeez Sadaqat, Dr Fahad Rasul and Chinese team including Confucius Institute Dean Dr Yang Zhijiang, Dr Geng Hongwie, Dr Sheng Jiafond and others notables attended the meeting.

It was agreed to identify the genes for heat tolerant and breeding of the new verities. Talking to delegation, Dr Zafar Iqbal said that under the Confucius Institute, UAF, as many as 7,000 students had learned the Chinese language.

He added Pakistan-China agriculture ties were being more strengthened that will help address the issue of poverty alleviation and productivity enhancement. He suggested including skilled manpower and technician training section in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor as a move towards prosperity.

He said that Alumni club of China will be established and a grant conference with Chinese counterparts will be held that will improve the agriculture situation and help learn from each other experiences.

Dr Yang said that Confucius Institute UAF is used as its headquarter and universities including Karakoram International University, GC University Lahore, UET Lahore, Government College Women University are teaching Chinese under the headquarter. He said that CI is not a place of language learning but also increases the people-to-people contacts between the both countries and it will help the boost different spectrum including trade, education, and other bilateral relations.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181114423530/

21PC OF TARGET SET FOR AGRICULTURE TAX COLLECTION ACHIEVED LAST YEAR, PA TOLD
Tahir Siddiqui November 15, 2018

KARACHI: Admitting that the agriculture tax collection was not very efficient in the province, Minister for Revenue Makhdoom Mehboob Zaman told the Sindh Assembly on Wednesday that the provincial government could recover only 21 per cent of the target of agriculture tax during the last fiscal year.

He was replying to questions of the opposition members during the Question Hour in the assembly.

The minister said the system for agriculture tax collection was not very efficient, but, he added, the same collection system was being practised in other provinces also. “We do face difficulties in tax collection, but there is considerable improvement than in the past. We are taking all possible measures to get the desired result,” he added.

He informed the house that the provincial revenue department remained unable to achieve even half of the Rs1 billion target set by the government for 2017-18 as only a little over Rs211 million was recovered from 23 districts of the province, except districts in Karachi.

When asked by an opposition member, Mr Zaman said the recovery of 2016-17 was more than last fiscal year’s as more than Rs220m had been recovered then.

He explained that there were certain variations in the assessment of agriculture tax which fluctuated the tax rate such as quantity and quality of crops.

MPA Arif Mustafa Jatoi of the Grand Democratic Alliance asked whether everybody, who was required to pay agriculture tax, was paying it.

The minister said that according to the prevailing tax collection system, the department collected tax on identification of mukhtiarkars.

Expressing dissatisfaction on the current agriculture tax collection, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan parliamentary leader Kanwar Naveed Jameel said that it was not actually agriculture tax but a sort of land tax.

"Just a nominal tax is being collected owing to this poor system. When will the government make its system effective and efficient just like the Federal Board of Revenue?" he asked, adding that the tax collection figures were merely eyewash.

The provincial revenue minister conceded that the current collection system was less efficient and vowed to improve it further.

The MQM leader asked the minister to apprise the actual number of lands of which that amount was recovered.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Bilal Ahmed also questioned the performance of the department asking that how the target of Rs2bn would be achieved this year as the government had failed to attain last year's target of Rs1bn.

Replying to another question, the minister said that over 1.2 million acres of land had been lost to sea intrusion in Sujawal, Thatta and Badin districts during the past 10 years.

The minister informed the lawmakers that a coastal highway was being developed to halt the intrusion, and hoped that it would be enough to get the desired result.

Published in Dawn, November 15th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1445597/21pc-of-target-set-for-agriculture-tax-collection-achieved-last-year-pa-told

CATTLE BREEDERS STRESS USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY TO MEET GROWING MEAT, MILK DEMAND
The Newspaper's Staff CorrespondentNovember 15, 2018

HYDERABAD: Cattle breeders, dairy farmers and livestock owners have underscored the need for exploiting potential of livestock sector by preserving indigenous breeds of buffaloes, goats and cows and advocated adaptation of modern technology to meet growing demand for meat and milk.

They said that cattle colonies were plagued by serious sanitation issues and dairy farmers had to face administrative action for increasing price of milk by a few rupees to meet their cost of production. Different breeds of cattle were on the verge of extinction due to lack of education, they cautioned.

They were speaking at 'farmers day' programme held at Sindh directorate of livestock here on Wednesday.

Sindh Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Abdul Bari Pitafi, who presided over the programme, said that his department was going to organise a grand cattle and livestock show in Hyderabad in February 2019.

The show would help develop linkage between farmers and corporate sector so that farmers could get experts' services and clientele, he said.

He said that farmers would bring to the show all existing rare indigenous breeds of Sindh like Red Sindhi and Kankraj cows, Kundi buffalo, Kamori and Pateri goat, Thari cow and bull. Data on different breeds, farmers' particulars, fodder, seed of fodder, corporate sector services, vaccination and medical service providers would also be collected, he said. He said that that Livestock Breeding Services Authority had been formed under The Sindh Livestock Breeding Act, 2016, and a farmers' association would be formed to ensure growth and development of livestock sector on scientific lines. "Cattle colonies face water shortage issue. How can farmers be encouraged to shift there if there is no water," he conceded.

DG Livestock Abdul Qadir said that Sindh would hopefully come close to Punjab's livestock sector in terms of performance if it could not outdo it.

Akbar Dars, a progressive farmer, said that experimental farm of Thari breed on 4,500 acres in Nabisar faced serious issues. Work on three watercourses for supplying water to the farm had been abandoned after excavation work of desalination plant for Thar coal project, he said.

Well-known dairy farmer Jamil Memon, a recipient of Tamgha-i-Imtiaz, demanded that Russian vaccine against foot and mouth disease be developed in Sindh on cost-sharing basis.

He said that Punjab livestock department had bought the Russian drug which worked better than France's for Rs2.5bn for eight districts, ridding them of the disease.

The vaccine could be developed on an island which existed in Sindh near Keti Bandar, he said.

He said that he had extracted 28 litres milk from Cholistan breed, followed by Red Sindhi and Sahiwal breeds and proposed that Red Sindhi breed should be promoted through cross breeding with artificial insemination.

Shakir Gujjar of Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association called for adaptation of modern technology to meet the ever-growing demand for meat and milk. Genetic improvement had become essential now for promoting different and better breeds, he said.

Dairy farmers and cattle breeders including Dr Hadi Bux Jatoi, Shafi Mohammad Pitafi, Sikandar Nagori, Abdul Ghani Nizamani and others complained that the department did not care to resolve their issues. There was no check on slaughtering of calf, they said.

Livestock Secretary Aijaz Mahesar and head of Sindh Institute of Animals Health Nazir Kalhoro also spoke at the programme.

Published in Dawn, November 15th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1445589/cattle-breeders-stress-use-of-new-technology-to-meet-growing-meat-milk-demand

CONCERN OVER RAW COTTON IMPORT
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 16, 2018

LAHORE: Claiming that textile mills are importing raw cotton through Torkham and Wagha borders, farmers have opposed the import terming it against the law and detrimental to local cotton growers' as well as national interests.

"At least 300 trucks carrying 50,000 tons of cotton are waiting at Torkham borders for a green signal from the Plant Protection Department (DPP) and National Food Security & Research Ministry," Pakistan Kisan Ittehad President Khalid Mahmood Khokhar said here on Thursday.

He said if allowed the import would not only depress local cotton prices to the disadvantage of growers but might also hurt the indigenous crop because the country had no fumigation facilities at borders to make the import pest free.

Quoting the law that governs import of cotton, he said the import was also illegal for raw cotton could only be imported with prior permission of the DPP and taking phyto-sanitary measures complying with sub Rule 3 of Rule 28 of Plant Protection Quarantine Act 1967.

The rule also disallows cotton import other than Karachi sea port, where quarantine and fumigation facilities were available.

The PKI chief alleged that textile millers were pressurizing the DPP to set aside the Quarantine Act and issue cotton consignment release orders to Customs authorities.

He hinted at launching a protest drive if the government allowed the cotton import.He said that raw cotton import without fumigation could introduce new pests and diseases in the country and ultimately hurt the local cotton crop.

Published in Dawn, November 16th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1445895/concern-over-raw-cotton-import

AGRICULTURE ASSOCIATION: FARMERS THREATEN PROTEST OVER COTTON IMPORT VIA LAND ROUTE
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 16, 2018

LAHORE:Pakistan Kissan Ittehad President Khalid Khokhar has threatened to initiate a series of protests if the concerned authorities fail to protect the interests of local farmers.

He said that the local agriculture and cotton crop needs to be protected by taking decisions in accordance with the law. "Importing cotton through land route is forbidden according to Plant Quarantine rules 1967 and should not be permitted through Wagha or Torkham boarders," Khokhar remarked.

He accused the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) of intending to import cotton from Torkham and Wagha borders at lower prices, which would result in a drop in cotton prices in the country and hurt the local cotton growers.

"Some 200-300 trucks carrying 50,000 metric tons of cotton are waiting at Torkham boarder for green signal from the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) and Ministry of National Food Security and Research," he said.

Khokhar was of the view that raw cotton could only be imported by receiving prior permission of DPP and taking phytosanitary measures complying with sub rule 3 of rule 28 of Plant Protection Quarantine Act 1967, which states that cotton can only be imported with prior special permission of DPP through sea routes and has to be fumigated at the port of entry.

"Aptma is pressurising the DPP to set aside the quarantine act and issue release order to customs authorities," he said.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 16th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1848146/2-agriculture-association-farmers-threaten-protest-cotton-import-via-land-route/

MILLERS IN SINDH AWAIT WHEAT ISSUANCE
Aamir Shafaat Khan November 17, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government has fixed the wheat sale price of Rs3,250 per 100 kg (polypropylene bag) and Rs3,315 (jute bag) but has not yet started issuing wheat to the flour millers.

Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) Sindh Zone Chairman Mohammad Jawed Yousuf told Dawn that the provincial cabinet had announced the new price four days back but the Food Department is reluctant in releasing wheat.

"I have talked to Secretary Food Rashid Khan on Friday for immediate release of wheat but he said he will provide the grain after receiving minutes of the cabinet meeting, which are awaited yet," FPMA chief said.

He said that Punjab had already fixed the issue price of wheat at Rs3,250 for both polypropylene and jute bags one and a half months ago and millers are getting wheat.

Jawed said he could not understand the reason of delay in releasing wheat this year. He recalled that Sindh government last year had fixed the issue price in August and started releasing wheat in early September. Sindh has 1.7 million tonnes of wheat left from current crop and last year's unsold stocks.

Millers are mainly procuring Punjab wheat available in the open market at Rs3,515 per 100 kg bag, which was Rs3,350 a month back.

The price of flour number 2.5 had already been raised to Rs38 per kg from Rs37 last month followed by the price of fine flour and maida (super fine flour) to Rs40 from Rs39 per kg.

"We have decided to hold any further price hike of flour varieties in a hope to get wheat from the Sindh government very soon," he said that 20-25 mills in Karachi out of the total 90 have stopped their operations, while a number of mills have slowed down wheat grinding capacity by at least 50 per cent due to high price and drying up of wheat stocks in the open market.

"Flour is coming to Karachi from Punjab in higher quantities," he claimed.

Published in Dawn, November 17th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1446155/millers-in-sindh-await-wheat-issuance

SINDH ASSEMBLY ASKS CENTRE TO ABOLISH DEEP-SEA FISHING POLICY
Hasan MansoorUpdated November 17, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly on Friday called upon the federal government to abolish the deep-sea fishing licensing policy 2018, which it said was in violation of the Constitution and encroachment on the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of fishermen of the province.

A resolution to this effect was moved by Pakistan Peoples Party's Saleem Baloch and Liaquat Askani and was passed with a majority vote.

The opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan supported the resolution, but the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Grand Democratic Alliance opposed it.

While the MQM-P backs the PPP resolution against the 2018 policy, the PTI and GDA oppose it

The resolution reads: "This house resolves and recommends to the government of Sindh to approach the federal government to withdraw and abolish its Deep Sea Fishing Licensing Policy 2018, as it is a violation of the Constitution following the [passage of the] 18th Amendment."

It further said that the fishing policy was an encroachment on the livelihood of estimated 1.6 million poor fishermen of Sindh and Balochistan and "an open disregard to the assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) that more than 72 per cent of the fish stock in coastal areas of Pakistan has already declined".

Foreign companies using lethal nets
Mr Baloch said Islamabad had issued licences for deep-sea fishing to numerous foreign companies, including Chinese and Korean, which were using lethal nets and hunting even fish seeds during trawling. "By doing this they are actually decimating fish species from our sea at the cost of our fishermen who are suffering a great deal."

He said the licensing policy adopted by the federal government had caused grave negative impacts on the fishermen of Sindh. "I appeal to those who [talk of a] new Pakistan that they should not deprive the livelihood of the fishermen of the old Pakistan."

Fisheries Minister Bari Pitafi said the federal government had passed an act in 1975 which defined zoning of the sea, according to which Sindh was authorised to take care of the area up to 12 nautical miles; from there to 20 nautical miles was termed the buffer zone while from that point up to 200 nautical miles was handed to the federal government.

He said the federal government had issued licences to various companies in the past decades, which caused grave impact to overall fishing for local population.

Referring to a 2016 survey carried out by the FAO that more than 70pc of fish stock across the coastline of Pakistan had depleted, he said the foreign companies involved in the business would even scoop up the seeds as the survey revealed.

The fisheries minister said after devolution of the fisheries sector following the 18th Amendment, the authority to issue trawling licences should rest with the Sindh government.

He added that the past PML-N government had drafted and got passed the 2018 law in April without taking the Sindh government into confidence.

Mr Pitafi said the 2018 law had been designed on the outlines of the 1975 Act, which reiterated the Zone-3 (from 20 to 200 nautical miles) would be controlled by the federal government.

Fresh policy through legislation sought

He said the PTI, which was in the opposition then, had also opposed the law, which he said was designed only to harm the people of Sindh.

He said a number of marine species were on the verge of extinction while some species had completely vanished.

The minister appealed to the PTI government to review the existing licensing policy and rectify it through fresh legislation.

He said the waters where the federal government had its claim and control were constitutionally in the jurisdiction of Sindh.

Giving an alternative solution, the Sindh minister said both the Sindh and the federal governments should jointly issue such licences and for that local fishing community should be given preference.

He said it would be hugely difficult to revive the depleted fish stock as it took five decades for a country like Canada to restore its declined marine life.

He also demanded that the fishermen of Sindh should not be stopped from fishing in Balochistan.

PTI’s Khurram Sher Zaman opposed the resolution saying how the entire territorial waters could be given to the Sindh government.

He said Sindh had its jurisdiction in the sea up to 20 nautical miles and then began the jurisdiction of Islamabad.

“The 18th Amendment does not say that the entire sea on the Sindh coastline belongs to Sindh,” he said, asking the mover to change wording of the resolution.

Issue would be resolved in CCI

MQM-P's Mohammad Hussain said it was a good resolution. However, he said the 18th Amendment was passed in 2010 and such "violations" of the landmark legislation continued for the past eight years. He asked why the issue was not raised in the meetings of the Council of Common Interests (CCI).

He demanded that the Sindh government write a letter to the federal government asking it to call an urgent meeting of the CCI to discuss the issue.

"We have passed scores of resolutions in the past, which helped us a little. This issue would be resolved in the CCI meetings."

Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani put the resolution before the house, which passed it by majority.

The members of the PTI and the GDA opposed the resolution.

Calling-attention notices

Replying to a calling-attention notice by PTI's Shaharyar Mahar, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said that more than four armed men were arrested in Ghotki and weapons and ammunition were recovered from them.

He said Punjab's Chhotoo gang was involved in crimes in the district bordering Sindh, but the situation had improved.

Mr Mahar had said his party's activists had been arrested and kidnapped from the district.

Malik Shahzad spoke over water shortages in Baldia Town, which had made life miserable for the area people.

Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani said the situation would improve after completion of some ongoing schemes in the area. He said West district was hooked to the Hub Dam which was completely dried up at present.

Waseem Qureshi spoke over a similar problem in North Karachi and said that riots over water supply were making the situation graver.

Minister Ghani requested the opposition benches to help the government in improving such facilities in the province.

Later, Mr Qureshi withdrew his adjournment motion regarding a better ambulance service in Sindh after the LG minister assured him that the government was already working on the issue.

The scheduled debate on water shortages in parts of Sindh was deferred till Thursday as the assembly secretariat received similar motions from other members of the house.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1446021/sindh-assembly-asks-centre-to-abolish-deep-sea-fishing-policy

TORKHAM BORDER: APTMA URGES GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE ‘RELEASE’ OF COTTON-LADEN TRUCKS
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN | NOV 18TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) is reportedly pressing federal government for “release” of more than 100 trucks loaded with imported raw cotton at Torkham border from Afghanistan and Central Asian States (CAS), well-informed sources told Business Recorder. This issue was discussed a couple of days ago in the Textile Division, which was attended by the officials of Textile Division, Ministry of National Food Security and Research and Aptma representatives.

The Department of Plant Protection (DPP), an arm of Ministry of National Food Security and Research, has also pleaded that raw cotton loaded in the trucks is American cotton, import of which is not allowed through the Afghan border. However, APTMA maintains that under the rules American cotton has been defined as 2(b) ie all cotton produced in part of western hemisphere (North, South and Central America and adjoining Islands).

The Import Policy Order (IPO) 2016 states that the terms of the border trade agreement will apply in such cases. The border trade agreement with Afghanistan states that the phytosanitary requirements as notified by FAO will apply. The FAO notified requirements do not limit import at only Karachi although they do require an import permit to be obtained.

Aptma has requested that the terms and conditions for import from Afghanistan and CAS may be amended to allow traditional trade with these countries to continue for this season at least. The Association has pleaded that it is not possible to route this cotton via Karachi and plant protection will have to develop facilities and procedures at Torkham which will require time.

The Association further stated that the matter is not only of a commercial nature but could also have serious consequences on our foreign relations as the Afghans have blocked our exports to CAS and Afghanistan pending resolution of the matter.

The government has been requested that current consignments stuck at the border maybe released through an executive order and plant protection department be instructed to allow the trucks passage. Previously, the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet had allowed release of 180 trucks of raw cotton stuck at Torkham boarder as one time permission, but APTMA members have repeated their plea and again put pressure on the government to release more than 100 trucks like in the past. The sources said, after detailed discussion, the meeting decided to prepare a joint summary for the ECC so that raw cotton trucks are allowed to enter into Pakistan after paying duties.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181118424825/

PFA SEALS 490 FACTORIES ACROSS PUNJAB
Our Correspondent

November 18, 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) during its snack industry checking drive has sealed 490 factories across Punjab.

PFA Director General Capt (R) Muhammad Usman said 918 snack factories were working under different names in Punjab among 46 snack production units sealed.

He said the units were sealed on the charges of wrong and fake labeling on their products, for using rancid oil, for not taking preventive measures to control the pests and over failure to maintain hygiene working environment.

The DG said authority has punished 88 snack manufacturing units with heavy fine tickets over non-compliance with the PFA's instructions.

As many as 280 food business operators were served with warning notices for improvement.

Usman said PFA teams have discarded 2,300 packets of snacks (including nimko, papar and salanty) and around 500 litres expired cooking oil besides of rancid oil.

He said PFA was training the snack industry to ensure the manufacturing of snacks in hygiene conditions and as per the SOPs of the provincial food regulatory body.

He has appealed parents to prefer home-made food for their children instead of junk food and store-bought food items.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/395146-pfa-seals-490-factories-across-punjab

FARMERS FAIL TO SOW PULSES AFTER UNCERTAIN FLOW OF INDUS LEAVES THEM DRY
Jan Khaskheli

November 18, 2018

HYDERABAD: It is for the first time during recent years that uncertain flow of the mighty Indus River has disrupted crop cultivation of mainly pulses (legumes), wheat, coriander and other short-period crops in the catchment areas.

Reports gathered from catchment area farmers residing in the surroundings of Unarpur and Budhapur show that masoor (split orange lentil) was cultivated on 20,000-25000 acres till a few years back. However, this year, hardly 10 percent of the land has been sown with this lentil, which has disappointed farmers.

Orange lentil is a winter crop. Farmers cultivate orange lentil mostly during November 15 to early December. It is worth noting that currently, only farmers in the catchment area of the river cultivate pulses. Farmers in the canal areas have changed their priority crops and mostly produce major crops.

Orange lentil is considered lucrative among pulse varieties. Its average per acre yield is around 25-30 maund and it is sold in the local market at around Rs5,000/maund.

Ali Gul Khoso, a small-scale landlord in Unarpur, Jamshoro district, said his own family could not spare a single acre of land for cultivating masoor this year.

He could not tell any specific reason why farmers were reluctant to sow orange lentil, despite the crop being lucrative in the catchment area over the years.

Similarly, he said farmers in this area usually spare 500-600 acre land for chickpeas (chana) cultivation, but this year they could not cultivate a single acre of land.

Coriander is another valuable crop in the area, which yields a produce of 15-25 maund/acre and has a market value of Rs6,000/maund.

Khoso said due to the uncertain flow of the river, most of influential farmers in the catchment area have installed tube wells as an alternative source of irrigation water to cultivate their lands. They also supply water to other farmers on commercial purposes and get a share of crops after the harvest, he said.

Some farmers have direct lift machines to get water from the thin stream of the river.

Farmers being living close to the river believe that underground water of tube wells was not beneficial for the growth of pulses. The produce decreases by 50 percent compared to the area receiving fresh river water flowing with rich nutrients.

Abdul Sattar Gambhir, another farmer of catchment area in the riverine town of Manjhand district Jamshoro, said usually farmers cultivate around 40,000-50,000 acre land for chickpeas.

But this year, the crop has been sown on merely 1,000 acres, indicating the disappointing event of drought

and dryness, which might cause food insecurity for not only the local communities, but the people who love pulses.

Chickpea, a winter crop, is valuable not only in terms of per acre income but also nutrition. It gives product at three stages. First the leaves are harvested for three-four times, then green seeds and at the end the mature product is picked.

Growers in the catchment area of the Indus River sow chickpeas in October and continue reaping it till March. Their traditional practices help them grow organic crops in a way that keeps the cost of cultivation low, except for the expenditure on tractors for ploughing the ground for sowing.

Its value in market ranges from Rs3,500-Rs4,000. It is the most drought tolerant crop, and farmers in the entire catchment area of the Indus produce it on a large scale.

These crops in the catchment area require water only once to grow without chemical input. Mostly, river floods the catchment area which benefits cultivation. But this year, the river could not continue its flow to reach the catchment area.

Agriculture researchers believe that some three decades back, Sindh had around 2,112,000 acres of catchment area, which depended on floodwaters to produce organic crops, mostly pulses. Every year, floodwaters irrigated a wide area, which was beneficial for the cultivation of organic crops, as one spell of the floodwater was enough for every crop.

The provincial government has never put the cultivation of pulses (legumes) on priority. Thus, it neither sets a cultivation target nor announces support/fixed prices for these crops for the benefit of the producers. As a result, farmers always face hardships in receiving proper rates for their produce.

Moreover, the farmers do not have access to any incentives or support case they could not cultivate valuable food crops because of unavailability of river water.

Reports reveal that in the wide mountainous areas, which depend on spate irrigation for cultivation, farmers have been unable to engage in their traditional practices. Since these farmers live at a distance from the river, they depend on natural waterways that carry water from hilly areas during the monsoon. These farmers also do not have access to tube wells.

Elderly farmers said they used to receive the river streams in March and April, and that was when they would prepare for crop growing. Now, it was changing continuously over the decade or so, they said.

At first, they started receiving water in the months of June, July, and August, and now this year, they were yet to get river water to grow traditional crops to continue living safe.

The depletion of forests along the river has already disturbed the traditional life of the riverine communities on both the sides of the river. The people used to rear livestock for survival in difficult times.

After the loss of forests, they shifted hands to agriculture on forest land. Since then they were being considered prone to disaster.

When the mighty river floods, these people suffer, and when the river flow declines, they face drought. The traditional practice of farmers in catchment areas is to cultivate winter crops, mostly food crops like varieties of pulses, wheat, coriander, and melon and watermelon families. At this point of time, the riverine people fear facing an uncertain situation in terms of losing their sources livelihoods.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/395007-farmers-fail-to-sow-pulses-after-uncertain-flow-of-indus-leaves-them-dry

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 5TH TO NOVEMBER 11TH 2018

CONTAMINATED VEGETABLES DESTROYED

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 05, 2018

LAHORE: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Sunday ploughed vegetables irrigated with untreated wastewater on 60 kanal land in Lahore.The PFA teams discarded different crops including radish, carrot, spinach, melon, beet and coriander during the crackdown in Shahdra Town.

The PFA director general said operation would continue against the vegetables being irrigated with contaminated and untreated wastewater throughout the province.

He said chemically treated vegetables were resulting in hepatitis and other diseases.

He said the authority was working on a joint action policy in collaboration with other departments for the elimination of the malpractice.

He said Water and Sanitation Agency assured the PFA of full cooperation and its inspectors would monitor the use of sewerage water in fields.

He said farmers can cultivate only alternative/non-edible crops like bamboos, flowers, and indoor plants in the red zone areas.

Published in Dawn, November 5th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1443606/contaminated-vegetables-destroyed

CANE CRUSHING TO BEGIN ON 15TH

By Our Correspondent | 11/5/2018 12:00:00 AM

MUZAFFARGARH: The sugarcane crushing season will start from Nov 15, while the government has fixed Rs180 per maund as the rate for purchase of the crop.
Meanwhile, Haseeb Waqas Sugar Mills had last year withheld Rs100 million of the farmers. The mill was illegally shifted from Nankana Sahib to Jatoi tehsil in Muzaffargarh.

Last year, the Supreme Court had ordered the halting of crushing, but later when the farmers demanded its resumption, the court ordered purchase of cane from farmers at fixed rates. But the mill administration had stopped payments to farmers.

A large number of people, including farmers, protested and claimed that the sugarcane season was around the corner but the government had shut down the bridges leading to Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan districts.

Syed Ahmad Shah Bukhari of Jatoi tehsil said that every year, millions of tonnes of sugarcane were taken to others districts along Head Panjnad, but that would not be possible this time.

Dera Ghazi Khan superintending engineer of the irrigation department, Mian Abid Hussain, told Dawn that barrages of Head Panjnad and others will be upgraded, while the district administration claimed that the barrage would be closed for about 18 months for upgrading.

It added that the administration was working on providing alternative routes for light traffic.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=05_11_2018_006_007

GROWERS BODY SAYS SOWING OF WHEAT CROP WILL BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent November 05, 2018

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has expressed its concern over non-availability of water in Sindh during the Rabi season and feared that sowing of wheat crop would be affected by 50pc this season.

The meeting demanded suspension of recovery of agriculture loans from growers.

The SCA meeting was presided over by its general secretary Zahid Bhurgari.

The meeting participants observed that such a situation could cause shortage of grain. Addressing the meeting participants, Mr Bhurgari said that declining acreage would affect production of wheat crop.

He said that 50pc water shortage in Rohri and Nara canals of Sukkur barrage was being reported and these canals fed large swathes of farmland, where wheat was usually grown.

He stated that rates of tomato and onion crops had declined drastically and if the two were imported, then legitimate monetary interests of local growers would be undermined.

He said that growers were facing financial losses so much so that they were unable to recover their cost of inputs incurred on cultivation of these crops.

He demanded of the government to make sure that ban was imposed on import of the two crops.

He also expressed concern over increase in fuel prices and cost of inputs, which would affect the agriculture sector and urged the government to control the prices and provide relief to growers.

The growers while participating in discussions said that shortage of water and less precipitation in Sindh had caused drought.

They told meeting that growers were facing serious crisis these days and they were also required to pay their debt, which they had obtained from banks for cultivating crops.

They said that government should have announced some package for them, but on the contrary they were getting notices from banks for loan recovery.

They said that bank officials were dealing with growers indifferently which was causing unrest among growers.

They said recovery of farm credit should be stopped forthwith.

They said that mark-up on these loans should be waived.

The meeting was attended by Nabi Bux Sathio, Karim Talpur, Imdad Talpur, Mohammad Khan Sarejo and others.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1443610/growers-body-says-sowing-of-wheat-crop-will-be-adversely-affected

COTTON UNDER THREAT

Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated November 05, 2018

THE future of the Bt cotton variety seems to be hanging in the balance in Sindh as farmers struggle with declining acreage in one of their major cash crops.

From water shortages, increased pest attacks, adulterated seeds and lower-than-before prices, growers find it hard to keep pace with cotton sowing.

Until a decade back cotton producers were in a state of euphoria as Bt cotton was giving them productivity as high as 60-70 maunds per acre. Bt cotton's most attractive feature for growers was its immunity to pink bollworm attack, with the pest becoming almost extinct between 2006-2014.

If sugar cane and paddy perform well growers may completely switch over from cotton to these two crops

In Sindh, growers were cultivating an Australian Bt cotton variety known as CRY1 which had been brought unofficially into the province. The Chinese CRY2 variety was officially obtained by Punjab.

According to Mir Amanullah Talpur, a progressive cotton grower from Umerkot, the characteristics of these two varieties differed with CRY1 being more suited to Sindh's climatic conditions.

Mr Talpur is said to have been amongst the first adaptors of the Australian variety: growing the CRY1 Bt variety during 1999-2000.

He believes that initially, owing to the pink bollworm's inability to attack the cotton plant, growers had a field day in terms of per acre productivity while ginners offered better prices.

But then adulterated seed started flooding the market from Punjab and degeneration in seed set in. Mr Talpur observes that currently a hybrid of CRY1 and CRY2 is grown under the Bt cotton name, adding that pink bollworm tolerant varieties need to be introduced to save Sindh's cotton sector from suffering badly.

In 2009-10 Sindh produced 4.2m bales in 1.56m acres under cotton cultivation against a sowing target of 1.6m acres. At the time Sindh increased its sowing target to 1.6m acres from 1.56m acres, a target that has remained consistent since then.

Even though the cotton sowing target was revised downward to 1.5m acres during the current crop season (2018-19), around 30 per cent of the sowing target remains unfinished as per figures available with the cotton crop controlling authorities. Last year 94pc of the target was achieved.

Farmers like Sindh Abadgar Board Vice President Mahmood Nawaz Shah consider declining acreage to be a serious warning sign for the province's cotton sector.

He opines that researchers should to put their foot down: "Cotton has been promoted in Kotri barrage's command area in the recent past. Growers were comfortably growing the crop when issues such as water shortages, adulterated seeds and susceptibility to pests started hampering per acre yields. The situation has become quite alarming."

Water issues have already had a negative impact on this year's cotton cultivation owing to unavailable irrigation water flows in the early Kharif period (March-April) when cotton is grown in lower Sindh: areas that are fed by left bank canals of the Sukkur and Kotri barrages.

As a result cotton producers have opted for late and non-Bt varieties like CRIS129, ARI, NIA. According to figures by the agriculture department an increase in area under non– Bt varieties — from 184,835 acres last year to 237,221 acres this year — has been noted.

A Matiari based progressive cotton grower, Haji Nadeem Shah says that while he is comfortable with his 2018-19 per acre productivity in cotton, water shortages made him lose around 130-acres of cotton acreage. He concludes that this year the crop so far has fetched a better price (between Rs3,500 to Rs4,000 per 40kg) as compared to last year.

After achieving a peak of 4.2m cotton bale production, Sindh's production now varies between 3.4m-3.7m bales which include arrivals from Balochistan and Punjab in Sindh's ginning factories.

From the growers' point of view cotton starts to pay returns once picking starts whereas another summer crop like paddy would need around 120 days to mature for market.

Sugar cane needs around 12 months to be ready for harvesting and is dependent upon payment from millers. With the advantage of early picking, cotton is still lags behind these two crops.

According to Hidayatullah Bhutto from the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee's research institute in Sakrand, the management of cotton crop is difficult and it demands growers' seriousness. For indigenous varieties of cotton soil quality must be maintained and weeds controlled after 24 hours of sowing to ensure proper germination of cotton plants.

As long as Bt cotton remained untouched by pests and productivity issues growers would plant the crop year round and keep getting pickings. This is no longer the case as cotton has lost its productivity potential.

Since cotton remains vulnerable to multiple issues, says Mahmood Nawaz Shah, authorities should take research and development oriented initiatives to arrest decline in the crop.

He believes that currently despite facing serious problems in sugar cane and paddy growers are reluctant to switch over to cotton. This proves if sugar cane and paddy perform well growers may completely switch over from cotton to these two crops.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, November 5th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1443713/cotton-under-threat

WHY AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES DONT ALWAYS WORK

Amjad Mahmood Updated November 05, 2018

Bringing change to the agriculture sector is not easy. Farmers tend to stick to their age-old practices, which are less profitable and eco-friendly than new ones.

Successive governments have been offering various incentives to the farming community to promote good agricultural practices (GAP). But many beneficiaries adopt new techniques and technologies as long as subsidies or incentives remain available. Many of them stop adhering to GAP after the scheme or project is over.

Punjab Agriculture Minister Malik Nauman Langrial announced recently that the provincial government would offer seeds of sunflower and other oil crops to farmers on subsidised rates next season onwards.

Many farmers stop adhering to good practices as soon as subsidies run their course

A senior official of the department, who earlier undertook various fruit and vegetable cultivation promotion projects, is critical of such subsidy schemes. Funds mostly go wasted as a majority of farmers stops implementing GAP and does away with the recommended technologies soon after the subsidy ends, he says.

Referring to a recently concluded anti–fruit fly project, he claims that the use of pheromone traps to curb the fruit fly–menace dropped substantially a year after the provision of subsidised material to mango, guava and citrus growers ended. The same was observed at the completion of the plan for enhancing vegetable production, he added, calling for categorising subsidy recipients before launching any such programme.

Agriculture Department Director General (Extension) Zafaryab Haider admits that the level of GAP adoption drops with the end of a project, but says that it doesn't disappear altogether. "Although GAP adoption slows down after a subsidy scheme matures, all the changes in cropping patterns and other farming practices so far came through subsidy programmes. The same lands that fed just 30 million people are now providing 210m people with food," he says.

Former Punjab agriculture secretary Arif Nadeem's experience is different though. He points out that the farmers are doing laser land levelling, although the provision of subsidised machinery discontinued long ago. "There are around 19,200 laser levellers in the province. Machine owners are now purchasing tractors and hiring drivers on their own while the government has stopped paying a Rs250,000 subsidy per machine."

He blames 'confusing' communication in cases that show a drop in GAP adoption. "When you say the government has deferred the subsidy payment to next year because of a lack of financial resources, you make farmers wait for a year for the equipment/technology that they hope to get at a reduced cost."

He argues that no subsidy scheme should be wrapped up abruptly for the sake of certainty in the sector. He asserts that a subsidy scheme must have a proper exit strategy.

Endorsing the view that beneficiaries of subsidy schemes for GAP adoption should be categorised, sociologist Dr Izharul Haq says some farmers are easier to convince than others and that strategies must be tailored accordingly.

Quoting research studies, he categorises Punjab's farming community in three segments — indigenous people, settlers and migrants — and argues that the incentives should be tailor-made for each group.

He says the settlers who spread into central and south Punjab districts from Sialkot and Gujranwala with the advent of the canal system in the pre-Partition era are early adopters of technology. "They are visionary people who will go after every new idea whether you offer them any incentive or not."

The migrants who came after Partition are late adopters, he says. They are a bit hesitant to test new initiatives and wait for results of the technology adopted by others and then embrace it, he adds.

Indigenous people are the most rigid ones, Dr Haq says. They don't adopt new ideas and technologies easily, he adds. He classifies them as 'money-motivated' and 'hands-off' people who resist new technologies until these are offered with monetary benefits and have already been adopted by others.

"Subsidies to farmers are offered globally, including in India, particularly when a new technology is introduced or the government wants to promote a certain crop or practice. Sometimes, subsidies are offered in view of the weak financial position of the farming community. They should be designed in accordance with the habits and needs of the targeted group."

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, November 5th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1443712/why-agricultural-subsidies-dont-always-work

WHEAT PRODUCTION MAY DROP BY HALF, WARNS SCA
By Our Correspondent
Published: November 5, 2018

HYDERABAD: The acute water shortage may drop the wheat cultivation by half in the upcoming winter sowing season in Sindh. The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA), a farmers' lobbying group, expressed this fear on Sunday underpinning its projection on more than 50% water shortage in Rohri and Nara canals.

"This may create a food security problem in Pakistan," said SCA General Secretary Zahid Bhurgari, adding that a large number of farmers will also encounter financial hardships due to low cultivation.

The SCA office bearers and members at the meeting also raised the issue of the financial crisis being faced by the growers of onion and tomato crops as imports of the two crops are still continuing. "The onion and tomato farmers are unable to even recover money which they spent to grow these crops," Bhurgari said.

The SCA demanded that the import of onions and tomatoes should be immediately stopped and that the government should simultaneously allow export of these crops to help the farmers recover their losses and bring foreign exchange reserves.

The SCA also asked the government to stop agricultural banks from recovering loans from the farmers hit by the water shortage and low crop prices. They claimed that the banks have begun issuing notices to delinquent farmers for auctioning their land to recover loans.

Earlier on Saturday, Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB), another leading farmers' lobbying group, called for increasing the water discharge in the downstream of Kotri barrage while citing continuous sea intrusion in the coastal district. SAB President Abdul Majeed Nizamani warned that if the required quantum of water is not released to the sea, the intrusion will begin to affect parts of Jamshoro and Hyderabad districts after some years.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 5th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1840653/1-wheat-production-may-drop-half-warns-sca/

FARMERS TOLD PRECAUTIONARY STEPS FOR RABI SEASON
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: The Met Office has asked the farmers to complete peanut harvesting before plowing field with making plans for irrigating the coming Rabi crops.

It said that farmers should schedule irrigation plans for the coming Rabi season and asked them to remove weeds from standing crops to help attain a maximum yield. It warned that the weeds take away an input meant for the crops, resulting in a sizeable yield loss every year.

It advised that the farmers should use proper precautions while plucking of cotton since good and clean quality production fetches a higher price comparing to the contaminated one on the market. Daytime temperature is expected to remain slightly normal in the most parts with nighttime below normal in the most of the agricultural parts of the country until Nov 10.

Normal wind pattern may prevail in the most of the agricultural plains of the country with sandstorms expecting in Southern Punjab and Upper Sindh over the period. Dry weather is expected in Punjab and Sindh with a scattered light to moderate rain in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir through forecast period.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/06/2-page/748016-news.html

FOOD RIPENING METHODS 'HAZARDOUS FOR HEALTH'
By APP

Published: November 6, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Farmers' representatives have said that the lives of the residents of Islamabad are at high risk due to the illegal practice of ripening fruits and vegetables using chemicals.

"Fruits are ripened through commercial methods like calcium carbide wrapped in a cloth or newspaper placed at the bottom of the basket," Babar Saleem, a farmer, told APP on Monday. "In order to increase the basket temperature and maintain humidity, the basket is covered with strong craft paper."

"Fruits ripened like this have good skin colour with high acidity and low sugar content, but poorly developed flavour," said Babar, adding that such fruits are hazardous as they may contain traces of arsenic and phosphorus hydride.

"We are at risk of short-term and long-term health hazards simply for eating such fruits," he warned.

According to local farmers, in developed countries, fruits are commercially ripened in an artificial chamber having no health hazards. The use of ethylene for this purpose is not harmful for human consumption; but since these compounds are expensive, developing countries use low-cost calcium carbide which is harmful and has many disadvantages.

Rana Munir, another fruit trader, informed APP that commercial ripening was an essential part of their business. "We pick raw fruits and use certain methods to increase their shelf life," he said.

According to Munir, acetylene gas is an analogue of ethylene which quickens the ripening process and sometimes only skin colour is changed while fruit remains unripe and raw.

Dr Waseem Khawaja of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) told APP that early symptoms of arsenic and phosphorus poisoning included vomiting, diarrhoea with or without blood, burning sensation in the chest and abdomen, thirst, weakness and difficulty in swallowing and speaking.

He said that other harmful effects of chemical food include numbness in the legs and hands, cold and damp skin and low blood pressure, and can become fatal if not treated in time.

Dr Amjad, a nutritionist at the National Institute of Health (NIH), recommends developing better technique for artificial ripening of fruits and vegetables to prevent direct contact of the substance with fruits. APP

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1841342/1-food-ripening-methods-hazardous-health/

BALOCHISTAN ASSEMBLY DEMANDS RELIEF PACKAGE FOR FARMERS
By Mohammad Zafar
Published: November 6, 2018

QUETTA: The Balochistan Assembly on Monday unanimously adopted a resolution demanding a relief package for farmers suffering from a severe drought in several parts of the province.

Tabling the resolution during the assembly session chaired by Deputy Speaker Sardar Babar Musakhael, Sanaullah Baloch of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) said the province must be declared a 'disaster-hit zone'.

He demanded of the federal government to announce a special relief package for local farmers.

"In view of the province's devastated economy, this august house demands scrapping of electricity dues for farmers and special relief on agriculture loans," he said.

Baloch also called upon the federal government to ensure 18 hours of power supply to the agriculture sector.

He further advised the federal government to obtain assistance from international donors to mitigate the effects of the drought in the province. He said 300 solar tube wells must be installed in the province to provide clean drinking water to the people.

Speaking on the occasion, provincial Minister for Information Mir Zahoor Buledi said water crisis in Balochistan had reached an alarming level, but the provincial government had been taking steps on an emergency basis.

He added that the federal government had agreed not to cut Balochistan's share under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

On the decreasing underground water level in Quetta, Nasrullah Khan Zeeray of the Pashtunkhwa Mili Awami Party (PkMAP) said that environmental experts had urged the provincial government to build small dams in the city because the land in the provincial capital was rapidly sliding and new cracks were emerging.

He said the previous government had proposed the construction of 200 small dams in the surrounding hills of Quetta and submitted a survey report to the federal government.

"But there was no response to the report from the Centre," Zeeray said, adding, "If we continue to ignore this vital issue, majority of the citizens will be compelled to migrate towards other cities."

After a thorough debate, the house adopted the resolution featuring several demands for the province's agriculture and livestock sectors.

The opposition, meanwhile, demanded explanation from the provincial government on the Spera Ragha Highway.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) leader Syed Fazal Agha told the house that the total cost of the highway was Rs1.604 billion but the provincial government allocated only Rs200 million. He called upon the government to clarify its position on the project.

In reply, Information Minister Buledi said the government was reviewing the provincial PSDP and the project would be prioritised in the next PSDP.

Taking a jibe at the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) about its relief operations in drought-hit areas, the BNP-M leader said a majority of the people in Kharan, Nushki and Dalbandin depended on the livestock sector which had been devastated by the lingering drought.

"People in the drought-hit areas are suffering from lack of food, but instead of taking care of their hunger, the PDMA Balochistan was sending them tents which is a joke with the people of those areas," Baloch said, adding that the modern world had already adopted technological solutions to control drought but "we haven't even thought about it".

On the water dispute with Sindh, MPA Jan Muhammad Jamali said Balochistan had supported the Sindh government in opposing Kalabagh Dam, but in return, the province had been stealing Balochistan's water.

"The Sindh government has stopped the water supply for the green belt of Balochistan due to which people in Naseerabad division have been migrating to other areas," Jamali said, adding, "We keep hearing the rhetoric of [Federal Information Minister] Fawad Chauhdry, but now it's time to make him listen to our stance".

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1841322/1-balochistan-assembly-demands-relief-package-farmers/

GOVT NEEDS TO IMPORT 0.1M TONNES OF UREA TO AVOID SHORTAGE
The Newspaper's Reporter Updated November 07, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The government needs to immediately import 100,000 tonnes of urea fertiliser to avoid any potential shortage in the current rabi season, recommended the Fertiliser Review Committee of the Ministry of Industries at its meeting on Tuesday.

Chaired by Secretary Industries and Production, Azher Ali Choudhry, the meeting decided to seek help from provincial governments for fertiliser control. It also suggested that all running fertiliser plants should be kept operational to ensure optimal production and availability to farmers across the country.

Last month, the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) reviewed agricultural performance of the country and set targets for the rabi 2018-19 crops. FCA had not anticipated shortage and noted that the supply of urea and DAP fertilisers was satisfactory for outgoing kharif season. The supply of urea will remain comfortable during the rabi season due to enhanced local production and import.

According to National Fertiliser Development Centre (NFDC) updates, the production of all fertiliser products during April 2018 was about 557,000 tonnes. Urea production was 433,000 tonnes, which is 77.9 per cent of total production. The DAP production was 31,000 tonnes. Imported supplies during April, 2018 were 55,000 product tonnes including 45,000 tonnes of DAP, 4,000 tonnes of SOP and 2,000 tonnes of MOP, AS and SSP each.

The National Food Security Policy 2018 seeks to ensure availability of appropriate fertilisers at affordable prices; establishing and strengthening accredited soil fertility laboratories by provinces to ensure best practice sustainable soil management information to farmers and policy-makers; establishing or strengthening accredited fertilisers testing laboratories by provinces; and promoting the production of compost as organic fertiliser in the country.

Published in Dawn, November 7th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444052/govt-needs-to-import-01m-tonnes-of-urea-to-avoid-shortage

THREE FRUIT & VEGETABLE MARKETS PLANNED

11/7/2018 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: The Sindh agriculture ministry has planned to establish large markets in three districts under the public-private partnership to encourage producers of fruit and vegetables in those regions.
Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu notified the decision while presiding over a meeting of the public-private partnership unit.
He said a mango market would be set up in Hyderabad, another fordates and other fruits in Khairpur and a vegetable market outside the city of Larkana.
He said the mango market would be set up between Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas, which also had the facility of lab testing of mangos, particularly for the ones meant for export.
He said the ministry had decided to get a piece of land leased from the revenue department for shifting ofthe existing vegetable market from Larkana city.
He said the Sindh government would support the unit for establishing markets in various districts in which shops, hotels and parking spaces would also be made available.
He said the government was mulling over shifting of markets selling fruit and vegetables from the cities because of increasing population.
-Staff Reporter
https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=07_11_2018_116_004

MINISTER SEES NO MORE DEADLOCKS OVER CANE PRICE, CRUSHING ISSUES
Hanif Samoon November 07, 2018

BADIN: Sindh Minister for Agriculture Ismail Rahu has expressed his confidence that cane growers and sugar mills will no more be at odds over cane price or start of the crushing season.

“I don’t think there will be deadlocks [in issues between the two sides] on the two core issues this year,” he said, adding that being an agriculturist and now having the same portfolio, he was well-versed with all related issues and had been in close contact with all stakeholders.

“We [the stakeholders] will sit together and hammer out all issues to prevent such deadlocks that had been happening in the past,” he said.

Speaking to this reporter on Tuesday, Mr Rahu said the real challenge to the agriculture sector was the looming water crisis.

The position of water availability in Sindh at the moment was terrible and the situation was aggravating with each passing day due to very low rainfall this year, unfair distribution of water among provinces, climate change impacts and certain other factors, he said.

The minister expressed his optimism that all other core issues relating to the agriculture sector would be resolved through negotiations with the organisations concerned.

He said that the Sindh government was committed to giving a boost to this sector by addressing impediments to its growth.

“It’s time to take serious measures to address climate change, food insecurity and other issues threatening the fertile lands of lower riparian,” he said.

Agriculture experts, he added, should exert pressure on all stakeholders asking them to put in their sincere efforts towards ensuring an equitable distribution of resources, including water, among provinces as per their genuine requirement.

Commenting on rice crop, he said it was good omen that rice growers were getting fair rates this year, pointing out that there had been no complaints so far coming in from any rice zone in the province.

The minister claimed that he had taken no pressures from irrigation officials while trying his best to ensure fair distribution of water among growers of lower Sindh because he knew that rice had always been the chief crop in this region.

“A very serious shortage of water prevailed during the peak season of rice cultivation. I, therefore, set aside all my ministerial engagements to focus on providing water to all rice cultivation areas of lower Sindh,” he said, observing that farmers were now reaping a yield higher than they had expected. He pointed out that chances of a good yield were not anticipated due to almost no rainfall in these areas.

He, however, conceded that some areas did not receive adequate water despite his all-out efforts and the full cooperation extended to the department by the PPP leadership as well as other authorities. Resultantly, he said, growers could not cultivate rice in time.

Regarding the issue of new dams, Mr Rahu said those who were bent upon going ahead with the “controversial” water reservoirs should first visit the devastated coastal belt of Sindh. “The entire belt is facing sea intrusion and water crisis. The ecology of the coastal region is totally disturbed due to a severe drought and inadequate release of water downstream Kotri,” he noted.

Mr Rahu said he was in direct contact with all stakeholders with regard to the water flows during the Rabi season. He urged the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) to ensure release of Sindh’s due share in water so that growers could cultivate Rabi crops in a timely manner.

The minister criticised what he termed “misrule and mismanagement” on part of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government, and also advised it to stop “finding ways to create hurdles in the smooth sailing of the Sindh government”.

He said that interference by state institutions in the affairs of the provincial government would only lead to a chaotic situation. He said top PPP leaders had already faced politics of victimisation in the past so they could not be intimidated through threats from politically immature people.

Published in Dawn, November 7th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444010/minister-sees-no-more-deadlocks-over-cane-price-crushing-issues

MNFS&R FOR DOUBLING SAARC FOOD BANK’S WHEAT RESERVES
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN NOV 7TH, 2018 ISLAMABAD

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) has proposed doubling of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Food Bank wheat reserves from 40,000 Metric

Tons (MTs) to 80,000 MTs without having any financial implications, official sources told Business Recorder.

SAARC secretariat established SAARC Food Bank in 2007 (regional food security reserves) for the SAARC member countries to cope with food shortage and emergencies. Accordingly, PASSCO is maintaining 40,000 MTs of wheat reserves as Pakistan's share in the SAARC Food Bank.

During the 16th SAARC Summit held in Bhutan in April, 2010, the Heads of States of the SAARC countries agreed to double the quantum of the SAARC Food Bank Reserve. The 7th and 9th SAARC Food Bank Board meetings urged Pakistan to double the quantum of Food Bank Reserve as had already been done by other members.

PASSCO is maintaining one million of national strategic wheat reserve as approved by the ECC of the Cabinet as well as the quantity of 40,000 tons of wheat reserve for SAARC Food Bank. Government of Pakistan meets the financial cost of maintaining these wheat reserves. The carrying cost of both of these reserves for wheat crop 2016 has been estimated at Rs 4.44495 billion and Rs 177.79 million respectively.

The draft summary was earlier shared with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and PASSCO, presenting the proposal that the quantum of the SAARC Food Bank may be doubled from 40,000 MTs to 80,000 MTs and may be adjusted in the existing quantum of one million tons of national strategic reserves to PASSCO without having further financial implications. While Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance endorsed the proposal, PASSCO proposed that the SAARC Bank Reserves be doubled to 80,000 MTs in addition to national strategic reserve of one million tons contending that the proposed course of action would reduce the strategic reserves to 0.92 MTs which will be sufficient for less than 13 days.

The Ministry of National Food Security has endorsed the proposal on the ground that Article-VIII of the agreement for establishing the SAARC Food Bank, entitles the member countries to immediately withdraw food grains from its assessed reserves, in case of emergency, under intimation to the member countries and board. As such, this would not place any constraint on the policy space available to the Ministry, while simultaneously saving the GoP from any additional financial liability.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181107421794/

SCIENTISTS URGED TO DEVELOP FISHERIES SECTOR
RECORDER REPORT

FAISALABAD: The country per capita fish consumption is only 2 kilograms as compared to world of 21 kilograms annually.

It was stated by experts at the inaugural session of seminar on aquaculture: opportunities and challenges arranged by Department of Zoology, wildlife and Fisheries, University of Agriculture Faisalabad at Seminar Room of Science Block, UAF.

The seminar was chaired by UAF Vice Chancellor Dr Zafar Iqbal Randhawa, while Dean Faculty of Sciences Dr Muhammad Ashghar Bajwa, Department Chairman Dr Hammad Ahmad, Dr Abdul Mateen and other notables also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Iqbal Zafar said aquaculture is still an untapped area; as there was an immense potential for development of the sector in terms of nutrition, employment, and poverty alleviation.

He said that the country has been blessed with very rich agricultural and animal resources both terrestrial and aquatic. He directed the UAF scientists and experts to address problems of farming community and to develop model farm of fisheries, livestock and agriculture.

He added that the UAF had mapped out a plan to convert the agricultural field a model ones to demonstrate the farming community and for the scientific purpose.

Dr Asghar Bajwa said that there were areas in fisheries sector, in which a scientific understanding including low-cost feed formulation and preparation, production of fast growing disease resistance fish, introduction of more species in aquaculture, improvement of post release survivor ship of fish and pond management need be carried out. He stressed upon the need to run fisheries and aquaculture activities on scientific scale.

Dr Hammad Ahmad said that world fish production reached 171 million tons per annum currently. He said that the seminar will come up with new avenue for the development of the sector. He added that we had to make the celebrated efforts to increase the aquaculture production in a sustainable manner. Dr Khalid Abbas, Dr Sajid Abdullah and others also spoke.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/07/16-page/748304-news.html

FERTILISER BODY RECOMMENDS SWIFT IMPORT OF UREA
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 7, 2018

KARACHI: The Fertiliser Review Committee has recommended immediate import of the earlier planned 100,000 tons of urea to avoid any shortage during the ongoing Rabi sowing season.

According to the Ministry of Industries and Production, a meeting of the Fertiliser Review Committee was held where urea demand and supply position and stock availability for Rabi 2018-19 was analysed.

After deliberations, it was recommended to immediately import the planned 100,000 tons of urea. Meanwhile, the help of provincial governments will be sought for controlling prices of fertiliser in the market, the committee decided.

The committee also recommended that all running fertiliser plants should be kept operational to ensure optimal production and availability of fertiliser in the country.

Ministry of Industries Secretary Azhar Ali Chaudhry chaired the meeting, which was attended by representatives of all fertiliser producers.

According to Pak-Kuwait Investment Company AVP Research Adnan Sami Sheikh, with the expected import of 100,000 tons of urea, the market will be just at the ‘border-line equilibrium’ as the present stock, expected domestic production following activation of two idle plants and imports would just match the anticipated demand.

"The situation cannot be called comfortable for the fertiliser market, however, we will have border-line equilibrium in the sector," he said.

According to the analyst, Agritech and Fatima Fertiliser started producing urea in October after the two companies began receiving gas for the next four months. In the first phase, 50,000 tons of urea will be imported which is expected to reach by mid-November.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) had directed the import of fertiliser for the Rabi season as the industry expected a shortfall of 400,000 tons. It is expected that the activation of idle plants will help reduce the shortfall by 75%. Sheikh said the second batch of 50,000 tons of urea was expected to arrive by mid-December.

He pointed out that it would be difficult for the federal government to help maintain the prices through subsidy as it looked towards a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which opposes such concessions. Therefore, the provincial governments will have to step in.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 7th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1842043/2-fertiliser-body-recommends-swift-import-urea/

ECC ALLOWS IMPORT OF 50,000 TONNES OF UREA
Mubarak Zeb Khan Updated November 08, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has given a week to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to come up with the details regarding the tax evasion in the sugar sector.

The sector's financials have been under spotlight over lack of clarity in the tax collection from the sugar millers — widely dubbed as the political crop of Pakistan.

The ECC also allowed import of 50,000 tonnes of urea fertiliser following a proposal from the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R). The committee authorised Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industries Abdul RazakDawood to allow additional import of 50,000 tonnes of urea, if required.

Furthermore, the committee also allowed fertiliser plants to be fully operational during rabi season in order to ensure adequate urea production. The ECC maintained that no undue increase in prices of urea will be tolerated on the pretext of increase in gas prices.

FBR given weeks' time to provide details on tax-evaders in sugar industry

Finance Minister Asad Umar, who chaired the ECC meeting on Wednesday, asked FBR Chairman Jehanzeb Khan to place the matter before cabinet after consultations with relevant stakeholders. The FBR chairman briefed the meeting on the status of tax collection from sugar industry and suggested a revised mechanism to ensure better recovery.

“We are reviewing various proposals regarding taxing the sugar industry,” a senior tax official informed the meeting.

The tax official lamented that there is hardly any accurate data on actual production of cane and its by-products. He said millers also produce molasses and ethanol from cane.

He added that FBR does not have a mechanism in place to monitor these products to determine the actual quantum of tax.

The committee also decided to maintain wheat support price at Rs1,300 per 40 kg after a proposal was submitted by the MNFS&R. It was noted that the wheat prices in the international market were considerably lower and the government, in order to protect farmers is incurring huge expenditure in procurement process.

The ECC also approved disbursement of Rs367 million — September’s salary — to Pakistan Steel Mill (PSM) employees and directed the Ministry of Industries to distribute outstanding dues to widows of PSM’s deceased employees. The Ministry of Industries and Production was also directed to submit a detailed proposal to revive PSM as it was removed from the privatisation list.

The committee approved a proposal to double Pakistan’s share of wheat for the South Asian Association of Regional Countries (Saarc) Food Bank Reserve from 40,000 tonnes to 80,000 tonnes, adjusting it in the existing quantum of one million metric tonnes of national strategic reserves assigned to Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation.

During the meeting, Power Division was directed to actively engage with companies to facilitate clearance of Pakistan State Oil’s outstanding receivables — Rs300bn — as early as possible to guard against risk of disruption in supply chain of petroleum products.

Published in Dawn, November 8th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444299/ecc-allows-import-of-50000-tonnes-of-urea

FISHERMEN, BOAT OWNERS SLAM DEEP-SEA FISHING POLICY
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: The federal government’s deep sea fishing policy 2018 outlining strict rules for hunting fish and shrimp has triggered resentment among fishermen and boat owners, who now plans a strike to stop catch landing.

Talking to Business Recorder on Wednesday, fishermen and boat owners showed serious concerns over the policy that allocates three zones for the hunt. The policy divides the sea into three zones mainly facilitating the licensed holder fishermen and boat owners for deep sea fishing up to 200 nautical miles.

The non-licensee hunters will only be allowed to fishing within the 12 nautical miles that falls within the provincial government’s jurisdiction.

The local fishermen and boat owners just want a free excess to deep sea without attaining any licence, as they have been doing for the last 70 years. They also opposed the trawling vessels to operate within the 200 nautical miles, fearing the hunt will cleanse the surface to seabed from marine species.

A leaflet distributed by the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PSMA) at the fish harbour to inform the fishermen about the deep sea fishing, clearly detailing the three zones including: Zone-I stands up to 12 nautical miles, Zone-II from 12 nautical miles to 20 nautical miles and Zone-III up to 200 nautical miles. Zone-I is under Sindh government's authority, while Zone-II and Zone-III under the federal government's jurisdiction.

The PSMA's leaflet asked the fishermen to comply with the rules laid down by the policy and warned that violators will face a legal action. It said that fishermen belonging to Sindh and Balochistan have been provided with fishing in Zone-I and Zone-II but will have to take a licence from their respective governments to hunt fish and shrimp on the sea legally. For deep sea fishing, fishermen and boat owners will have to obtain license from the federal government.

However, the foreign trawlers have been allotted licences to hunt fish and shrimp in Zone-III, as they will not be permitted trawling into Zone-I and Zone-II.

The leaflet said that if any local fishermen or boat owners intend to hunt deep sea should follow the policy conditions that primarily include: A boat must be registered with Mercantile Marine Department, should have a fishing license from Marine Fisheries Department, all basic credential of fishermen should be in place before sailing deep sea, all the vessels should have vessel monitoring system (VMS) installed, all fishermen going for hunt should be Pakistani nationals. The PMSA will monitor fishing operations.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/08/2-page/748366-news.html

EMKAY SEEDS DEVELOPS TWO HYBRIDS OF BASMATI RICE

ZAHID BAIG Nov 8th, 2018 LAHORE

Emkay Seeds, a Pakistani seed company involved in the development of hybrid rice, has claimed to develop two hybrids of Basmati Rice, which have outperformed Basmati Super and Pusa 1121 in the small-scale trial with more than 40 percent yield advantage and longer grain. The new varieties have the yield potential of around eight tons per hectare with good cooking and eating qualities. These varieties also have early maturity trait thus vacating the field for timely sowing of the wheat crop.

"Developed indigenously by the Pakistani scientists led by Dr Muhammad Bashir Cheema, these varieties will be available for commercial sowing in two years time as currently it is being further refined," said CEO Emkay Seeds, SajjadSulaiman Malik while talking to a group of journalists here on Wednesday. It has been estimated that if only 20 percent of Basmati area is sown with new hybrids of fine rice varieties in Punjab, the main growing area, Rs 60 to 70 billion worth of additional economic activity can be generated. On export front, Pakistan can fetch another $500 million with this bonus production of Basmati rice.

"This is the beginning of Pakistan's rice revolution which will start bearing fruit for the farmers, the rice millers and exporters in the near future," Malik added.

He also claimed that the company was the first in Pakistan to have a locally developed medium grain rice hybrid (Emkay H-401) approved from the Varietal Evaluation Committee (VEC) of the Pakistan Federal Ministry of Agriculture.

He said that it has been refined further for Sind and expected to be launched in the next year.

He said that research is being conducted at their research farms situated in Farooqabad, which is the heartland of Basmati rice production in the world. Throwing light on their achievement till date, he said that 20 medium grain CMS lines have been developed, four Basmati Lines including the famous "Super Basmati" having excellent eating and cooking quality have been converted into CMS lines, about 400 Restorer and Maintainer Lines have been developed and one Bacterial Leaf Blight (BLB) resistant rice hybrids have also been produced at the same farm.

Sajjad also said that their developed medium grain hybrid rice had reached a stage where these could compete with the Chinese products. He said their company had a long history of research and collaborated with the Chinese and IRRI-Philippines.

To a question, he said that locally produced hybrid rice seed would cost less than the imported hybrid rice thus saving millions of dollars being spent on import. He also disclosed that the rice germplasm was obtained from China and IRRI in addition to local germplasm to develop three line systems i.e., Cytoplasmic Male Sterile (CMS), Maintainer and Restorer Lines.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181108422665/

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER SUGAR GLUT
BR Research November 9, 2018

It has become a yearly occurrence now. Just before the crushing season sugar mills take to protesting the support price imposed by the government for procurement of raw sugar-cane from the farmers.

This year is no different with the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) publishing an appeal to the government in leading newspapers to reconsider the recently imposed support price of Rs180 per 40kg in Punjab. The sugar industry association believes the cost of production of sugar to be around Rs63/kg which it deems to be too high because of the high support price of sugar-cane which represents almost 80 percent of overall production cost.

Recall that the by the end of the last crushing reason sugar mills had already warned of their inability to pay more than Rs120 per maund for the sugar-cane procurement this season. The PSMA cited a severe supply glut as the reason and claimed sugar mills would still have almost 55 percent surplus stock even after accounting for annual domestic sugar demand. (Read: "Sugar supply glut persists" published on 14 September, 2017)

According to industry sources, there is an excess supply of 2.8 million tons compared to the domestic demand of 5.5 million tons. The government has to provide a subsidy to the sugar mill owners for in order to make exports viable given the price differential between international sugar prices which are lower compared to domestic prices.

While the government has failed to come up with an adequate mechanism to regulate sugar-cane prices, it has also failed to stem the rise in the number of sugar mills operating in the country. As things stand currently, the installed capacity of the sugar industry in Pakistan is 13 million tons which has come about due to a failure to prevent more sugar mills being set up. In the last thirty years, the number of sugar mills has tripled from 30 to 90 due to the political patronage afforded to the industry.

In a recent interview with Business Recorder, Iskander Mirza, Vice Chairman of PSMA pointed out that cotton production and consequentially the textile sector is bearing the brunt of incentivisation of sugar-cane in fertile cotton producing areas of South Punjab. This column has also highlighted the issue previously. (Read: "Addressing crop price distortion" published April 15, 2018 and "Sugar thrives, cotton dives" published on January 11, 2018)

The current policy is a loss for all stakeholders involved. The farmers are unable to actually sell their sugar-cane crop at the government notified support price and deals are often struck with middle-men at lower prices. Sugar mills produce excess sugar as a result which cannot even be exported without costing the national exchequer billions in subsidies.

Instead of treating sugar like a political commodity, a market based mechanism is the best way to set the price of sugar-cane. Failing to do so will only result in persistent supply glut of both sugar-cane as well as sugar.

https://www.brecorder.com/2018/11/09/451608/another-year-another-sugar-glut/

LINT PRICES STABLE ON TIGHT SUPPLIES
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 10, 2018

KARACHI: Steady conditions prevailed on the cotton market on Friday though activity shrank due to short supply of cotton and slow off take of yarn in domestic market.

Slow trading did not have much impact on the price line as many big spinning groups are reportedly shifting to imports to meet their cotton demand.

There was shortage of cotton as picking in Sindh – which is mostly done by Hindu women – remained suspended owing to Diwali holidays.

Meanwhile, ginners have also stopped lifting phutti (seed cotton) as a mark of protest against SRO 188 imposing tax on cottonseed cake. The Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association has demanded that the Federal Board of Revenue should withdraw the said SRO and suspended the tax.

Demand for cotton yarn from value-added sector has dropped and many spinning mills are confronted with huge unsold stocks of yarn and liquidity crunch, brokers said.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, the global cotton stocks are down by 1.84 million bales to 72.61m bales – mainly due to fall in cotton production in the US, India, and Pakistan.

Official spot rates were raised by Rs100 to Rs8,900 per maund but most of the deals on ready counter mostly transpired at overnight level.

The following deals were reported to have changed hands on ready counter: 400 bales, station Nawabshah, at Rs8,450; 400 bales, Sakrand, at Rs8,450; 600 bales, Khairpur, at Rs8,750-8,800; 600 bales, Ghotki, at Rs9,150; 400 bales, Rohri, at Rs8,800; 400 bales, Rahim Yar Khan, at Rs9,100; 600 bales, Sadiqabad, at Rs9,100; 600 bales, Liaquatpur, at Rs9,100; 200 bales, Haroonabad, at Rs8,600-8,900; 1,200 bales, Ahmedpur East, at Rs8,800; 400 bales, Bahawalpur, at Rs8,800; 600 bales, Yazman, at Rs8,800; and 400 bales, Shujabad, at Rs8,750.

Published in Dawn, November 10th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444687/lint-prices-stable-on-tight-supplies

SAI WANTS CANE CRUSHING SEASON TO BEGIN ON 15TH
RECORDER REPORT

HYDERABAD: Sindh Abadgar Itehad has threatened to stage sit-in in Karachi if the cane crushing not started up to November 15 with announcement of support price of Rs 200 per 40 kg of cane.

Addressing a press conference here at Hyderabad Press Club on Friday, President Sindh Abadgar Itehad, Nawab Zubair Talpur said that according to Sindh Sugarcane Act, the cane crushing was supposed to start in the month of October every year but despite passage of nine days of November, the sugar mills management did not torch the boilers nor Sindh government has fixed the support price of cane.

The cane crop has been matured at million acres of land in the province and delay in starting the crushing season is causing huge financial losses to growers, he said.

He further said that the cane crop which standing in the field also causing delaying in sowing the wheat crop.

He said that the growers have also suffered huge financial loss due to the policies of the provincial government and despite the fixation of cane price from the court, the mills management still not paid the outstanding dues of the growers.

He urged the provincial government to issue notification of the fixation of cane price at the rate of Rs 200 per 40 kg and start crushing season up to November 15.

He also appealed to the federal government to pay its due role for granting justice to growers.

“If the crushing season not started up to November 15 and the provincial government failed to fix support price of cane at the rate Rs 200 per 40 kg, the growers under the banner of Sindh Abadgar Itehad will hold protest demonstrations in district headquarters including Hyderabad and finally stage protest in Karachi which will continue till acceptance of their demands,” he said.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/m/2018/11/10/3-page/748744-news.html

PCGA SUSPENDS COTTON PURCHASE FROM GROWERS
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 10, 2018

MULTAN: The Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) has announced that it has suspended the purchase of phutti (raw cotton) from growers in protest against the continuation of a new system of sales tax and the federal cabinet’s refusal to restore the old system.

Farmers sharply reacted to the ginners’ decision, describing it as a “stab in their back” and said it came despite earning profit of millions of rupees in the current season. According to sources, another group of ginners has announced that they will continue to purchase raw cotton from the farmers as usual.

They stated that it was a dispute between the composite units and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) because they did not pay taxes over the last four to five years and made excuses to evade the taxes. Now, there are defaulters of more than Rs5 billion, but they are putting pressure on the government to accept merely Rs1.5 billion. About 90% of factories have so far been closed in Sindh after completion of their season and 60% of ginning factories are working in south Punjab.

Oil mill owners have not recognised and approved the association and there are two associations working in the field, but both are reluctant to pay taxes.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 10th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1844093/2-pcga-suspends-cotton-purchase-growers/

FERTILISER PRODUCERS RELUCTANT TO GET INVOLVED IN SUBSIDY PROCESS
By Zafar Bhutta
Published: November 10, 2018

ISLAMABAD: As the government is striving to reverse the increase in urea prices, the fertiliser industry has suggested three options for the provision of subsidy in the wake of increase in gas tariff for old plants.

Urea manufacturers have raised prices by around Rs130 per 50kg bag in an attempt to pass the impact of gas price hike on to consumers despite government assurances that the state will pay subsidy to them.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government has increased gas tariff by Rs128 per million British thermal units (mmbtu) for old fertiliser plants. However, it does not want to pass on the increase to farmers and has tasked the adviser on industries and commerce to come up with a solution.

Industry sources said fertiliser producers had provided three options for the Ministry of Industries to streamline the subsidy process.

In the first option, the industry has proposed direct subsidy disbursement to gas companies in lieu of the price differential, which will restrict gas price increase to only old plants as new ones with fixed gas prices were not affected.

In the second option, the industry has suggested direct disbursement of subsidy to the farmers through a token system – a model that was followed by Punjab. In the third option, the industry has proposed reversal of feedstock gas prices as this will have a limited financial impact.

Fertiliser producers said they did not support any plan to provide the subsidy for them. In that regard, they pointed to the failed past experience when fertiliser manufacturers were involved in subsidy disbursement.

The industry was of the view that there had been a trust deficit in previous years, adding it would be an impediment to the implementation of the past model. Moreover, it will put an unnecessary financial burden on the government.

The industry said it had not yet received old dues of Rs19.2 billion on account of urea subsidy from the government. Owing to that reason, it said, the fertiliser manufacturers did not want to get engaged in subsidy disbursement.

In a bid to provide relief for the farmers, the government is considering a price subsidy again. However, its size and mechanism has not yet been determined.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1844685/2-fertiliser-producers-reluctant-get-involved-subsidy-process/

FISHING INDUSTRY CAUGHT IN POLICY NET
Aamir Shafaat Khan Updated November 11, 2018

KARACHI: Seafood exports, already down by 11.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2018-19, may drop further as trawlers and other boat owners have stopped going for fresh catch of fish and shrimps. At issue is their opposition to the Deep Sea Fishing Licensing Policy 2018.

“We are currently dependent on the arrival of boats and trawlers which are returning to the harbour. Otherwise none of the boat owners are going for fresh catch,” said President Pakistan Fisheries Exporters Association (PFEA), Syed Akhlaq Hussain Abidi.

Out of the 2,000 fishing trawlers, some 20-30 are now in the high seas. These vessels are scheduled to arrive in a day or two. Fish landing has fallen by 20-25 per cent from October till date, Mr Abidi claimed.

Seafood exports plunge 11pc to $67m in first quarter of FY19

Trawler owners are not going for fishing due to fear as Maritime Securities Agency (MSA) had also started implementing the new deep sea policy. One fishing trawler was arrested on October 13 while returning to Karachi harbour despite valid fishing permits from the Sindh government and Custom’s Port clearance. The matter is in court.

Country’s fish exports plunged to 28,185 tonnes ($67 million) versus 29,544 tonnes valuing $76m in same period last fiscal.

Mr Abidi alleged that the new policy is ambiguous about the requirements of seaworthiness and procedures for licensing in Zone-3 for local boats. “Simplified rules must be made and time to apply for licence should not close until announced number of boats have received the licence. These must be working boats and no fake licences be given to non-existent boats," he added.

He suggested that mid-water trawling for 12-35 miles zone while Buffer zone must stay till 35 miles as before.

Patron Sindh Trawlers and Fisherman Association (Stofa), Sarwar Siddiqui said STOFA, PFEA and Fishermen Cooperative Society have moved to the Sindh High Court against the deep sea fishing licensing policy. The hearing is scheduled for November 16.

Mr Siddiqui also claimed that landing of fish would almost come to a standstill in a couple of days as no new trawlers left for fishing in the past two weeks.

Published in Dawn, November 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444864/fishing-industry-caught-in-policy-net

SUGAR MILLS UNWILLING TO START CRUSHING AMID 'LIQUIDITY CRUNCH'
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana Updated November 11, 2018

KARACHI: The sugar industry has urged the government to fix sugarcane price in tandem with the selling price of sugar and asked for early payment of outstanding subsidies to come out of the woods.

According to industry sources, around 89 sugar mills — located in Sindh and Punjab — are reluctant to start new crushing season citing liquidity crunch due to an outstanding amount of Rs16 billion export subsidies from the government and low prices in domestic market.

In addition to that, the industry has also demanded the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to collect general sales tax (GST) on actual selling price of sugar instead of Rs60 per kg fixed by the board.

Chairman Mehran Sugar Mills Mohammad Kasim Hasham told Dawn that industry also wants the government to allow unconditional sugar exports. He said that prescribed conditions cause export delays and changes in international prices.

The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association has already rejected prices fixed by the provincial governments for procurement of sugarcane — Rs180 and Rs182 per maund for Punjab and Sindh respectively.

Punjab's sugar millers are also unwilling to begin crushing at the price fixed by provincial government at Rs180 per 40kg, the sources added.

The Sindh government is yet to officially announce sugarcane prices for the new crushing season starting from November 15, however it has directed Sugarcane Commissioner to ensure that cane price for procurement would be Rs182 per 40kg, Mohammad Kasim Hasham added.

He regretted that government ignored sugar millers or its representative body while taking decisions regarding the industry.

Mr Kasim was apprehensive about less cane production this season in Sindh and added that with no rains and shortage of irrigation water, the production is likely to be 30pc less than the previous season.

The sugar industry in Sindh is also at standstill and so far only one sugar mill has started crushing but it is paying only Rs140 per maund to cane growers. There is a greater possibility that sugar production in 2018-19 is likely to be less than last year when production stood at 8.5 million tonnes, he maintained.

Published in Dawn, November 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444859/sugar-mills-unwilling-to-start-crushing-amid-liquidity-crunch

ARREST WARRANTS OUT FOR CEOS OF EIGHT SUGAR MILLS
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 11, 2018

KARACHI: A banking court on Saturday issued warrants for arrest of the heads of at least eight sugar mills owned by the Omni Group in a case pertaining to alleged pilferage of Rs11 billion worth of sugar stocks pledged to different banks against financial loans obtained by the group.

Judge Muhammad Saad Qureshi directed the SHO of the Clifton police station to arrest the chief executive officers/directors of the sugar mills and produce them in court on Nov 14.

The banking court-III issued bailable warrants in sum of Rs1 million each against Khawaja Anwer Majeed, Saima Ali Majid, Khawaja Mustafa Zulqarnain Majid, Khawaja Ali Kamal Majid, Khawaja Nimr Majid, Rashid Ahmed Khan, Nihal Anwar, Muhammad Zeeshan Khan, the CEO/director of the KG Traders Private Limited, Sajjad Ahmed, the CEO/director of Talha Associates Private Limited and Ansari Sugar Mills Limited.

The management of different banks, including National Bank of Pakistan, Silk Bank Private Limited and others had filed criminal applications under Section 201(a) of the Financial Institutions (Recovery of Finances) Ordinance, 2001 seeking action against the sugar mills' CEOs/directors regarding the alleged pilferage of the sugar stocks pledged to them against bank loans obtained by them.

The issue had surfaced when the head of a joint investigation team probing into the 'fake' accounts case had recently disclosed before the Supreme Court that the stocks shown against the loans of around Rs50bn obtained from the NBP, Sindh Bank and Summit Bank had been removed or taken away from nine sugar mills of the Omni Group situated in different parts of Sindh.

According to the JIT's head, the mandatory stocks against those loans were not available as there must be stocks worth Rs13.5bn, but only Rs2bn was available and the remaining Rs11.5bn worth stock was missing.

The apex court had directed the Federal Investigation Agency to lodge FIRs against officials of the mills.

Published in Dawn, November 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444811/arrest-warrants-out-for-ceos-of-eight-sugar-mills

RICE MILLS ACROSS SINDH, BALOCHISTAN SHUT OVER MILLER'S ABDUCTION
Dawn Report November 11, 2018

SUKKUR/LARKANA: All rice mills in Sindh and Balochistan remained closed and no trading in the commodity took place on Saturday in response to a strike call given by the Sindh Balochistan Rice Millers and Traders Association (SBRMTA) against alleged kidnapping of its central leader, Haji Mohammed Nawaz Mengal.

Mr Mengal, 55, was kidnapped while he was returning home after buying some medicines from a store in Dera Murad Jamali on Wednesday, general secretary of the association Asad Tunio said. He said the kidnappers intercepted the motorcycle he was riding and forced him to travel along with them by his own two-wheeler, he said giving details of the incident.

Mr Tunio said that at some distance, the outlaws forced him into a waiting car, which took the victim and kidnappers to some unknown place. Since then, he added, the whereabouts of Haji Nawaz Mengal were not known.

All rice mills in Jacobabad, Thull, Kandhkot, Kashmore, Garhi Khero, Shikarpur, Shahdadkot, Lalu Raunk, Wagan, Naseerabad, Qambar, Ratodero, Usta Mohammed and other towns of Sindh and Balochistan remained closed. No trading in rice commenced at any place in the two provinces, leaders of the association said.

The association gave a strike call for Saturday in Sindh and Balochistan over failure of the police to provide protection to industrialists and other segments of the business and trader communities. It regretted that police also failed to locate the victim and his kidnappers 48 hours after the incident.

Hundreds of employees, work-charge workers and labourers associated with the mills stayed away from their workplaces owing to the closure.

In several towns, millers organised rallies for the safe and early recovery of Mr Mengal.

In Thull town, participants in a similar rally held a sit-in on Thull-Jacobabad road. A leader of the association, Abdul Aziz Abro, spoke to them and urged the authorities concerned to take measures for the immediate recovery of the miller.

He also appealed to the Supreme Court to take suo motu notice of the incident as the kidnapping had sown fear among industrialists in the two provinces.

He pointed out that rice millers were contributing heavily to the national exchequer in terms of taxes and also contributing to curtailment of unemployment. They deserved to be protected from falling prey to such anti-social elements, he added.

Mr Abro said that the protest could be intensified by organising sit-ins on the National Highway if police failed to recover Haji Nawaz Mengal at the earliest.

Published in Dawn, November 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1444799/rice-mills-across-sindh-balochistan-shut-over-millers-abduction

GOVT URGED TO LOOK INTO DAP PRICE
ZAHEER ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The government has been asked to look into the price of diammonium phosphate (DAP), which is on higher side and requires intervention for reduction.

Sources said that the issue of availability of DAP and urea was discussed during the last meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) chaired by Finance Minister Asad Umar and the meeting was informed by Ministry of National Food, Security and Research that the availability of DAP for Rabi season is satisfactory. However, the price of the commodity is on higher side “and requires intervention for reduction.”

An official said that a great deal of discussion took place on the matter. The meeting was told that DAP is major phosphate fertilizer used in Pakistan and there is only one plant of DAP located at Port Qasim.

The annual production capacity of the plant is around 0.8 million tonnes. Total demand of DAP is around 2.4 million tons per annum. Thus two-third of demand is met through imports, which is made through private importers.

The availability of DAP during Rabi 2018-19 is estimated around 1,457,000 tonnes, which comprises 729,000 tonnes of opening inventory, 378,000 tonnes domestic production and 350,000 tonnes of imported supplies. The expected off-take of DAP is about 1,405,000 tonnes. DAP is a de-regulated item and its availability depends on import by the private sector.

The ECC was also informed that DAP fertilizer prices are directly linked with international prices. International prices during September were in the range of US $420-425/tonne FoB bulk in Australia and US $413-417/tonne FoB in China. Price of DAP fertilizer has been reported at Rs 3,581 per bag in the local market.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/m/2018/11/11/11-page/749004-news.html

Sacked employees of Charsadda sugar mills seek payment of arrears
Our Correspondent
November 11, 2018

CHARSADDA: Former workers of Charsadda sugar mills staged a sit-in on Saturday and asked the owners to immediately pay them arrears.

Addressing the sit-in, the president of the workers union Said Rehman, Subhanuddin, Ajmal Khan and others said that they were expelled from employment 28 years ago but their arrears were not paid to them.

They added that the machinery of Charsadda sugar mills has been shifted to Sheikhupura, Punjab.

The workers demanded authorities to make the Charsadda sugar mills operational once again and pay them their arrears. They stated that they would launch a series of protests if their demands were not fulfilled.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/392509-sacked-employees-of-charsadda-sugar-mills-seek-payment-of-arrears

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 29TH TO NOVEMBER 4TH 2018
COSTLY INPUTS ARE SQUEEZING FARMERS HARD
From the Newspaper Updated October 29, 2018

Fertiliser prices started rising following a recent gas price hike, pushing up the cost of inputs for farmers of major and minor crops.

According to newspaper reports, fertiliser companies have raised urea prices by up to Rs130 per 50-kilogram bag, thus passing on the impact of the increase in natural gas prices. In the first week of October, the government notified an increase of 10-143 per cent in gas prices for various kinds of consumers. For fertiliser producers, the rate of increase was 30pc for fuel stock and 50.4pc for feedstock.

Market watchers say the price of a 50kg bag of urea has shot up from around Rs1,570 to Rs1,700. This is in addition to two smaller hikes, one of Rs100 per bag and another of Rs50 per bag during the last quarter of the previous fiscal year. At that time, growers' lobbies such as Farmers Association of Pakistan, Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, Agri Forum Pakistan and Sindh Abadgar Board protested against both price hikes and demanded their reversal. Fertiliser producers had linked those hikes to sharp rupee depreciation and a rising trend in international urea prices.

Seeds of vegetables and other minor crops recorded a sharp price increase in the first four months of the current fiscal year

In less than four months of this fiscal year, the rupee has lost 10.2pc of its value against the dollar in the open market. Prices of imported seeds that had already become costlier in the wake of about 16pc rupee depreciation in the last fiscal year continue to rise accordingly. Prices of locally produced seeds are also moving upwards due to a general inflationary pressure in the economy following repeated rupee depreciations and fiscal belt-tightening.

But in the absence of an integrated price-monitoring system for seed markets, it is difficult to assess how much farmers are actually paying for seeds. Provincial seed corporations maintain records of subsidised prices of seeds that they give to farmers. They usually boast about the extent to which these prices are subsidised. Average market prices for the last Kharif season and the ongoing Rabi season cannot be independently verified.

But farmer groups complain of a higher cost of seeds: by up to 30pc in the case of paddy seeds in Sindh where water scarcity has also hit farmers, and by up to 20pc in both Sindh and Punjab in the case of wheat and maize seeds. Rice, wheat and maize are staple food crops. Prices of grains go up when their costs of inputs increase. Domestic markets suffer and export competitiveness is also affected.

Seeds of vegetables and other minor crops, including those of pulses, sorghum and millet, recorded a sharper increase in their prices during the past one year and, more noticeably, during the first four months of this fiscal year, officials of Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, Sindh Abadgar Board and Agri Forum Pakistan say.

Minor crops' seeds are bought in smaller quantities. They come in smaller packaging, which is made up of plastic material. Prices of packaging material have risen after the rupee depreciation and the imposition of higher import and regulatory duties. This has made packaged seed bags and pouches all the more costlier, they say.

The same is true in the case of insecticides and pesticides that have mostly imported raw material. They are sold in bulk and their retail packaging is made up of mostly imported material.

In the past few years, the share of locally operating companies, including multinationals, has increased in seed, pesticide and insecticide production. But since local producers also rely on imported raw material for both products as well as packaging, they quickly raise prices of branded seeds and insect and pest killers.

A vast majority of our farmers uses machinery, including tractors, combined harvesters, tube wells, threshers and mechanised water sprinklers, on rent. Hourly and daily charges of such machinery continue to rise and farmers suffer in silence.

Prices of agricultural machinery and smaller tools and implements have increased in the wake of the rupee depreciation, higher fuel charges and import and regulatory duties. However, those who rent out machinery not only pass on the impact of higher costs, but also overcharge small farmers who use rented machinery and tools. But again, no integrated system for rent tracking is available. Perhaps provincial agriculture departments, Ministry of IT and Telecommunications and private-sector investors can join hands to implement real-time price-tracking systems in all areas of agricultural activities.

One way of assessing the extent of inflation for agricultural inputs is to keep an eye on the price movements in agricultural and food items of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). Better still, authorities can bifurcate the WPI on a rural-urban basis, incorporating more agricultural items in the former.

There is a direct relationship between the costs of agricultural inputs and local and export prices of food items. The time lag varies from three months to a year. So it will be difficult for the government to keep food prices in check during the current fiscal year. Even promoting food exports will be a challenge once the hike in electricity tariffs finally takes effect. — MA

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 29th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1441972/costly-inputs-are-squeezing-farmers-hard

BANANA IN, SUGAR CANE OUT

Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated October 29, 2018

THE area under banana cultivation is increasing. Fed up with the sugar cane's pricing and payment-related issues, growers have started switching over to banana cultivation. It ensures better and timely returns — something that the growers are in dire need of.

The increase in the banana acreage is in areas that have either sweet groundwater zones or are located in head reaches of perennial Nara and Rohri canals of the Sukkur Barrage. Influential political families, bureaucrats and uniformed officials own agricultural lands in these areas. They usually manage to get irrigation water flows — sometimes at the cost of the lower riparian growers who own lands in the same command areas of the two major canals that feed tail-end areas of Mirpurkhas and Badin districts.

Being a high-delta crop, banana grows mostly in Sindh, which meets Pakistan's 90 per cent consumption. According to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, banana was cultivated on 26,300 hectares in Sindh in 2014-15. Its countrywide cultivation in the same year was on 28,200ha. As per figures released by Sindh's agriculture department, banana grew on 28,200ha in the province in 2017-18. Its production was 109,472 tonnes in the same year.

Banana prices remained on the lower side until recently because of larger supplies. But the rate started rising when supplies dwindled towards the end of October

"Banana farming is impressively rising in Tando Allahyar, Matiari and Mirpurkhas. This increase is largely because of the dispute over the sugar cane's price and clearance of growers' liabilities. Growers who usually cultivated sugar cane now tend to switch over to banana cultivation. They also opt for intercropping of chillies to make an extra buck during the same season," says Karamullah Sand, a banana grower from Tando Allahyar, a most fertile district in lower Sindh.

Banana is a 16-18-month crop, which is usually in full swing in September-October. Prices remained on the lower side until recently because of larger supplies. But they started going up when supplies dwindled. The rate began rising at the end of October. Depending on the size of the crop, its production continues throughout the year.

Mr Sand says the going rate was Rs600-625 per 40 kilograms until Oct 17 this year. But on Oct 22, the rate rose to Rs700 per 40kg. It shows that either the exports to Kabul have begun or the supplies from farms have started declining. Such a situation always necessitates an increase in the rate.

The popular local variety under cultivation is Basrai or Bombay. Besides, an Australian variety called Williams has been under cultivation since the 1970s. Until the mid-2000s, Thatta district's riverine area stood out in banana cultivation within Sindh. But the bunchy top disease wiped out banana from the coastal district.

Later, super-floods in 2010 and a flow of 603,084 cusecs in 2016 inundated the district's riverine area and damaged the entire banana crop. The area is located between the two embankments of the mighty Indus. Lands in this area are leased out by the forest and revenue departments to influential families and individuals.

Tando Allahyar-based banana grower Imdad Ali Nizamani says the crop cycle usually remains the same with slight changes in overall production figures. Luckily, the crop remained unaffected by frost bite in the last three years. Frost bite hits if the temperature drops below six degrees, he says. A temperature of 15-35 degrees suits it, he adds. “We need to pay serious attention to improving the quality of the fruit given its export potential,” he says.

Farmers point out that although the area under banana cultivation has increased, the average per-acre production has dropped due to water shortages. The area of cultivation is increasing in Naseer, Jamrao and Mithrao canal systems, which are governed under the Rohri and Nara canal system that feed areas on the left bank of the Indus. “Growers ensure water supplies to banana to protect their monetary interests,” says Mr Sand.

Like the major crops of wheat, sugar cane, cotton and paddy, banana is also a cash crop. Umerkot-based cotton grower Mir Amanullah Talpur has cultivated banana on 32 acres out of his total landholding of 850 acres. He says the purpose of cultivating banana is to meet miscellaneous expenditures relating to farm management. The crop survives in the lower parts of Sindh while extreme cold in upper parts affects it adversely, he says.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 29th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1441971/banana-in-sugar-cane-out

AGREEMENT SIGNED TO PRODUCE SILAGE FOR LIVESTOCK FARMERS

By APP
Published: October 30, 2018

ISLAMABAD .: Provincial Minister for Commerce and Small Industries Muhammad Khan Toor Utmankhail has said it is time to promote small and medium-sized enterprises in the province and encourage young entrepreneurs to set up their business.

Talking to APP on Monday, the minister said the provincial government was designing programmes for youths to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. He said the government planned to provide adequate training to motivate young people towards entrepreneurship.

Utmankhail promised that the frustrated and pessimistic unemployed youths would be turned into progressive job-seekers under the government’s initiative. He said the government would then equip them with advanced skills to support their business ideas and help them materialise those ideas into successful start-ups.

The training would help the youth create space in the current business environment, he said, adding that the training would also help the existing entrepreneurs to strengthen their skills.

The minister expressed the hope that in future, young entrepreneurs would be playing their role in different fields, including minerals, agriculture, handicraft, fisheries and livestock.

He said the government had also taken initiatives to encourage more women entrepreneurs to participate in the business activity.

Utmankhail said that the strength of the province “lies in its natural resources and rich mineral deposits”.

He agreed that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a game-changer for the whole region which would bring development in Balochistan. "It is a major motivation for the capable people of the province to achieve swift economic growth through massive infrastructure development," he added.

The minister said the government would take all steps needed to realise the full benefits of CPEC.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1836929/1-agreement-signed-produce-silage-livestock-farmers/

SUGAR MILLS MUST CLEAR DUES TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR EXPORTS, SAYS SBP
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated October 31, 2018

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has asked sugar mills to clear dues of cane growers and begin crushing from November to become eligible for exporting the commodity.

Endorsing government's decision to allow sugar exports, the central bank on Tuesday attached a number of conditions on exporters and advised banks to ensure full compliance. The Ministry of Commerce has allowed sugar exports of one million tonnes.

Sugar millers have repeatedly pleaded with the government to allow exports of surplus commodity. They warned that due to surplus stocks, mill owners may not be able to purchase sugarcane for the coming season.

The decision comes at a time when the government is struggling to pay for debt servicing costs, filling the widening trade gap and increase its foreign exchange reserves.

The central bank has mandated upon all mill owners to submit required documents before allowing exports. The SBP directed the banks that

the owners are required to submit clearance certificate issued by the concerned Cane Commissioner to the effect that the mill has cleared outstanding dues of the farmers for sugarcane crop up to 2017-18.

"After November 15 the said clearance certificate will also certify that concerned sugar mill has started crushing at full capacity," said the SBP. In case export quota is granted prior to Nov 15, sugar mill will provide an undertaking that it will commence crushing from the said date, said the SBP.

Confirmation is also required from respective authorised dealers that the said sugar mill is not a defaulter of any bank in Pakistan. "There will be no freight or financial support by the federal or provincial governments for export under the above scheme," said the SBP.

The SBP made it clear that sugar mills who are defaulters of banks will not be allowed to export sugar. "Authorised dealers will ensure receipt of a minimum 15 per cent of total contract value as advance payment or obtain an irrevocable L/C from the buyer," said the SBP.

There will be no provision of surrendering the quota once allocated and in case of non-performance within the stipulated time against the quota allocated, authorised dealers will charge a penalty of 15 per cent of total contract value from the exporter and deposit in favor of government of Pakistan.

"All exports including those destined for Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics will be subject to receipt of export proceeds by wire transfer through banking channel," said the SBP.

Exporters must ship the sugar within 60 days from the date of approval regarding quota allocation. Both date of approval and date of shipment are included in counting of the 60 days period, said SBP.

Published in Dawn, October 31st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1442486/sugar-mills-must-clear-dues-to-be-eligible-for-exports-says-sbp

PSMA MAKES SUGARCANE CRUSHING CONDITIONAL
M RAFIQUE GORAYA

LAHORE: The 89-member Pakistan Sugar Mills Association, being the second biggest agro-based industry, has put up four demands to start 2018-19 sugar cane crushing season across the country next month.

The Association has demanded of the government to clear outstanding dues of about Rs 16.6 billion since 2011-12 and link the price of cane with the local price of the sugar instead of support price of Rs 180 per maund.

It said the government should allow export of one million tons of sugar without any strings as the Commerce Ministry had given permission only to those sugar mills to export sugar, which have paid arrears to farmers for all the crops up to 2017-18. Besides an inter-ministerial committee will have fortnightly meetings to review sugar stock, export and price situation.

PSMA further demanded that the FBR should collect tax on the actual price of sugar in the market rather than on Rs 60 per kg which is an injustice to the millers, growers and consumers.

The millers also suggested that the provincial cane commissioners should exercise their powers to end the role of middle man in the supply of sugarcane to the mills to protect the grower from economic exploitation. In this way the grower would get better price of his produce.

It is worth mentioning that currently Pakistan is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of area under sugar cane cultivation, 15th by production and 60th in yield. Today, there are approximately 89 functional sugar mills in the country out of which 45 are in Punjab, 37 in Sindh and seven in Khyber Pakhtonkhwa.

The sugar industry is a source of revenue by about Rs 22 billion to the growers by Rs 110-135 billion and to the vendors, other contractors, transporters and suppliers by about Rs 20 billion, beside providing direct and indirect livelihood to 1.2 million seasonal farm labour particularly in the rural areas of the country and employs over 75,000 people, including management experts, technologists, engineers, financial experts, skilled, semiskilled and unskilled worker.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/m/2018/10/31/6-page/746910-news.html

FIVE DAIRY PRODUCTION UNITS SEALED

RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) enforcement teams have unearthed five illicit dairy production units and sealed all sites for producing fake milk. The raids were conducted in the areas of Sahiwal, Arifwala and Pakpattan on Tuesday.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/10/31/27-page/747085-news.html

SPECIAL STATUS FOR RICE SECTOR PROPOSED TO BOOST EXPORTS
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana Updated November 01, 2018

KARACHI: The commerce ministry has prepared a proposal to include rice in the list of sectors under special incentives to promote exports and earn foreign exchange, said the ministry officials on Wednesday.

The ministry will put up the proposal before Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) in the next meeting.

Rice sector fetches $2 billion per annum in foreign exchange and is the second largest export commodity. The country is net exporter of rice and produces 60 per cent more than domestic demand.

Currently, five sectors enjoy government incentives to promote exports. These export-oriented sectors are exempted from sales tax, electricity load shedding, and gas load shedding — for period between December to February — in addition to enjoying reduced electricity tariffs.

Exporters have time and again urged the government to include rice among export-oriented sectors and the issue was also raised by the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) in a recent meeting with Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile Industry and Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood.

REAP Chairman Safdar Hussain Mehkri also took up the issue with Finance Minister Asad Umar who agreed to include rice sector among export-oriented sectors after Mehkri highlighted that rice make ups for almost 10pc of country's total exports.

Talking to Dawn, Mehkri said that successive governments have repeatedly asked rice producers to increase exports but were reluctant to offer incentives.

He said that rice exporters face tough competition from India and after recent devaluation of Indian rupee, the situation has worsened. He also said that rice crop yield in India is higher than in Pakistan due to cheap farm inputs.

Published in Dawn, November 1st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1442728/special-status-for-rice-sector-proposed-to-boost-exports

BODY FORMED TO REVIEW SUGAR CANE GROWERS' PLEAS ABOUT NON-PAYMENT OF DUES
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 01, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court on Wednesday constituted a seven-member committee to examine around 1,300 applications of sugar cane growers regarding non-payment of their dues.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar ruled that the high-powered committee, being formed under the supervision of the agriculture secretary, would conduct an exercise of reconciliation with regard to the applications of growers submitted to the cane commissioner office about alleged non-payment.

The cane commissioner will be the chairman of the committee while three representatives from each side will be the members.

They include president of the Sindh Growers Alliance Nawab Zubair Talpur, senior vice president of the Sindh Abadgar's Board Mehmood Nawaz Shah, Sindh chamber of agriculture president Kabool Khatian and three representatives of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association, Sindh zone.

Sugar mills owners will nominate their representatives within three days, it added.

The bench further said that the committee must complete the task within 45 days and directed the agriculture secretary to file a report in court.

Sindh govt told to set up the sugar cane control board within 10 days

The committee will examine the applications on an individual basis and may call each applicant individually or through his attorney for verification of claims, the order said, adding that the applicants must produce all relevant documents in support of their claims while the committee would also call sugar mills' representatives and ask them to produce all relevant record in support of their payment if any to the growers.

The bench in its order further observed that the committee would hold its sessions for completing the exercise at the office of the cane commissioner in Hyderabad on a daily basis in working hours.

The Sindh Growers' Alliance and others had moved the court submitting that hundreds of applications, filed by growers to the cane commissioner complaining of non-payment of their lawful dues by the sugar mills, were still pending.

However, the lawyers for sugar mills contended that a substantial amount had already been paid to the growers directly.

The bench observed that previously directions were given to the sugar mill owners to pay their liabilities, but the fact remained that unless the amount was properly reconciled, the court cannot reach any definitive conclusion.

After arguing at length, both sides agreed to a modality of the committee and the same was constituted by consent.

Board meeting to fix cane price ordered

The same bench directed the provincial authorities to set up a sugar cane control board as required under the Sugar Factories Control Act 1950, within 10 days and to immediately convene a meeting of the board to fix the sugar cane price.

The court ruled that the fixation of price should also include the cost element of production of sugar cane, the return to the grower from alternative crops and the general trend of prices of agricultural commodities and quality premium.

Disposing of the petitions of a lawyer and around 24 sugar mills along with PSMA (Sindh zone), the bench also said that the sugar mills must send a notice to the cane commissioner for showing their intention to start crushing strictly in accordance with Section 8 of the Sugar Factories Control Act.

It further ruled that the price of sugar cane fixed by the sugar cane control board must be notified by the provincial government before Nov 30.

Earlier, Agriculture Secretary Agha Zaheeruddin assured the bench that the sugar cane control board will be established within 10 days and a meeting will be immediately convened to fix the sugar cane price.

The petitioners pleaded for directions against the authorities concerned to establish the board and fulfilment of duties ancillary and incidental thereto.

The petitions were disposed of by consent, but the counsel for sugar mills owners submitted that the crushing season/date will be notified in accordance with Section 8 of the Sugar Factories Act.

Published in Dawn, November 1st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1442658/body-formed-to-review-sugar-cane-growers-pleas-about-non-payment-of-dues

PFA TO TEST INTENSITY OF PESTICIDES IN FIELDS
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 1, 2018

To ensure the provision of quality and safe food, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) will test pesticides sprinkled in fields to protect vegetables and fruits from insects for laboratory analysis. The purpose of the laboratory test is to know the presence and intensity of toxic substances in fruits and vegetables.

This decision was taken in a meeting chaired by PFA Director General Captain (retd) Muhammad Usman, held at his office on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by PFA additional director general (operations), PFA additional director general (technical) and other officers concerned.

Muhammad Usman said the PFA would prepare a comprehensive strategy for further proceeding in the light of laboratory report in collaboration with agriculture department. He said the strategy would help eliminate the remaining effects of toxic pesticides which hit to consumers health. He said several insect killers and insecticide do not remove speedily and their ingredients remain late in fruits and vegetables. “The PFA will keep an eye on the use of pesticide in fields as per law. We are already discouraging the practice of growing vegetables with untreated and industrial wastewater," he mentioned.

Meanwhile, the PFA launched a province-wide crackdown against jams (maraba) manufacturing units for inspecting the quality of food and food safety standards on Wednesday.

Following the directives of PFA DG, the food safety teams under the supervision of food safety officers have visited 43 units in a daylong activity.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 1st, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1838248/1-pfa-test-intensity-pesticides-fields/

PAKISTAN'S HORTICULTURE EXPORTS TO CHINA HAVE POTENTIAL TO REACH $1B
By Bilal Hussain

Published: November 2, 2018

KARACHI:All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) has extended recommendations to the government regarding the horticulture sector ahead of the prime minister's visit to China.

PFVA Patron-inChief Waheed Ahmed said that the sector's exports to China have the potential to reach $1 billion.

Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood has reached out to different industries and gathered input from stakeholders for their improved performance and enhanced exports.

Ahmed, who also happens to be Vice President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), said that the government, through the adviser, has expressed interest to identify ways for promotion of Pakistan's fruits and vegetables. "During his visit to the FPCCI, he informed that prime minister will be visiting China and requested for input and market access of fruits and vegetables to China," said Ahmed.

Ahmed added that a comprehensive document of proposal including the fruit and vegetable sector has been submitted to the adviser for further discussion by the PM during his visit. "I have been contacted by the adviser's office following our proposal submission," Ahmed appreciated. "The government seems serious and I am hopeful that it will move in the right direction."

According to the vice president, there exist bright chances for enhancement of horticulture trade between the two countries under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Pakistan can export fruits, vegetables and value added products worth $1 billion to China in the next five years. Using BRI roads and ports infrastructure, which could help widen Pakistan's access to new markets, the sector has estimated exports skyrocketing to $2.5 billion, from current $608 million, within five years.

A research-based proposal has been prepared with assistance from China.

According to Ahmed, the development of this proposal will steer technology transfer from China to Pakistan in the sector under consideration. Ahmed emphasised joint bilateral collaboration of private sectors for treatment of agriculture-related diseases.

Provision of quarantine facilities in the special economic zones for the purpose of raising horticulture trade with the South Asian giant has also been suggested.

"An opinion has also surfaced to inculcate awareness about Chinese quarantine regulations and export model among Pakistani exporters," the PFVA official stressed. "To ensure speedy clearance of trade cargo at Pakistani sea ports, assistance from the Chinese authorities has been sought so that the perishable cargo can effectively be transferred with minimal delay from sea ports to the vessels and go-downs."

A proposal was also extended to conduct trade in Chinese currency for decreasing dependence on American dollar. In the proposal, the government has been asked to convince its Chinese counterparts to allow Pakistani agricultural products at all ports in China via land and sea routes.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1839004/2-pakistans-horticulture-exports-china-potential-reach-1b/

SEAFOOD EXPORT DOWN BY 11.31PC
RECORDER REPORT
KARACHI: Pakistan's seafood export scaled back to $ 67.156 million in July-Sep 2018-19, down by 11.31 percent, official figures show.

Fall in seafood export now stands at $8.567 million in July-Sep 2018-19 from $75.723 million in July-Sep 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says.

In term of volume, the country exported 28,185 metric tons of seafood in July-Sep 2018-19, less by five percent or 1359 metric tons from 29,544 metric tons in July-Sep 2017-18.

Seafood export fell by 6.32 percent or $2.54 million to $37.620 million in Sep 2018 from $ 40.160 million in Sep 2017.

The country made 14,884 metric tons of seafood export in Sep 2018, which is almost stagnant with 0.29 percent growth or 4300 tons, comparing to the export of 14,841 metric tons in Sep 2017.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/02/5-page/747393-news.html

GROWERS ADVISED TO USE APPROVED WHEAT SEED VARIETIES
RECORDER REPORT NOV 2ND, 2018 LAHORE

The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) has advised the growers from Barani areas to use only approved varieties of wheat seed for sowing to achieve maximum per acre yield. The department has urged the growers to complete their cultivation by November 15 and use approved varieties of NARC 2009, BARS 2009, Dharabi 2011, Pakistan 2013, Fateh Jang 2016, Ihsan 2016, Barani 2017 and Chakwal 50.

The departmental spokesman further advised the growers to use 40-50 kilograms of wheat seed per acre with germination not less than 85 per cent. He further said that growers from areas with low rain percentage, such as Rajanpur, Layyah, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bhakkar, Mianwali and Khushab, should use one bag of DAP and two-third bag of urea with half bag of SOP or two bags of nitrophos per acre while preparing the land for sowing. While growers should use two bags of DPA and 1.25 bags of urea, half bag of SOP or five bags of single super phosphate (18 percent) and two bags of urea and half bag of SOP per acre in moderate and heavy rain fall areas. The spokesman also stressed the need for eradication of weeds in Barani areas for getting maximum yield.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181102420654/

BAN ON DAIRY DRINKS TO BE EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 5: PFA
ZAHID BAIG NOV 3RD, 2018 LAHORE

The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has imposed ban on the sale of dairy drinks being sold in market and issued a deadline of December 05 to the companies to recall their stock from the market. PFA Director General Muhammad Usman said that the decision to this effect was taken on the recommendations of PFA scientific panel.

He further said that children use dairy drink as replacement of milk and consider it as nutrient-rich. But, as a matter of fact, these are produced after extracting healthy fat and creams from milk and are low in solid fat. Usman further said that companies are selling flavored milk in the market which is a labeling fraud. He requested the citizens to avoid buying such products and use homemade products as they are best for children's growth.

Meanwhile, the PFA also decided to launch an awareness campaign through social media about nutrition among the masses. It would use its Facebook page for the general public. This was decided in a meeting held to review progress of public relations and awareness wing of last two months at his office on Friday.

Muhammad Usman said that qualified nutrition expert will be available on the page for guidance of general public. He said the PFA will also share live coverage of operation teams on its page occasionally. Usman said it will share instructions for food business operators.

The PFA will also launch a programme titled "My Menu" sharing the list of healthy and affordable food with the public. It is utilizing all available resources for the community awareness.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181103420911/

December 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 24TH TO DECEMBER 30TH 2018

2018: A YEAR OF LOSS FOR AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Shahid Shah

December 30, 2018

KARACHI: Agriculture sector witnessed some of the worst times in the outgoing year 2018, as input prices increased, while the country failed to meet production targets of kharif crops, including cotton, sugarcane and paddy.

This makes the lives of the majority of growers miserable, as they faced innumerable problems in dealing with the situation.

They said owing to rise in input prices and decline in production, they remained unable to feed their families and, in some cases, they fear bankruptcy.

According to State Bank of Pakistan’s annual report for FY18, credit outreach in the agriculture sector decreased by 5.1 percent, which shows banks were not opening their doors of credit to newcomers, which also affected the farmers.

Mehmood Nawaz Shah, senior vice president of Sindh Abadgar Board, told The News that it was a bad year for the growers, “overall, this is a loss year for the agriculturists,” he said.

During the last 25 years, it was the first time when water was released in the month of July and August, Shah said, adding that this not only affected the crop production, but also environment, as ‘katcha’ areas and lakes get recharged in kharif.

Flowering of mangoes was also affected in lower Sindh because the plants could not get water on time. “In some areas, paddy was sown late, while water supply was stopped in November, which affected the crop,” he said.

Last year was not good for cotton production, and this year too, it is likely to go further down by nearly 20 percent. Sugarcane is likely to go down around 30 percent. Minor crops, including orchards of mangoes and banana have also been affected, he said.

“This happened because of acute water shortage and less rainfall.”

Shah said that the lack of governance in managing sugarcane prices and crushing season also had a bad impact on the growers. Besides, input prices, including fertiliser, diesel and pesticides have increased up to 20 percent, which increased the cost of production.

Meanwhile, paddy and phutti (seedcotton) growers get some relief due to the devaluation of the rupee during the period under review, as they got better price for non-basmati paddy at Rs1,100/maund and Rs2,800 to Rs3,000/maund for ‘phutti’ (seedcotton).

Kabool Muhammad Khatian, chairman of Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, said that the growers received negligible rates for vegetables, including onions and tomato. Tomatoes were sold at wholesale rate of around Rs30 to Rs40/10kg. “Whatever is purchased from the former at Rs40, it is being sold in the market at Rs100. Retailers are having profit of around Rs150 percent. The benefit is neither reaching to farmer nor the consumer. This trend needs to be changed,” he said.

“Federal government does not seem interested in the growth of agriculture sector,” he said, adding: “Farmers are unable to feed their families. They are going to be bankrupt, as devaluation of the rupee has hurt them with higher cost of inputs." "Around 80 percent people are related to agriculture sector, while government policies are against the sector," he said.

Khatian said that agriculture inputs, including fertiliser (DAP), diesel and pesticides were imported items and their prices increased nearly 30 percent in a year with currency devaluation.

"Quality pesticides are imported from Switzerland, Germany and Italy, while China is supplying substandard pesticides at lower rates," he added. "Diesel is not only used in the tractors for cultivation of the land, but all goods transport vehicles also use it. Thus, farm-to-market cost has also increased."

He demanded the government to improve its agriculture-related policies and remove inefficient ministers, including the finance minister, who failed to give any incentives to the farmers.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/412114-2018-a-year-of-loss-for-agriculture-sector

FISHERMEN'S DEMANDS ACCEPTED: BULEDI
By Mohammad Zafar

Published: December 30, 2018

QUETTA : The provincial government has accepted all demands of protesting fishermen and the chief minister is approaching Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Zaidi to ensure their accessibility under the East-Bay Expressway in Gwadar.

In a series of tweets on Saturday, Balochistan Minister for Information and Higher Education Zahoor Buledi said Chief Minister Jam Kamal had approved the acceptance of the demands of the fishermen.

Fishermen in the coastal belt of Gwadar have been on strike for two weeks against the construction of the expressway which has cut off routes to the Arabian Sea, which is affecting their livelihood.

Buledi said, "Balochistan CM Jam Kamal has approved all the demands of fishermen about East-Bay Expressway, which include construction of breakwater, boat basin and auction hall. Gwadar Development Authority has been asked to initiate the approval and bidding process as soon as possible.

"Moreover, CM Jam Kamal is approaching Minister for Maritimes Affairs Ali Zaidi to ensure the accessibility of fishermen under East-Bay Expressway."

The expressway project is part of the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor. According to sources, the six-lane expressway along with the provision of a 30 metres wide railway corridor will connect Gwadar with Makran Coastal Highway through the 2,300 acres free trade zone of the port city.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1877261/1-fishermens-demands-accepted-buledi/

BUYERS AWAY FROM COTTON MARKET ON LACK OF INTEREST
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 29TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Not a single deal was reported on the cotton market on Friday as both buyers and seller did not take interest in fresh deals, dealers said.

The official spot rate was unchanged at Rs 8,700, they added. Prices of seed cotton in Sindh were at Rs 3000-4000, in the Punjab seed cotton prices at Rs 3200-4000 and in Balochistan, rates of seed cotton were at Rs 3600-3900, they said.

In the ready session, no any deal was finalised owing to lack of buying interest, they said.

Market sources said that uncertainties created among the leading participants owing to likely mini budged in January 2019.

Besides, cotton analyst, Naseem Usman said that bank closing is also a factor behind the dullness in the cotton market.

What are possibilities in the budget, participants were busy in exchanging views over more taxes, rise in essentials and further increase in the dollar's value in terms of the rupee, he added.

In the international markets, cotton prices moved both ways, dealers said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181229435683/

MODI CONSIDERS THREE OPTIONS TO AID INDIAN FARMERS HIT BY LOW CROP PRICES
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 29TH, 2018 | NEW DELHI

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is considering three options for a relief package to help farmers suffering because of low crop prices at a cost of as much as 3 trillion rupees ($42.82 billion), according to three government sources. The possibilities are a direct payment to all landowning farmers, compensation for those who sold produce below government prices, and a loan forgiveness program.

Modi is desperate to claw back support among India's 263 million farmers and their many millions of dependents after his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost power earlier this month to the opposition Congress in three big heartland states. A general election has to be held by May.

The government is keen to find a way to get money to farmers as quickly and simply as possible so that they can feel the benefits before the election. That could come at a major cost to its budget, which is already strained because of lower-than-expected tax revenues, and is likely to undermine its fiscal deficit target for the year ending in March.

The BJP won much of the rural vote at the last election in 2014 but there has been increasing anger with the government in the countryside because Modi has tried to get the market to play a bigger role in setting prices and sought to reduce government intervention. Healthy crop production in the past two years and lower than expected exports have combined to drive prices down at a time when some farm costs have been surging.

The quickest option, and currently the most favored inside the government, is to directly pay landowning farmers 1,700-2,000 rupees per acre, said two of the sources, including one at the farm ministry. They spoke on condition they not be identified.

The finance ministry estimates such a scheme, which means farmers would get the money before next sowing season, could cost up to 1 trillion rupees. The second option would be to compensate farmers for the difference they received by selling their produce in the market compared with the government price that is set for grains and some other products, one of the finance ministry officials said. That would be cheaper, costing about 500 billion rupees, the official added.

That option has some major drawbacks, though, as government support schemes have lost credibility because they don’t cover all farm produce and claiming from the government has often proven difficult. Middlemen have also taken advantage of such schemes by persuading the farmer to give them part of any subsidy or compensation.

The most expensive option – at a cost of as much as 3 trillion rupees – and the least favored inside the government, would involve writing off farm loans by up to 100,000 rupees per person. That is a policy that is being pushed hard by the opposition Congress party.

MODI IN SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS

“Broadly speaking, the government is considering three options – writing off some farm loans, introducing a price differential plan and direct transfer of cash to farmers,” said a source at the farm ministry.

All three sources, said that the government has not yet discussed the ways in which it plans to fund any of the schemes. In the last week Modi had a series of meetings with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Agriculture Ministry Radha Mohan Singh and officials from its top think tank Niti Aayog to weigh its options for a farm relief program.

BJP President Amit Shah also met Agriculture Minister Singh last night to discuss the proposals, according to a senior cabinet minister, who did not want to be named. The government is also planning to buttress any package by revising the existing crop insurance policy to facilitate easier settlement of claims and also give greater non-collateralized credit assess to farmers, the minister said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181229435654/

SUGAR MILLS OWNERS URGED TO ENSURE PAYMENT TO GROWERS BY NEXT WEEK
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 29TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Punjab Minister for Population Welfare Colonel Hashim Dogar (retd) has asked the sugar mills owners to ensure payment of pending amount to the sugarcane growers till next week. He also asked the mills owners to settle down their matters with banks so that the cane growers could get their rights.

The minister was chairing a meeting held in connection with the payment of arrears of worth 880 million rupees to the sugarcane cultivators here on Friday.

Cane Commissioner Punjab Wajid Ali Shah, Deputy Commissioner Kasur Sarwat Saeed and the representatives of Pattoke Sugar Mill and Brothers Sugar Mill attended the meeting.

While speaking on this occasion, the minister said that the matter regarding payment to growers has taken much time, now it should be resolved on immediate basis.

He said that Punjab government is strictly monitoring the crushing season and CM Punjab Usman Buzdar is himself looking into the matter. CM Punjab has assigned the task to all senior officers including Cabinet Members of protecting the rights of cultivators.

The minister said that a crackdown is being conducted against the middlemen across the province and cases are being registered against the exploiters of the cane growers. Measures and scales are being strictly monitored and no one would be allowed to violate the rules, he added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181229435607/

GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ARREST RISE IN UREA PRICES
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN | DEC 28TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The government has failed to arrest urea prices as half measures taken with the approval of Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet have not worked, well informed sources told Business Recorder.

"Ministry of Industries and Production (MoI&P)) has taken a few half measures to control shortage of urea fertilizer and bring down its market price in the critical wheat planting season but the half measures have not proven effective as urea is now retailing at Rs 1860 per bag to farmers in the Punjab and KPK provinces. This is uncontrolled market price increase of Rs 10 per bag versus last week," the sources added.

Last week MoI&P instructed the National Fertilizer Marketing Limited (NFML) to start selling imported urea but it was too little, too late. The NFML received 100,000 tons of imported urea in December and began selling last week. However, this did not reduce market price of urea.

The total quantity of 100,000 tons imported so far by Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and handed over to NFML is apparently too small to lower market price of urea. Another 50,000 tons of urea is expected to be contracted for import by January, 2019.

According to sources, before last week, the NFML was not selling its stock due to which holding of stock by the NFML in the main Urea season allowed its price to climb to Rs. 1860 per bag. Ministry of Industries had also threatened action against urea manufactures if they fail to release their held stocks.

Wheat is the major food crop and shortage of urea could mean lower wheat production in the country. Last year in December, 2017, the price of urea was Rs 1370 per bag which implies a jump of almost Rs 500 per bag in 12 months, mainly due to its shortage, the sources continued. Insiders claim that MOI&P is being pushed to ensure the two marginal urea manufacturing plants which were given assurance of gas till January 31, 2019 are kept operational till at least April 30, 2019, adding that if this is not done, then another 270,000 tons of urea fertilizer will have to be imported in addition to the already approved quantity of 150,000 tons to reduce shortage of urea in the country.

The sources further stated that the ECC on September 10, 2018 had allowed import of 0.1 million tons of urea through TCP, which reported that cost of 50 kg bag excluding NFML charges stood at Rs 2,555.88 per bag. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported that price of 50 kg Sona urea bag for week ending on December 13, 2018 was Rs 1778 whereas price of other urea for the week ending on December 13, 2018 was Rs 1757 per bag. The NFML has suggested that dealer booking price of imported urea be kept less at least Rs 100-150 lower than local urea brand price. The Ministry of Industries and Production submitted detail of the subsidy impact to be borne by GoP with existing NFML handling charge rate of Rs 21/bag and proposed increase of Rs 70/bag by NFML.

Regarding domestic urea prices, it was suggested by Finance Division and Ministry of National Food Security & Research that selling price of Rs 50/kg imported urea gab be fixed at Rs 50 less than the prevailing market price i.e. Rs 1707/50kg per bag. However, Dealer Transfer Price (DTP) of urea fertilizer by fertilizer industry is Rs 1712/50 kg per bag. Ministry of Industries and Production proposed that dealer transfer price for NFML dealers be kept at par with DTP of the fertilizer industry i.e. 1712/50 kg per bag which was also approved by the ECC.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181228434997/

PAD STARTS MANAGEMENT OF COTTON FOR BETTER PRODUCTION
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 28TH, 2018 | LAHORE
The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAD) has started off-season management of cotton for better production during next season. The off-season management strategy if adopted well before cotton sowing would minimize the chances of attack by pink bollworm and other pests, said a spokesman of the department on Thursday.
It is in the interest of cotton grower to adopt off-season management strategy after last picking of cotton crop. Farmers should cut cotton sticks from their field till 31st January and place them outside their field in vertical direction so that pupa of bollworm is destroyed. After that farmers should plough their land with Chisel plough for destruction of remaining of pink bollworm. It has also been observed that off-season pest management strategy adopted by the agriculture department and farmers delivered higher cotton production during the last year. Early harvest and stalk destruction are among the most effective cultural and mechanical practices for managing overwintering bollworms if done on an area wide basis. These practices reduce habitat and food available to the boll weevil, pink bollworm, bollworm and tobacco budworm.

11 SUGAR MILLS YET TO START CANE CRUSHING

The Newspaper’s Staff Correspondent December 28, 2018

HYDERABAD: Out of the total 38 sugar mills of Sindh, 27 are said to have started cane crushing for the season 2018-19.

The Sindh government had fixed the date of Nov 30 for the start of cane crushing this year but the process has started belatedly as a notification regarding sugar cane procurement price was issued only in the first week of December.

The mills that have started crushing include a few of those owned by the Omni Group, which is currently facing an investigation into its dubious operations involving money-laundering and other offences. The probe is being conducted by a joint investigation team (JIT).

In the previous season, 34 of the total 38 mills had done cane crushing to produce sugar but in the current season, only 27 have started producing sugar so far. A few more are expected to follow suit in coming days.

While cane production this year has been affected due to water shortage, farmers are not offered the notified rate from millers, who have moved the Sindh High Court against the notified price of Rs182 per 40kg. No interim order has been passed as yet by the court in favour of millers.

Cane growers say that some mills in upper Sindh are paying the notified price but those of lower Sindh are not ready to offer the official rate.

A decline in sugar cane acreage is being reported and it is be assessed by the agriculture department after final figures pertaining to the crop are compiled.

Last year, sugar mills did not pay the notified price of Rs182 per 40kg and instead approached the high court. An arrangement for payment of Rs160 per 40kg was agreed upon between millers and growers with the court leaving the payment of the differential amount subject to a decision by the apex court on identical cases that had been pending before the latter.

Growers claimed that wheat sowing this year had also been affected because of delayed harvesting of the cane crop. In some areas, farmers expect that sugar cane rate would go up in the next few days.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture vice president Nabi Bux Sathio said that millers, as usual, were denying the notified cane price to farmers this year. He complained that the provincial government also looked the other way leaving growers at the mercy of millers.

The cane growers from lower Sindh are also fighting their case for payment of last year’s liabilities. A committee was formed by the Sindh High Court with equal representation of millers’ and growers’ organisations to take a decision on clearing the dues.

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https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181227434789/

UREA, DAP SALES FALL ON HIGH PRICES

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Updated December 27, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) sales have dropped in November mainly because of high rates but the situation is expected to change in the current month due to Rabi crop demand.

The figures released by National Fertiliser Development Centre (NFDC) shows total urea offtake was recorded at 497,000 tonnes in November, showing a decline of 17.4 per cent year-on-year.

Similarly, DAP offtake decreased by 47pc to 265,000 tonnes against November 2017, and the sale of nutrients too faced a downward trend.

The government allowed import of an additional 100,000 tonnes of urea this December — taking the total limit to 1.1 million tonnes — to put a leash on local urea prices and tackle supply shortages.

Since November 2017, urea prices have witnessed an increase of 26pc.

Analysts said the raised import quota is unlikely to challenge pricing power of local manufacturers under current scenario as the local urea prices are still lower than the international rates.

This is thanks to the hefty subsidy government is offering on the chemical, currently estimated to be Rs845 per bag. The Trading Corporation of Pakistan informed the Economic Coordination Committee that the cost per 50 kg bag, excluding NFML charges (Rs21 per tonne), stood at Rs2,556 per tonne. But after the state subsidy, the new urea price per bag comes to be Rs1,712.

NFML had suggested that dealer booking price of imported urea be lowered by at least Rs100-150 than local urea brand price. The government will have to pick a Rs845per bag subsidy.

For DAP, the sales have been 8.1pc lower in 11MCY18 compared to the cumulative offtake in similar period last year. On the other hand, its prices surged by 29pc in one year since November 2017.

The increase in global oil prices was one of the factors triggering the rise of urea and DAP prices.

However, experts believe that the sales of urea, DAP and the nutrient will improve from the current month due to the demand for Rabi crop.

“In our opinion, the decline in nutrient consumption is just a temporary phenomenon as issues with sugarcane crushers are now resolved and crop harvest should resume, we expect the fall to reverse in December since sugarcane harvest is completed,” said Suneel Kumar, an analyst at Optimus Capital.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1453866/urea-dap-sales-fall-on-high-prices

SINDH GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES VARIOUS UPLIFT SCHEMES IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR: MINISTER

RECORDER REPORT | Dec 27th, 2018 | HYDERABAD

“Sindh government has launched various development schemes in agriculture sector and distributing agriculture tools with financial assistance of the World Bank in order to facilitate the small growers and improve agriculture produces of the province.” Sindh Agriculture Minister Muhammad Ismail Rahu stated this while addressing the ceremony of distribution of auto-loaders through electronic balloting, here on Wednesday.

Pakistan is agriculture based country and the contribution of agriculture sector in the national economy is more than other sectors, the minister said. He said the provincial government is making all-out efforts to uplift the living standard of the small growers and the scheme of providing auto-loaders is one of the plans of the government. Under this scheme which launched with financial assistance of the World Bank, the minister informed that the growers would have pay only 30 percent amount of the total cost.

The agriculture department had received a total of 7408 applicants from small growers in this regard and today electronic balloting held for provision of one thousand auto-loaders to small growers, he informed. The minister said that the growers of Sindh had suffered great pressure because of shortage of 40 percent water during Kharif season and survey is indicating that they would also face 45 percent of shortage during Rabi crops.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181227434789/

MINISTER FEARS FALL IN AGRICULTURE PRODUCE DUE TO SHORTAGE OF WATER

By Our Correspondent

Published: December 27, 2018

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu has said that the province’s farmers have been encountering 45% shortage of water during the winter crops sowing season while the shortage was 40% during the summer sowing. During a ceremony of electronic draw for winners of 1,000 auto loaders in Hyderabad on Wednesday, he informed the media that a drop in agricultural production will be an inalienable outcome of the scarcity.

The minister held the federal government responsible for the growing shortage. “If the percentage of shortage is one in the national water system and another for Sindh, then it’s an injustice,” he said, tacitly suggesting that the bigger province Punjab does not share equal shortfall with Sindh.

“Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s government has proved to be a tsunami for the people associated with the agriculture sector,” he contended, pointing to the increasing price of fertiliser and other agricultural inputs on the back of expensive public utilities and a depreciating Pakistani currency.

The minister emphasised that Sindh should get due share from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. He said that the provincial government had been trying to include some irrigation and agriculture projects in the CPEC. He expressed hope that the corridor will help enable the two sectors to advance by applying modern methods of irrigation and cropping as well as through the technology.

The minister informed that as many as 7,408 applications were received for 70% subsidised auto loaders among whom 1,000 recipients of the vehicles were selected through the draw. Responding to a question about implementation of Rs182 per 40 kilogrammes rate of sugarcane crop, he assured that the provincial government will ensure that the farmers get that price from the sugar mills.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1875263/1-minister-fears-fall-agriculture-produce-due-shortage-water/

OILSEED CULTIVATION – A WIN ON ALL SIDES
BR Research December 26, 2018

China plans to remove import and export tariffs on a range of goods at the start of January next year. For most part, Pakistan will not be the beneficiary as the adjustments impacts industries such as aircraft engines, information technology products and pharmaceutical goods. But there is good news to be had, if Pakistan can capitalize on the opportunity. US was one of the main suppliers of soybean to China. Given the trade war, China is looking for alternative meals that can be used in animal feed.

Import tariffs on rapeseed meal, cotton meal, sunflower meal, and palm meal will be removed starting January 1, 2019. While some imports of US soybean have resumed, China's official statement expresses the belief that removal of tariffs on alterative meals will help improve the reliability of its animal feed meal supply chains.

Pakistan has historically had abysmally low levels of oil seed cultivation, despite fitting in the cropping system. Research indicates that cultivation can be in the form of rice-sunflower-rice and cotton-sunflower-cotton, but corn, rice, wheat, and sugarcane are generally more remunerative.

Growing various oil seeds and converting them into meal would enable Pakistan to tap in China's $12.7 billion soybean feed market. The US China trade war has opened up a whole host of opportunities for exports to China to diminish the trade deficit. While high end exports such as aircraft engines are not feasible, markets such as animal feed can be explored.

However, while tariffs can be changed with the stroke of a pen, changing crops historically cultivated would require years to increase acreage and yield. Detractors could argue that by the time Pakistan has grown sufficient crop and enhanced processing facilities, the trade war could have cooled down. Other countries with readily available supply chains could be taking care of China's import needs.

Pakistan is highly dependent on palm oil imports for ghee and has increased soybean imports for meal. Increase in cultivation in oil seeds would contribute positively towards the edible oil sector and has been repeated the request of related associations such as PEORA (Pakistan Edible Oil Refiners Association) and APSEA (All Pakistan Solvent Extractors Association).

Other than the need to import substitute palm oil and soybean, oilseeds such as canola have a superior nutrient profile and are an excellent feed for animals and birds, especially poultry. By increasing the acreage under oil seeds, Pakistan could import substitute and enhance exports in the long run while improving the nutrition for people and animal alike. It's a win on all fronts.

https://www.brecorder.com/2018/12/26/461462/oilseed-cultivation-a-win-on-all-sides/

DEMAND FOR FOOD TO RISE BY OVER 50 PERCENT GLOBALLY: WRI REPORT

ZAHID BAIG | Dec 26th, 2018 | LAHORE

As the global population grows from 7 billion in 2010 to a projected 9.8 billion in 2050, and incomes grow across the developing world, overall food demand is on the course to increase by more than 50 percent, and demand for animal-based foods by nearly 70 percent.

Yet today hundreds of millions of people remain hungry, agriculture already uses almost half of the world's vegetated land, and agriculture and related land-use change generate one quarter of annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

This has been claimed in a report recently released by the World Resources Institute (WRI) titled 'creating sustainable food future'. This synthesis report proposes a menu of options that could allow the world to achieve a sustainable food future by meeting growing demands for food, avoiding deforestation, and reforesting or restoring abandoned and unproductive land and in ways that help stabilize the climate, promote economic development, and reduce poverty.

The report estimates that the world has to grow 56 percent more crop calories in year 2050 than what was being produced in year 2010. Similarly, the difference between global agricultural land area in 2010 and the area required in 2050 even if crop and pasture yields continue to grow at past rates, it is estimated this gap at 593 million hectares (Mha), an area nearly twice the size of India.

The difference between the annual GHG emissions likely from agriculture and land-use change in 2050 has been estimated at 15 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent (Gt CO2e), and a target of 4 Gt that represents agriculture's proportional contribution to holding global warming below 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures. The report therefore estimate this gap to be 11 Gt. Holding warming below a 1.5°C increase would require meeting the 4 Gt target plus reforesting hundreds of millions of hectares of liberated agricultural land.

This report to meet these targets suggests a five course remedy which includes reducing growth in demand for food and agricultural products, increase in food production without expanding agricultural land, exploit reduced demand on agricultural land to protect and restore forests, savannas, and peat lands, increase fish supply through improved wild fisheries management and aquaculture; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural production.

Increased efficiency of natural resource use is the single most important step toward meeting both food production and environmental goals. This means increasing crop yields at higher than historical (linear) rates, and dramatically increasing output of milk and meat per hectare of pasture, per animal, particularly cattle and per kilogram of fertilizer. If today's levels of production efficiency were to remain constant through 2050, then feeding the planet would entail clearing most of the world's remaining forests, wiping out thousands more species, and releasing enough GHG emissions to exceed the 1.5°C and 2°C warming targets enshrined in the Paris Agreement even if emissions from all other human activities were entirely eliminated.

Closing the food gap will be far more difficult if we cannot slow the rate of growth in demand. Slowing demand growth requires reducing food loss and waste, shifting the diets of high meat consumers toward plant based foods, avoiding any further expansion of bio-fuel production, and improving women's access to education and healthcare in Africa to accelerate voluntary reductions in fertility levels, the report adds. The report also stresses the need for ensuring that food production is increased through yield growth (intensification) and not expansion, and productivity gains do not encourage more shifting, governments must explicitly link efforts to boost crop and pasture yields with legal protection of forests, savannas, and peatlands from conversion to agriculture.

The report also suggests that fully closing the gaps requires many innovations. Fortunately, researchers have demonstrated good potential in every necessary area. Opportunities include crop traits or additives that reduce methane emissions from rice and cattle, improved fertilizer forms and crop properties that reduce nitrogen runoff, solar-based processes for making fertilizers, organic sprays that preserve fresh food for longer periods, and plant-based beef substitutes. A revolution in molecular biology opens up new opportunities for crop breeding. Progress at the necessary scale requires large increases in R&D funding, and flexible regulations that encourage private industry to develop and market new technologies, the report concludes.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181226434389/

AS INVESTORS FLEE, POOREST COUNTRIES ARE HIT HARDEST

While the Federal Reserve raises rates, money drains from emerging markets

India "is very vulnerable to the fallout to the readjustment of global interest rates."

Vikram Singh is accustomed to life under the tyranny of elements he cannot control, from rains that do not fall to insects that tear at his crops. Lately, one unchanging trouble is plaguing his family — rising prices. "Everything has gone up," Mr. Singh said on a recent afternoon, as his family members plucked a meager cotton harvest on their one-acre patch of earth in the Indian state of Gujarat. He rattled off the items that cost more. The lentils that are a staple of his family's diet. The cotton-oil cakes they feed to their dairy cows. Fertilizer. Diesel fuel for their tractor. Clothing, and school fees for the four children. Across this nation of more than 1.3 billion people, as in many of the world's developing countries, versions of such tribulations are playing out. The strain of higher prices reflects a global change in sentiment as the United States Federal Reserve — known, not for nothing, as the central bank for the world — steadily lifts interest rates, as it did last week. Investors have been pulling money out of riskier developing countries and entrusting it to safer, more established economies like the United States. That has sent the value of currencies plunging from Argentina to Turkey to India, making basic goods more expensive for households and businesses, while amplifying debts. "Farmers are losing money," Mr. Singh said. "We just survive. We are earning less and spending more." As money abandons emerging markets, commercial activity is slowing, magnifying concerns about a broader deceleration of growth in the global economy. Such worries have been adding to troubles in stock markets around the world, including the United States, with investors absorbing the likelihood of leaner times. The change in the flow of money has been engineered in part by people in Washington, far from Mr. Singh's farm in western India. The American central bank has been raising interest rates, ending the era of ultracheap money unleashed a decade ago as the world plunged into the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Back when rates were effectively zero, investors scoured the globe for higher returns, placing big bets on highrisk, high-reward countries — India among them — propping up the value of currencies. With the Federal Reserve now reversing course, money has been washing back to the United States, bolstering the American dollar, while depressing emerging market currencies. Last year, global investors delivered $315 billion in fresh capital to the stock and bond markets of emerging economies, not counting China, according to an analysis by Oxford Economics in London. This year, the flow dropped to $105 billion through October. Many economies have seen outright reversals, with Argentina, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey seeing overall declines. "You have the perfect cocktail of risks for emerging markets," said Nafez Zouk, Oxford's lead emerging markets economist. This turnaround has exposed many countries to a painful reckoning, contributing to full-blown crises in Turkey and

Argentina. There, precipitous plunges in currencies have left companies that borrowed in dollars staring at impossible debts. Argentina was forced to accept a $50 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund. India is in no imminent danger. Official data shows the economy expanding at well over a 7 percent annual clip, though the pace is slowing. The official inflation rate, below 4 percent, is not flashing emergency. But beneath these headline figures are significant troubles that are prompting money to leave India, applying pressure to families and businesses. Given that India imports more goods than it exports, the effects are potent. Any increase in cost, any factor discouraging companies from hiring, strains a country in which one in five people survive on no more than $1.90 per day, according to the World Bank. “India is a country that is very vulnerable to the fallout to the readjustment of global interest rates,” said Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate economist at Columbia University and a former chief economist at the World Bank. India imports more than 80 percent of its oil. Though the price of Brent crude oil — the global benchmark — has plummeted over the last two months, it has more than doubled since early 2016. Oil is priced in United States dollars. Its increase, combined with a 10 percent decline in the value of the rupee this year, has lifted the cost of petroleum-based products, from fuel to chemicals, used by key parts of Indian industry. Concerns are mounting about rising debt levels as the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi unleashes spending aimed at winning popular support ahead of next year’s elections. Worries fester over bad loans choking a banking system still dominated by the government. Doubts about India’s economic vigor have been enhanced as Mr. Modi’s government has sniped with the Reserve Bank of India, suggesting it should hand over some of its cash to finance public spending. The drama has resonated as an attack on the central bank’s independence, an impression only enhanced this month by the sudden resignation of the bank’s governor, Urjit Patel. All of this has combined to prompt investors to yank their money out of India, pushing the rupee down. In Gujarat, Mr. Modi’s home state, and a center of business, many local industries require imports to make their wares — especially petroleum products. Gujarat’s largest city, Ahmedabad, a dusty, traffic-choked metropolis of six million people, is home to factories that produce plastics, from packaging materials to the film covering greenhouses. Many of the necessary petroleum products have risen in price by as much as 35 percent. At the same time, a glut of plastics factories worldwide has prevented producers from raising prices, hurting profit margins. “We are very much affected,” said Jigish Doshi, president of the Plastindia Foundation, an alliance of plastic industry trade groups that collectively represent more than 50,000 plastics companies across India. Mr. Doshi’s own company, the Vishakha Group, makes plastic pipes used for irrigation. The fall in the rupee has lifted the cost of the raw materials by 15 percent over the last year. “We are slowing our production,” he said. Gujarat is also a major source of dyes used for coloring textiles and plastic household goods. The fall in the rupee has given Indian exporters a competitive advantage, reducing the price of their wares in dollar terms. So has the Trump administration’s tariffs on Chinese goods. Indian companies are gaining orders from American manufacturers seeking alternatives to Chinese suppliers, said Bipin Patel, a director at Jay Chemical Industries, which operates four dye-making factories in Ahmedabad and exports to some 75 countries. But the raw materials used to make dyes have risen in price, cutting Jay Chemical’s profit margin in half. That trend may still be unfolding. “The rupee is unsustainable,” said Sebastian Morris, an economist at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad. “It can fall quite a bit more.” At a Mercedes dealership in the center of Ahmedabad, where the most expensive model, the Maybach S 650 sedan, sells for 35 million rupees (more than $486,000), sales staff fret that the weaker rupee has inflated the costs of the vehicles. The top models are imported from factories in Germany. Two blocks away, on a patch of garbage-strewn dirt within view of the dealership’s spinning Mercedes logo, some 600 people live without electricity in shacks fashioned with boards, plastic tarps and sheets of corrugated aluminum. Women scrub pots using water delivered once a day by a municipal tanker. Children pound sticks in the dirt for lack of toys. Most of the families are migrants from villages who survive as so-called ragpickers, earning less than $3 a day as they scour city streets for discarded materials they can sell — plastic bottles, scraps of paper, pieces of metal. Laxman Gohel, a 38-year-old father of two, saved enough from ragpicking to open a tea shop. He boils water over a charcoal fire, making sales of about 1,500 rupees a day (about $21). But the price of charcoal has more than doubled over the last year, leaving him with perhaps 300 rupees in daily profit. He cannot pass on the costs. “These poor people cannot pay me more,” he said. Across an alleyway, Shahbaz Ansari, 17, works part time repairing truck tires at his father’s roadside stall. He is in his final year of high school. After graduation, he imagines a job inside an air-conditioned office. Mr. Gohel scoffed. “Do you have money to pay a bribe to get a job?” he said. “Nobody gets a job after 12th grade.” Even the children of middle-class homes worry about declining opportunities. As they sipped fresh juice procured from a sidewalk stand, four students enrolled in a three-year college program in business administration expressed fears that the program may not deliver them to their desired management jobs. “The rupee is falling day by day,” said Vatsal Thakkar, 18. “Wages are falling, so I’m thinking about going to Canada.” Thirty miles northwest of Ahmedabad in the town of Kadi, the Singh family’s fortunes are firmly tethered to their land. Last year, torrential rains destroyed their cotton crop. This year, an insect infestation cut it by half. On a recent afternoon, Mr. Singh’s wife, Sonal Ben, stood in the 95-degree heat, pulling puffs of cotton from the plants that have flowered, and depositing them into plastic bags. Mr. Singh will use his tractor to haul the crop to a trader in town. The diesel that fuels his vehicle has increased in price by one-fifth. Yet when he brings his crop to market, he cannot recoup the additional costs. “The traders decide on the price,” he said. “I don’t decide.” The traders themselves insist they are themselves at the mercy of global forces, accepting whatever price is dictated by commodity pits from New York to São Paulo, Brazil. “Now, we are losing money,” said Prahlad Bhai Patel, owner of a cotton mill in Kadi. Ordinarily, Mr. Patel’s company sells half its product to domestic factories that spin cotton, and exports the other half to Bangladesh, China, Pakistan and Vietnam. Lately, he just piles up bales at a loading dock, waiting for better days. The price for his exports is now too low to cover his costs, he said.

http://iht.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx

NEED FOR POLICY INTERVENTION
Muhammad Imran Azeem December 24, 2018

Agriculture is an integral part of the country’s economy. However, owing to the ill-conceived policies of the last two regimes, the sector experienced low annual growth and its share in GDP consistently declined from 24 per cent in 2004-05 to 18.9pc in 2017-18.

Consequently, Pakistan has become a net importer of food, with a food trade deficit of about $1.4 billion.

High energy prices and rapid depreciation have triggered a significant rise in the prices of locally produced and imported agricultural inputs. High input prices increase the cost of production and reduce agricultural profitability. Poor and marginalised farmers become the worst victims. There is a considerable decline in overall production and a subsequent increase in domestic food prices.

It is high time for the PTI to fulfil its election promises about cheaper inputs to make agriculture a thriving enterprise. Farmers’ access to quality inputs at highly affordable prices is a prerequisite for enhancing productivity.

The government should revisit its current subsidy regime in the wake of high energy prices and devaluation. The gas price hike has considerably increased the rate of locally manufactured urea. If the government ensures uninterrupted supply of gas at a subsidised rate to fertiliser plants, these have the capacity to fulfil domestic urea demand.

The recent decision of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to import 50,000 tonnes of urea might not be a pragmatic move. Subsidising imported urea is costlier than locally produced urea.

To ensure seed supplies, the government should increase its share of the seed market through large-scale production and distribution of approved varieties developed by state-run research institutions.

Currently, the state seed departments provide only about 12pc of certified seeds despite the release of 120 varieties by the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in the last five years. The seed market is currently dominated by multinationals like Syngenta, Monsanto and ICI.

The current agriculture credit policy is skewed towards big farmers and needs to be revised.

An inclusive water policy for the sustainable management of water resources is urgently required to overcome water scarcity. Several independent research reports suggest that Pakistan is in imminent danger of a water crisis. It has been anticipated that the persistence of the current situation can lead the country into dryness by 2025. Water scarcity has grave implications for national food security as it is the lifeline of agriculture.

In addition to building new dams and reservoirs on a preferential basis, the government should also invest to upgrade existing irrigation infrastructure to reduce seepage losses.

The extension workforce has to be effectively mobilised for the dissemination and large-scale adoption of innovative farming practices. Information and communication technologies, also known as ICT tools, can be employed to widen the scope of extension and advisory services.

To sum up, small farmers' access to quality and inexpensive farm inputs, credit and the adoption of innovative farming practices are vital to the development of agriculture. The government needs to tailor its current and potential agriculture and development policies in the context of these critical preconditions.

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MAJOR CROPS NEED MORE ATTENTION
From the Newspaper Updated December 24, 2018

Achievements in the major crops sector can help politicians earn public confidence. One of its reasons is that the economy's reliance on major crops is more evident than elsewhere.

When a new government comes in, the major crops not only get some immediate policy attention but also become a subject of sharper scrutiny by the opposition parties.

However, despite tall claims about the revival of agriculture, governments manage to address key issues facing the major crops only partly. The important sub-sector of agriculture continues to suffer from several structural problems.

The federal government has recently unveiled an agriculture promotion package of Rs82 billion. This is part of an overall Rs200bn agriculture development plan that the federal and provincial governments will be implementing in the next three years, according to Minister of National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Mehbub Sultan.

Part of the plan aims at boosting yields of the major crops, minimising their post-harvest and storage losses and exploiting their full potential for exports and local needs.

Pakistan produces five major crops: cotton, sugar cane, wheat, rice and maize. In the past 10 years, lots of development plans focused on boosting their per-hectare yields, but the results are not very encouraging. The yield of cotton, for example, has increased from an estimated 641 kilograms per hectare in 2008 to 726kg per hectare in 2018 — a rise of just 13 per cent over 10 years, according to statistics compiled by the US Department of Agriculture.

We must focus on boosting per-hectare yields, cutting pre- and post-harvest losses and promoting the efficient use of water

That is why local cotton output fails to meet demand and we often have to import it. Cotton imports continue devouring precious foreign exchange even now when the country is facing a serious balance-of-payments problem.

The per-hectare yields of wheat and rice have depicted a nominal increase, although the yields of maize and sugar cane have shown some encouraging growth rates over the last decade, data compiled by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research shows.

More disturbing is the fact that the yield gap — or the gap between the global average of per-hectare yields and the yields of the crops being grown in Pakistan — remains high. This weakness is more pronounced in the case of our minor crops like pulses and oilseeds.

Pakistan’s balance-of-payments situation is precarious. Fixing of this situation requires fiscal austerity. That limits the government’s ability to offer too many or too large cash incentives to farmers for boosting yields or expanding the total arable land. And even if this option is exercised, the shortage of irrigation water remains a big problem.

Tackling water woes through big dams will take years even if we factor in Chinese help under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the ongoing drive to raise donations from the public for these dams.

So we are left with this option: we have to focus on boosting per-hectare yields, cutting pre- and post-harvest losses of the major crops and promoting the economisation of water uses. That is something the designers of the Rs82bn package realise, officials claim.

Part of this package (Rs4bn) is meant for promoting farm mechanisation to reduce pre- and post-harvest losses and ensuring disciplined distribution of certified seeds to increase per-hectare yields.

The Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) will get another Rs4bn out of this package to develop crop seeds that can give higher yields and be grown with minimum water, they add.

The largest chunk of Rs82bn — ie Rs68.6bn — has been earmarked for increasing water efficiency across the country through the lining of water courses, construction of small and mini dams in barani (rain-fed) areas and water conservation projects.

If these measures to improve water supplies really work, then a decline in the output of the key crops can be prevented, especially in Sindh and Balochistan where crops are suffering from a shortage of water.

Whereas further farm mechanisation can help reduce pre- and post-harvest losses, equally important is the upgrading of storage facilities. How the federal government plans to help the provinces in this area is not known.

In Punjab, some large steel silos were erected on farm fields with the assistance of the World Bank during the PML-N government. But in Sindh, no major progress was made for the want of the required response from the private sector.

How the promised Chinese cooperation in agriculture will lead to improved storage facilities is yet to be seen. Lack of proper storage facilities led to huge losses of wheat in recent years. Rotten wheat had to be sold at throwaway prices to the poultry feed industry.

Similarly, due to improper storage, sucrose content of sugar cane reportedly reduced in various districts in Sindh and Punjab last year when the miller-grower tussle led to delayed cane crushing.

When we produce more wheat or sugar cane in a particular year — and for some years we have been doing this — we get the opportunity to export it and earn sizable foreign exchange. So ensuring the maximum output of these crops and keeping wheat grains fresh and sucrose content of sugar cane intact are also important from the point of view of the external account management.

In the case of rice, the top foreign exchange earner in the food export group, water shortages in general and in rain-fed areas in particular impede fuller exploitation of production prospects. In fact, the output of our prized basmati varieties has been in decline — a fact also highlighted in a recent Asian Development Bank report.

For boosting the output of the paddy crop, it is important to introduce varieties that grow with less water and encourage farmers to use those means of cultivation that rely on an efficient use of water. In the past few years, some efforts were made in both areas that supported growth in wheat and non-basmati rice production. But there is a need for further augmenting and expanding those efforts.

Inter-provincial movement of grains is also an important factor. Going forward, it will become a greater challenge if coordination between Punjab and Sindh remains less than ideal.

The federal government has promised faster development of grain markets closer to farm fields and the introduction of real-time price discovery mechanism for farmers. Its early implementation is crucial for proper projections of the major crops, timely announcement of support prices and disciplining cultivation patterns. — MA

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1453326/major-crops-need-more-attention

SIRAJ FOR BETTER SEED, FERTILIZERS FOR FARMERS
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter December 24, 2018

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami emir Senator Sirajul Haq has advised the prime minister to arrange improved seed and subsidised fertilizers for the growers instead of talking about "eggs and poultry".

Addressing a farmers' convention at Mansoora here on Sunday, he said if the government provided interest-free loans, farm machinery, pesticides and irrigation water to growers, they could bring about a revolution in the country.

He said that like in the past, the incumbent premier was also surrounded by "sugar mafia", rendering the common farmer helpless.

He demanded a task force at the federal and provincial level, with farmers' real representatives on it, for resolving the growers' problems.

Mr Haq also called for waiving the GST on agricultural inputs, and provision of low-priced farm inputs under a package.

He sought payment of the cane growers' arrears by the sugar mills owners, fixing the rate of sugarcane at Rs250 per 40kg and giving CPR status to cheques issued by the millers to the farmers.

The JI emir said had the chief justice, instead of talking of population planning, launched a movement for bringing nearly 60 percent of the country's barren land under cultivation, it would have created a hope among the masses. On the occasion, the JI chief formally approved the merger of the Kisan Board Pakistan into his party's farmers wing.

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NEED FOR POLICY INTERVENTION
Muhammad Imran Azeem December 24, 2018

Agriculture is an integral part of the country's economy. However, owing to the ill-conceived policies of the last two regimes, the sector experienced low annual growth and its share in GDP consistently declined from 24 per cent in 2004-05 to 18.9pc in 2017-18.

Consequently, Pakistan has become a net importer of food, with a food trade deficit of about $1.4 billion.

High energy prices and rapid depreciation have triggered a significant rise in the prices of locally produced and imported agricultural inputs. High input prices increase the cost of production and reduce agricultural profitability. Poor and marginalised farmers become the worst victims. There is a considerable decline in overall production and a subsequent increase in domestic food prices.

It is high time for the PTI to fulfil its election promises about cheaper inputs to make agriculture a thriving enterprise. Farmers' access to quality inputs at highly affordable prices is a prerequisite for enhancing productivity.

The government should revisit its current subsidy regime in the wake of high energy prices and devaluation. The gas price hike has considerably increased the rate of locally manufactured urea. If the government ensures uninterrupted supply of gas at a subsidised rate to fertiliser plants, these have the capacity to fulfil domestic urea demand.

The recent decision of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to import 50,000 tonnes of urea might not be a pragmatic move. Subsidising imported urea is costlier than locally produced urea.

To ensure seed supplies, the government should increase its share of the seed market through large-scale production and distribution of approved varieties developed by state-run research institutions.

Currently, the state seed departments provide only about 12pc of certified seeds despite the release of 120 varieties by the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in the last five years. The seed market is currently dominated by multinationals like Syngenta, Monsanto and ICI.

The current agriculture credit policy is skewed towards big farmers and needs to be revised.

An inclusive water policy for the sustainable management of water resources is urgently required to overcome water scarcity. Several independent research reports suggest that Pakistan is in imminent danger of a water crisis. It has been anticipated that the persistence of the current situation can lead the country into dryness by 2025. Water scarcity has grave implications for national food security as it is the lifeline of agriculture.

In addition to building new dams and reservoirs on a preferential basis, the government should also invest to upgrade existing irrigation infrastructure to reduce seepage losses.

The extension workforce has to be effectively mobilised for the dissemination and large-scale adoption of innovative farming practices. Information and communication technologies, also known as ICT tools, can be employed to widen the scope of extension and advisory services.

To sum up, small farmers' access to quality and inexpensive farm inputs, credit and the adoption of innovative farming practices are vital to the development of agriculture. The government needs to tailor its current and potential agriculture and development policies in the context of these critical preconditions.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1453325/need-for-policy-intervention

JI DEMANDS TASK FORCE FOR SOLVING GROWERS' PROBLEMS
RECORDER RPEORT | DEC 24TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, Senator Sirajul Haq, has impressed upon the prime minister to arrange improved seed and subsidized fertilizer to the growers instead of talking of eggs and poultry. Addressing a Kissan Convention at Mansoora on Sunday, he said that if the government provided interest- free loans, farm machinery, pesticides and irrigation water to the agriculturists, they could bring about a revolution in agriculture.

The JI chief said that as in the past, the present prime minister was also surrounded by the sugar mafia due to which, the common farmer appeared helpless. Sirajul Haq demanded setting up a task force at the federal and provincial level , with the Kisan's real representatives, for the solution of the growers problems. He also called for waiving GST on agricultural inputs, and provision of low priced farm inputs under a package. He called for clearing the arrears of the growers with the sugar mills owners.

He demanded that the rate of sugar cane be fixed at Rs 250 per maund and the CPR should be given the status of a cheque to stop the exploitation of the growers at the hand of the mills owners.

Sirajul Haq said that if the Chief Justice, instead of talking of population planning, had launched a movement for bringing under the plough nearly 60 per cent of the country's land lying barren, it would have created a hope and a spirit among the masses. On the occasion, the JI chief formally approved the conversion of the Kisan Board Pakistan into JI Kisan. JI deputy chief and chief patron of the JI Kisan, Mian Muhammad Aslam, also addressed the convention.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181224433997/

FOCUS ON FARMERS NOT CHICKENS: JI CHIEF
By Our Correspondent

Published: December 24, 2018

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan chief Senator Sirajul Haq has urged Prime Minister Imran Khan to focus more on facilitating farmers rather than talking about eggs and chickens.

Addressing a Kissan Convention at Mansoora on Sunday, he said if the government provides interest-free loans, farm machinery, pesticides, sufficient irrigation water, improved seed and subsidised fertilisers to agriculturists, they could bring about a revolution in agriculture.

The JI chief also demanded setting up a task force at both the federal and provincial level with farmer representatives to resolve their problems. He also called for waiving off GST on agricultural inputs, and provision of low-priced farm inputs under a package.

Haq also demanded rate of sugarcane be fixed at Rs250 per maund and CPR should be given the status of a cheque to stop exploitation of growers at the hand of mills owners.

"5% elite are exploiting 95% of the general public," he said, adding people sitting in the assemblies represented the elite only and believe they are not answerable to anyone including their voters.

Meanwhile, the senator talking about Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar said if the top judge had launched a movement for bringing under the plough nearly 60% of the country's barren land instead of just talking about population planning, it would have created some hope.

On the occasion, the JI chief formally approved the conversion of the Kisan Board Pakistan into JI Kisan.

JI deputy chief and chief patron of the JI Kisan, Mian Muhammad Aslam, also addressed the convention. He said industry in the country was running mainly due to the agriculture and lamented that almost 60% of cultivable land in the country is lying barren due to shortage of water.

JI Kisan chief Ch. Nisar Ahmed advocate, General Secretary Ch Shaukat and JI Kisan representatives from other provinces were also present at the ceremony.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1873316/1-focus-farmers-not-chickens-ji-chief/

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 17TH TO DECEMBER 23RD 2018
AGRICULTURE: SUGAR CANE CRISIS ON REPEAT
Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated December 17, 2018

For sugar cane producers, this year is no different from preceding years. Only six out of 38 sugar mills commenced crushing by Dec 11 as they said the price of Rs182 per 40 kilograms notified by the Sindh government was not viable.

Under Sugar Factories Control Act 1950, mills must start crushing no later than Nov 30. Sugar mills have once again challenged the price notification in the Sindh High Court (SHC). However, the court turned down their request to put the notification in abeyance.

The controversy over the sugar cane price is not new. It has been a regular feature of the crushing season for the last eight years. Until the early 2000s, no such controversy existed as sugar mills would abide by the price notification and start crushing by mid- or late October in line with the provisions of the 1950 Act.

Belated harvesting always panics sugar cane growers into selling their crop to mills or their middlemen at a lower than the official rate

The Act was amended in the last PPP government, which bound sugar mills to start crushing no later than Nov 30. Sugar factory owners follow the notification about neither the price nor the starting date for crushing. Over a dozen or so sugar mills are said to be owned by those in government. They exploit growers by buying their sugar cane at the lowest possible rate.

The sugar cane crop takes around 18 months to mature. It grows on around 320,000 hectares in the province, mostly in the lower Sindh region. But in the recent past, the sugar industry has flourished in upper Sindh as well. In Ghotki district alone, five sugar mills are operational, although it has otherwise been a rich cotton-growing area.

Is the sugar industry unviable?

There used to be 32 sugar mills in Sindh about eight to nine years back. But their number has increased to 38 now. Even former president Asif Ali Zardari — whose name is bracketed with the Omni Group that owns around a dozen sugar mills in lower Sindh and is also facing money laundering cases — recently said that some sick units were revitalised to create employment opportunities in those areas.

He is not wrong altogether.

Not only the number of mills has increased in Sindh, but also the per-day crushing capacity of several units has increased to 10,000-12,000 tonnes from 4,000-5,000 tonnes over the last 10 years, according to Syed Mahmood Nawaz Shah, a progressive farmer.

Given such growth in the sugar industry — primarily supported by banks' financing — one can safely assume that the sugar business remains largely lucrative. Besides sugar cane, the crop produces a number of by-products. Some mills also produce electricity by burning bagasse.

Analysts say that if this industry was unprofitable, big industrialists like Jahangir Khan Tareen would not be expanding their businesses beyond Punjab and setting up mills in upper Sindh's Ghotki district. Mr Tareen is known for paying the notified price of Rs182 per 40kg for the last few years. The Sindh chapter of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) should explain why Mr Tareen's mills comfortably pay growers the notified price in Sindh while other mills call the rate unaffordable.

Economist Dr Kaiser Bengali asserts that the sugar sector is structurally inefficient as it is quasi monopsony, which refers to a market structure in which a single buyer substantially controls the market as the major purchaser of goods and services offered by many would-be sellers. According to Dr Bengali, 38 men decide at which price they will buy sugar cane from farmers.

He believes that this industry will remain in crisis forever and that it is better for Pakistan to start importing sugar. "Being water-intensive, sugar cane is not Pakistan's crop. We can import sugar, which will be cost effective," Dr Bengali says, adding that sugar cane production is unviable for Sindh as much as apple production is unviable for Balochistan. He says that sugar prices remain on the lower side in the international market. "With surplus sugar in stock, sugar mills want to export them. They demand a subsidy, which also comes out of public purse."

Why millers delay crushing

Sugar factory owners delay crushing for a number of factors that range from getting increased sucrose recovery to procuring the crop at an inadequate price from farmers. A delayed harvest of sugar cane increases sucrose content in the crop whereas farmers get the rate on the basis of crop weight. Belated harvesting always panics growers into selling their crop to mills or their middlemen. Growers have to use land under the sugar cane crop for the sowing of wheat for which the ideal time is November. Late sowing also leads to lower per-acre grain productivity.

According to Punjab-based Pakistan Agribusiness Forum representative Ibrahim Mughal, one per cent sucrose recovery in a maund translates into Rs18. "Sucrose recovery remains at 7.52pc in October, 9pc in November and 9-10.5pc in December. That's why sugar mills tend to delay crushing to December for maximum recovery," he says. He believes the government has declared sugar cane a ‘political crop’. “We will still be better off if 20 or so sugar mills are closed. We are producing around 0.6-0.7 million tonnes over and above consumption needs,” he says.

Sugarcane is apparently the only crop that is under some regulatory cover because of the 1950 Act. Yet its enforcement remains weak in view of the so-called nexus between wealthy industrialists and those in government.

Farmers have calculated their cost of production at Rs198 per 40kg, inclusive of 10pc profit, whereas a research paper by the Sindh government also puts it at Rs180 per 40kg.

Mr Shah points out that factory owners have been able to achieve their goals for the last several years. “They have held down prices, procured the crop through brokers and denied the price as directed by courts on the one hand while winning federal and provincial subsidies on the other,” he says.

Despite impressive sucrose recovery in Sindh — 10.46pc in the 2017-18 season — the sugar cane sector remains in crisis. It is time the government addressed the root cause of the recurring problem.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1451878/agriculture-sugar-cane-crisis-on-repeat

PFA SEALS 7003 FOOD OUTLETS IN ONE MONTH

LAHORE. The food safety teams of the Punjab Food Authority discarded 84,000 packs of gutka and sealed around 7003 food points for violating the PFA Act during the last one month.

The teams in their monthly report disclosed that around 34,580 raids were conducted at different food points, of them, 7003 were sealed for selling poor quality food and other edibles. The report revealed that teams discarded unwholesome food worth Rs25 million in November,

According to the report, PFA took the blood samples of 3,846 food handlers, workers, of them, blood samples of 3,362 workers were declared healthy while samples of 484 workers were declared unhealthy after screening.

The PFA teams analyzed 585 samples of food in a food laboratory, of them, 265 samples were found up to the mark, while 772 samples were declared substandard. The PFA also imparted training to 3,103 food handlers, workers under the PFA Training School Programme. APP

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201812170217&EN_ID=11201812170080&EMID=11201812170043

ECC SETS IMPORTED UREA PRICE AT RS1,712 PER BAG
Khaleeq Kiani Updated December 18, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Monday fixed the price of imported urea at Rs1,712 per 50kg bag and put certain restrictions on export of ethanol to control tax evasion.

The ECC meeting, presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar, set the urea price on the recommendation of Fertiliser Review Committee (FRC) that met earlier in the day.

The FRC, headed by Adviser to Prime Minister on Industries & Production (MoIP) Abdul Razak Dawood, was told that the price of local urea in the domestic market varied between Rs1,820-1,850 per bag and was much higher than desired level. A top official of the ministry said the chief secretaries of the provinces had been asked to crack down against hoarding and black marketing and bring the commodity in the market.

However, the fertiliser stakeholders opposed the crackdown and requested the governments to let their own channels overcome the challenge to avoid a sense of harassment. The meeting was also explained that initial supply gaps had also emerged after the imported product reached the port on Dec 2 but could not be released for few days due to capacity constraints and in the absence of price fixation.

On the question of delayed price fixation of imported urea, it transpired that a summary moved on the request of National Fertiliser Marketing Company (NFML) to the Secretary Finance on Dec 6 was reportedly returned the same day with consent but could not be presented to the ECC for Dec 12 meeting due to mysterious reasons.

This time lag coupled with gas shortfall over the following week also helped speculators take undue benefit with fears that gas constraints could create fertiliser shortage. An official said the FRC recommended the price of imported urea at Rs1,712 per bag against a request of the MoIP that suggested the price should reduced by Rs52 per bag to Rs1,660.

The meeting was informed that prevailing market price was now Rs1,820 per bag even though sufficient stocks were available. It was also reported that 50,000 tonnes imported stocks from NFML had been released in the market and remaining 50,000 tonnes had also reached Karachi. The ECC had ordered import of 100,000 tonnes on Sept 10 through Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to avoid anticipated shortage for the Rabi crop.

The TCP reported that the cost per 50 kg bag, excluding NFML charges (Rs21 per tonne), stood at Rs2,556 per tonne. NFML had suggested that dealer booking price of imported urea be lowered by at least Rs100-150 than local urea brand price. The government will have to pick a Rs845per bag subsidy.

Informed sources said the FRC was also requested by fertiliser companies to take an early decision on utilisation of 66mmcfd gas of Mari Deep to fertiliser sector in view of expected future requirement. In a recent meeting, the ECC had allocated this gas to Mari Petroleum but had declined to allow it set up a 180MW power plant.

The ECC also approved a proposal of the Ministry of Commerce to amend the Export Policy Order (EPO) 2016 to the effect that the export of ethanol be made subject to the condition that case molasses used in its production is either produced in house or purchased directly from the sugar mills.

It was reported by the FBR that cane molasses was a major by-product of sugar industry and was either exported by the industry, sold locally or consumed in house for producing ethanol, more than 95pc of which was exported. Although export of ethanol was accounted for, the sale and purchase of cane molasses was not fully documented. It proposed the production and sale of the molasses be properly recorded so that it can be used as an indicator to gauge the production of sugar and thus assist in the collection of due taxes.

It was, therefore, proposed that the EPO be amended by adding an entry in Schedule II to the effect that export of ethanol and other products manufactured from cane molasses shall be subject to the condition that “the molasses used in production of ethanol and other products manufactured from it being exported is either produced in house by the exporter or purchased directly from a sugar mill.”

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1452108/ecc-sets-imported-urea-price-at-rs1712-per-bag

PM STRESSES PRODUCING 15M COTTON BALES
The Newspaper’s Reporter Updated December 18, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has asked the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to take measures to achieve the production target of 15 million bales of cotton.

Chairing a meeting here on Monday on the challenges being faced in cotton sector, he emphasised the need for revamping research centres involved in seed registration, besides supporting farmers and assisting them in adopting modern practices.

The prime minister further directed that the existing rules relating to bio-safety assessment of genetically modified crops be reviewed to make them more simple, efficient and time-saving.

Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan and senior officials of the ministry informed Khan that even with the existing seed varieties, production could be enhanced to 15m bales by incentivising farmers and helping them adopt the best practices and modern technologies.

Khan approved the setting up of a working group, headed by Sultan to revamp existing seed registration institutes to bring improvement in their output. It was decided that a working group comprising of private sector seed companies and government sector regulators would also be constituted to simplify seed certification system and find a solution which ensures that farmers are able to sift between the good and bad varieties and companies.

Cotton is Pakistan’s second largest crop, planted on 6.66m acres. Despite being the fourth biggest cotton producer in the world, the country was still importing raw cotton worth $1.2 billion. The meeting discussed various reasons for declining production in the country since 2004-05 and efforts being made for improving seed varieties.

The meeting was also attended by Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Malik Amin Aslam; Punjab Minister for Agriculture Malik Nauman Ahmed Langrial; Secretary National Food Security Dr M. Hashim Popalzai and other officials.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1452104/pm-stresses-producing-15m-cotton-bales

GROWERS' BODY THREATENS PROVINCE-WIDE PROTEST OVER FIR

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent December 18, 2018

HYDERABAD: Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) on Monday condemned registration of a case against growers, who had protested in Benazirabad on Dec 14 against delay in commencement of sugar cane crushing season, and warned the growers' body would protest across the province if the Sindh government did not order withdrawal of the "fake" FIR.

The SAB members said that growers were protesting against sugar millers and demanding enforcement of government's writ with regard to commencement of crushing season.

The meeting noted that growers had remained completely peaceful throughout the protest and ended the agitation after successful talks with administration which assured them that their demands would be met by Dec 18.

The meeting said that police had lodged the case against 650 poor farmers for demanding enforcement of government's writ while no action was taken against the sugar millers for challenging the government.

The meeting said that farmers demanded payment of Rs182 per 40kg price for sugar cane in line with government's notification and issuance of indent for procurement of cane to genuine growers alone and not to brokers.

SAB president Abdul Majeed Nizamani who chaired the meeting said that the notification was issued after much delay and then the government did not take interest in its implementation.

The sugar factory owners had practically rejected the notification and government appeared helpless before them, he said.

He said the government was protecting the interests of millers who had been committing excesses against farmers for a long time.

The government did not tire of repeating that protest was a democratic right of everyone but it took action against the farmers for exercising their democratic right to protest, he said.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1451993/growers-body-threatens-province-wide-protest-over-fir

'ALL PAKISTAN KISSAN CONVENTION' BEGINS TODAY

RECORDER REPORT | DEC 18TH, 2018 | PESHAWAR

The 9th All Pakistan Kisan Convention will begin on Tuesday (today) at Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARD), Peshawar, which will continue till December 20. According to details, the three-day convention with the theme "Food Security through Water Management" is being held under the policy framework of National Food Security Policy and Pakistan's Zero hunger programme to devise implementable action plans to counter the menacing problems of malnourishment and water shortage.

Almost 200 farmers having small and medium sized land from country-wide are going to participate in the convention. Several technical and financial institutions will hold consultative sessions with the farmers including NIFA, Pir Sabaq Research Institute, Bank of Khyber, Livestock and Dairy Development and ADBP. Convention will also consist of agricultural exhibition showcasing the latest technologies and equipment of around 35 organizations.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181218432176/

HIGH INPUT COST, WATER SHORTAGE HIT COTTON PRODUCTION
Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana Updated December 19, 2018

KARACHI: Cotton production has fallen 6.77 per cent to 9.962 million bales during the current season up to Dec 15 due to water shortages and rise in input costs.

This year's shortfall would mark the fourth consecutive year of production declines. The cotton production data for last fortnight (Dec 1-15) paint a gloomy picture for both of the leading cotton producing provinces.

Production in the country's largest cotton producing province, Punjab, suffered a 9.64pc decline after production fell to 5.918m bales against the 6.55m produced during the same period last year.

On the other hand, cotton production in Sindh also fell short of the targets but performed relatively better than Punjab. As of December 15, Sindh's production has reached 4.04m, down 2.22pc from 4.136m produced during the same period last year.

However, it is interesting to note that despite higher flow of phutti – seed cotton – during the last fortnight, overall cotton production remained short. Total flow of phutti during the season has reached 595,719 bales compared to 553,907 bales last year.

On the demand front, so far, textile spinners have purchased 8.055m bales as against 8.849m bales in the corresponding period last season. Similarly, exporters also booked less cotton at 99,589 bales compared to 0.214 million bales last season.

However, due to quality constraints, ginners are holding unsold cotton stocks of 1.807m bales higher than the 1.623m bales held by them in the corresponding period of last season.

Consequently, the cotton season is likely to culminate earlier than the last as crop shortage is likely to affect production. Around 365 ginning units are currently operating in Punjab compared to 597 units operating last year, whereas, around 148 units are operating in Sindh against 229 operating last year.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1452312/high-input-cost-water-shortage-hit-cotton-production

SUGAR EXPORT CONDITION WAIVED

RIZWAN BHATTI | DEC 19TH, 2018 | KARACHI

The federal government has allowed sugar mills to export commodity without starting crushing of sugarcane at full capacity. The Ministry of Commerce (MoC)'s through a Memorandum No.7(2)/2012-Exp-III dated December 10, 2018, has enhanced the sugar export quota for sugar mills for 2018-19 by some 100,000 metric tons from one million metric tons to 1.1 million metric tons.

As per ministry directives, the condition that sugar mills would start crushing at full capacity by 15th November, 2018 to be eligible for export of sugar has been waived to facilitate the sugar mills. "The clearance certificate issued by the Cane Commissioner concerned certifying that the respective sugar mill has started crushing at full capacity from November 15, 2018 as required", the State Bank said in a circular issued on Tuesday.

As per previous directives issued in October 2018, it was mandatory for the exporting mills to submit a clearance certificate, which will also certify that concerned sugar mill has started crushing at full capacity by November 15, 2018.

However, the sugar mills will still be required to submit the clearance certificate issued by the Cane Commissioner to the effect that sugar mill concerned has cleared outstanding dues of the farmers for sugarcane crop up to 2017-18 in order to be eligible for export, it added.

According to ministry of commerce notification, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has underscored the importance of providing relief to the farmers by ensuring start of crushing by sugar mills at the earliest.

It was also decided that since the entire issue of freight support arose due to varying procurement prices of sugarcane fixed by the provincial governments, therefore, the freight support may be determined/paid by the respective Provincial Governments, if deemed appropriate.

In addition the Finance Division to release Rs 2 billion for payment of outstanding claims of freight support for sugar export. Moreover, the ministry has requested the State Bank of Pakistan to revise its circular regarding procedure of allocation of quota for export of sugar in accordance with fresh decisions of the ECC of the Cabinet.

SBP has advised Authorized Dealers to bring the same to the notice of all their constituents. While, all other instructions on the subject shall remain unchanged.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181219432405/

FISHING RESTRICTIONS: SINDH FISHERMEN DECIDE TO MOVE SC AGAINST BALOCHISTAN GOVERNMENT
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 19TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Boat owners are set to file a case against the Balochistan government for its 12-nautical mile fishing restrictions on Sindh's fishermen, fearing the entire fisheries sector will collapse if the arrest of vessels continued.

The country's seafood export nosedived by 13 percent in July-Nov 2018-19 'mainly due to the restrictions by the Balochistan officials'. The decline now stands at $21.602 million to $144.794 million in the first five months of 2018-19 from $166.396 million in July-Nov 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says.

"A meeting in this regard was held and decided to move the Supreme Court to settle the issue since it has crippled the entire hunt operations and reduced the seafood export this fiscal year," Sindh Trawlers Owners and Fishermen Association (Stofa), Habibullah Khan Niazi told Business Recorder on Tuesday, saying that "The Balochistan government officials have arrested some 15 boats of Sindh fishermen for the last week and confiscated diesel oil and millions of rupees catch from the boats".

He worried over the continuing 'Anti-Sindh boats' drive that hinders their operations and resulted in a reduced catch to contribute widely in scaling back the country's seafood overall export. 'Less catch will result in less export," he said, adding that the federal and Sindh governments have also disappointed the fishermen seeking hunt access into the Balochistan territorial maritime limits. Both governments are widely unconcerned the country's key export sector, he maintained.

"We the Sindh's fishermen are now deprived of hunt in the country's 700 kilometers coastal belt that provides 80 percent of the export-oriented marine species including fish and shrimps," the Stofa President said, adding that the fishermen see no solution in sight as yet, meaning further seafood export decline. The restriction and fears of arrest of fishing boats is now virtually reducing hunting operations in the Balochistan waters, he said, adding that "each deep sea fishing boat is suffering millions of rupees loss daily".

In term of volume, the country's seafood export also slumped by 7.25 percent or 4801 metric tons to 61,403 metric tons in July-Nov 2018-19 from 66,204 metric tons in July-Nov 2017-18. In Nov 2018, seafood export nosedived by 21 percent or $16.681 million to $35.018 million from $18.337 million in Nov 2017. Seafood export volume also plunged to 17,009 metric tons in Nov 2018 from 18,337 metric tons in Nov 2017, showing a fall of 7.24 percent or 1328 metric tons.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181219432464/

9.9M COTTON BALES REACH GINNERIES
MULTAN: Seed cotton (Phutti) equivalent to 9.962 million (9,962,657) bales reached ginneries across Pakistan till Dec 15,2018,registering a shortfall by 6.77 per cent compared to corresponding period last year. Out of total arrivals, over 9.4 million or 9,488,411 bales have undergone the ginning process, says a fortnightly report of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) issued here on Tuesday.

Arrivals in Punjab were recorded as 5.9 million or 5,918,023 bales and over 4 million or 4,044,634 bales in Sindh.

Total sold out bales were recorded as over 8.1 million or 8, 154,749 including over 8 million or 8,055,160 bales bought by textile mills and another 99,589 bales purchased by exporters.

Around 1.8 million or 1,807,908 bales were still lying with the ginneries as unsold stock. The report does not include cotton figures from districts of Kasur, and Sargodha.

Exactly 513 ginning factories were operational in the country out of total 1300, including 365 in Punjab and 148 in Sindh.—APP

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/19/6-page/754593-news.html

APTMA LAUDS PM'S INITIATIVE TO PRODUCE 15M COTTON BALES
By Our Correspondent

Published: December 19, 2018

LAHORE: The All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) Chairman Syed Ali Ahsan and Patron-in-Chief Gohar Ejaz have appreciated Prime Minister Imran Khan for his initiative to achieve 15 million cotton bales by next year.

Cotton is a major raw material for producing textile goods, predominantly meant for exports, said Aptma chairman, adding that unfortunately, the cotton production has declined by 27%. There has been a 17% drop in area under cultivation and 12% decrease in per acre yield. Therefore, the industry had no other option but to import cotton for industry consumption, which pushed the cotton import to 3.59 million bales, worth $1.22 billion, last year.

According to Ejaz, the government should ensure low cost of inputs to cotton farmers, provide quality cotton seeds and extension for best crop management and extension without any further delay.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 19th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1869881/2-aptma-lauds-pms-initiative-produce-15m-cotton-bales/

DETENTION ORDERS FOR OWNER, OTHERS: TWO MILLS OFFICIALS HELD FOR 'REFUSAL TO BUY CANE'
Q.A. Bukhari December 20, 2018

JHANG: In compliance with the orders of the deputy commissioner, police on Wednesday arrested the senior vice president and general manager (administration) of a sugar mills on their alleged refusal to buy sugarcane.

Deputy Commissioner Shaukat Ali on Wednesday issued detention orders of five administrators of two mills, including the owner, for 90 days.

The sugar mills are owned by a high profile business group of the country. In the light of government decision [on crushing], three small mills have started crushing while the administrations of remaining two main mills situated at Jhang-Chiniot-Sargodha and Jhang-T.T.Singh roads seem reluctant to start purchasing crop from growers.

Some of the growers — Ramzan, Khan Muhammad, Khalid Mahmood, Zawar Hussain and Gulzar Ahmed — told reporters outside the DC Office that they came to inform the deputy commissioner about the 'discriminatory' attitude being adopted by the millers who prefer big and influential farmers during purchase of crop. They pointed out that supply permits were allegedly being issued to the 'powerful' landlords. They complained about less payment [slips] by extra deduction in weight at the time of supply to mills. They said the purchase process was very slow because two main sugar mills were yet to start procurement.

CM orders action on crushing season violations

Meanwhile, the DC in a handout said the assistant commissioners were directed to take action against the middlemen involved in purchasing crops from growers on low rates. He said officials of revenue and food departments were tasked with ensuring proper weight and government notified rate of Rs180 per 40 kilo.

“Further action will be taken against the managements of all five sugar mills of the district if they create problems for farmers as the government is fully committed to protecting the benefits of growers,” he said.

Our Staff Reporter Adds: Chief Minister Usman Buzdar has directed the food minister and the food secretary to initiate legal action against those sugar mills that have not started crushing season despite instructions by the government.

Instructions were issued to the minister and the secretary as well as the cane commissioner, the chief minister said on Wednesday.

He said there was no reason in non-functioning of sugar mills as the government had accepted their demands. He said no one would be allowed to exploit the sugarcane farmers and warned: “Those who have not run their mills will be taken to task”.

The chief minister said the sale of sugarcane on fixed rates would be ensured and sugar mills were bound to procure sugarcane from the farmers at the rates fixed by the government. He said action would also be taken against violators.

100-DAY PLAN: The chief minister continued reviewing performance of different departments with regard to his government’s first 100-day plan. The performance of social welfare, mines and minerals, population welfare, law, transport, human rights and minorities affairs, home and police departments was reviewed in detail.

Provincial ministers and administrative secretaries gave a briefing about the performance of their departments.

Published in Dawn, December 20th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1452532/detention-orders-for-owner-others-two-mills-officials-held-for-refusal-to-buy-cane

‘BIOTECH CROPS CAN HELP TACKLE PAKISTAN’S WATER AND FOOD CRISES’
The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Updated December 20, 2018

KARACHI: Pakistan urgently needs to adapt to modern agricultural technologies to help tackle its water and food crises exacerbated by increasing salinity, deforestation and high population growth.

This point was raised at a press conference held on Wednesday at the Latif Ebrahim Jamal (LEJ) National Science Information Centre, Karachi University, with an objective to create awareness about the potential commercialisation of biotechnology offers for Pakistan’s sustainable development.

This year’s International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) report highlighting global status of commercialised biotech/genetically modified crops was also launched at the event.

According to the report, biotech crop area in 2017 attained new record-high adoption at 189.8 million hectares worldwide. Top five countries (USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada and India) planted 91 per cent of the global biotech crop area of 189.8 million hectares.

“Biotech countries in the Asia and Pacific region were led by India with the biggest area of biotech crops at 11.4 million hectares of cotton followed by Pakistan [three million hectares cotton], China, Australia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam and Bangladesh.”

Speaking about global food insecurity, Prof Iqbal Choudhary, director of the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences, presented some recent statistics that showed that 60pc of the world’s people hit by food insecurity lived in 19 countries facing conflict and climate change crisis situations whereas high risks of famine were recorded in Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, where 20 million people were severely experiencing hunger.

Coming to Pakistan’s food and water crises, he cited a recent UN report according to which Pakistan continued to have high neonatal mortality and that 44pc of its children were stunted. Water availability currently in the country stood at around 865 cubic metres.

“Hunger will only be defeated if countries translate their pledges into action, especially at the national and local levels. It is extremely important to ensure that people have the conditions to continue producing their own food,” he observed, adding that biotech crops over the last 22 years had contributed to food security and sustainability increasing crop productivity and helping alleviate poverty in many countries.

He appreciated Pakistan’s progress on biotech cotton and said that it had increased its biotech cotton area by 3.4pc or 100,000 hectares from 2.9 million hectares to three million hectares.

He added that this was expected to increase cotton production by 14.04 million bales.

Sharing some estimates of the latest ISAAA report, he pointed out that an estimated 725,000 smallholder Pakistani farmers had been benefiting from the economic gains in using biotech cotton.

Published in Dawn, December 20th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1452393/biotech-crops-can-help-tackle-pakistans-water-and-food-crises

SINDH FISHERMEN HALT HUNT OPERATIONS IN BALOCHISTAN WATERS
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 20TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Boat owners on Wednesday called their crew back to bring the fishing operations to an abrupt closure following Balochistan government crackdown on Sindh's vessels trawling within its 12-nautical miles maritime belt.

Pakistan's largest fishing sector is located in Karachi that contributes over 80 percent share to the country's seafood export is now in deep crisis mainly from a hunt restriction on Sindh-bound boats trawling in Balochistan's territorial waters, exporters told Business Recorder, seeking an immediate end to the deadlock between the two coastal provinces on the issue.

"Sindh boats have ceased hunt operations in Balochistan waters and returning to the Karachi coast after arrests of several vessels by the Balochistan government," Chairman Pakistan Fisheries Exporters Association (Pakfea), Syed Akhlaq Hussain Abidi told Business Recorder, fearing the country with its continuing deep sea fishing policy will lose its seafood export. He sought an immediate solution to end the Balochistan's ban on trawling of Sindh boats.

He said that the trawling in Balochistan waters has reached the lowest level in years after several Sindh boats were arrested in recent days. The reducing catch landing will scale down the country's seafood export further.

The Sindh governor, the chief minister Sindh and the Federal Government should resolve the country's exporting sector's problems and step up their efforts to end the continuing crisis. "No matter what happens, Pakistan needs exports," Abidi said that the Balochistan fishing sector is not up to the standards to keep up with that of the Sindh with just 10 percent of its share to the seafood export. Gill net and other mode of fishing cannot meet the global demand for the seafood demand on the world market, he added.

If the crisis prolongs to catch the second fishing session that starts from February until June, he said that the country will almost lose every chance to improve seafood export that reached over $450 million last fiscal year. "It [seafood export] will further decline if further witness the freefall," he feared that the federal government should not delay in ending the crisis. Fisheries stakeholders are now mulling on options to fight jointly for solving the issue.

Abdul Berr, Fishermen Cooperation Society, said that the stakeholders are united on a single agenda to remove the ban from Sindh's boats trawling in Balochistan's waters, saying, "we have recommended four from our side to the committee set up by the Federal Ports and Shipping Ali Zaidi to discuss the matter and seek a solution to it". He hoped that the proposed committee, which he called a 'first-step' to find a solution to the crisis. The committee, he said, will first evolve terms of references (ToRs).

The country's seafood export nosedived by 13 percent or $21.602 million to $144.794 in July-November 2018-19 from $166.396 million in July-November 2017-18. In term of volume, the country's seafood export also slumped by 7.25 percent or 4801 metric tons to 61,403 metric tons in July-November 2018-19 from 66,204 metric tons in July-November 2017-18.

In November 2018, seafood export nosedived by 21 percent or $16.681 million to $35.018 million from $18.337 million in November 2017. Seafood export volume also plunged to 17,009 metric tons in November 2018 from 18,337 metric tons in November 2017, showing a fall of 7.24 percent or 1328 metric tons, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181220432730/

SCIENTISTS CALL FOR DEVELOPING DISEASE, DROUGHT RESISTANT SEEDS
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 20TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The scientists at a symposium have called upon the need to do more research on developing disease and drought resistant seeds of vegetables to resolve issues in agriculture sector. They were addressing Pakistan's biggest three-day international symposium organized by Punjab University National Centre of Excellence in Molecular Biology titled "Advances in Molecular Biology of Plants and Health Sciences" here on Wednesday.

PU Dean Faculty of Life Sciences Prof Dr Firdous-e-Barin, CEMB Director Prof Dr Tayyab Husnain, Dr Razi Abbas Shamsi, Prof Dr Ikram ul Haq, Prof Dr Fazal-e-Majid, Four Brothers CEO Javed Qureshi, faculty members and over 100 scientists from Japan, Malaysia, Turkey, Nigeria, as well as from different prestigious institutes of Pakistan were present on the occasion.

Addressing the symposium, the scientists explained that various recent researches had explored to cure serious and ordinary diseases in human beings while research was also being done on genetic reasons behind deafness, blindness and other such diseases.

CEMB Director Dr Tayyab Husnain said that CEMB was working hard to explore molecular biology in various research areas including plant biotechnology, seed technology, plant genomics, functional genomics, forensics sciences, virology, genetic diseases, stem cells and bio safety related issues etc. He said that the CEMB has already developed Bt cotton varieties CEMB 33 and CA 12 which have been approved by Punjab Seed Council and were available in the market.

He said that the idea behind this international symposium was to gather scientists; share science and search ways to collaborate. He said that the participation of such a large number of Molecular Biologists from Agriculture and Health side in this symposium was a good omen and shows the magnitude of the interest of the participants. He also thanked Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and the major sponsors including Crop Life Pakistan, Four Brothers Group, Tara group, Sun Crop, Allah Din group, World Wide Scientific, Philco Pakistan for collaborating in organizing the mega event.

Prof Dr Firdaus-e-Bareen said researchers at CEMB were working for welfare of common man. She applauded the efforts of scientists and staff of CEMB for organizing a mega event and appreciated the productive idea of Dr Tayyab Husnain to provide a platform for scientists to present their research.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181220432742/

CM DIRECTS ACTION AGAINST SUGAR MILLS
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 20TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The Punjab chief minister Sardar Usman Buzdar has directed to initiate legal action against those sugar mills that have not started crushing season despite clear instructions of the Punjab government. Necessary instructions have been issued to food department's Minister, Secretary as well as the Cane Commissioner in this regard.

The CM Usman Buzdar said that there is no reason in non-functioning of sugar mills despite acceptance of their demands. Those who have not run their sugar mills will face action, he said, adding: “No one will be allowed to exploit the sugarcane farmers. Sale of sugarcane on fixed rates will be ensured and sugar mills will be bound to procure sugarcane from the farmers at the rates fixed by the government.” He said that indiscriminate action will be initiated on the complaint of cut in weight.

The PTI government is siding with the farmers’ community; interests of the sugarcane farmers will not be compromised and the farmers will be given the reward of their hard work, he added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181220432745/

FAO LAUNCHES DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR BETTER NUTRITION
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 20TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The Ministry of Planning and Development in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations launched the ‘Pakistan Dietary Guidelines for better Nutrition,’ here on Wednesday. The FAO has jointly developed these comprehensive dietary guidelines for the general public to adopt healthy eating practices and prevent and reduce the risk of infectious and chronic diseases.

The FAO representative in Pakistan Mina Dowlatchahi said it is an opportune time to disseminate the dietary guidelines, when the country is confronted with challenges of diet associated conditions. The dietary guidelines have been developed through an extensive consultative process involving all relevant stakeholders, technical experts and professionals from across the country, she said.

This launch is also a call of action for people from all walks of life including policymakers, planners, academia, civil society, UN agencies, private sector, and public to follow for achieving healthy and productive life, she added.

Speaking on the occasion, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Development and Reform Kanwal Shauzab appreciated the initiative and called it a result of a longstanding partnership between the government of Pakistan and FAO and other partners. She said the country specific food based dietary guidelines are important for maintaining healthy dietary practices, weight management, and making smart food choices to prevent nutritional disorders.

The parliamentary secretary said the present government has given a high priority to address human malnutrition by focusing on its education and awareness.

The guidelines called for a balanced diet in ‘one plate’ composed of meat and pulses, cereals and cereal products, vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products, and edible oil/ghee. These guidelines will be useful for multi-sectoral professionals and policymakers to formulate appropriate policy, plan and programmes. These guidelines will also facilitate provincial good and drug authorities to implement food quality standards in their respective provinces for ensuring that foods are safe and of better quality.

Diet is one of the strongest determinants of health and nutritional status. The balanced diet provides adequate nutrients at different stages of life for good nourishment to be healthy; physically and cognitively. Good nutrition is thus important for enhanced productivity, as individual's performance which implicates into socio-economic development and economic prosperity of the country. Nutrition is as such considered a maker and marker of the sustainable development.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181220432782/

AGRICULTURE: SENATE BODY APPRISED OF CROP SITUATION
By APP

Published: December 20, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research was informed on Wednesday that due to the absence of appropriate crop zoning in the country, the area under cotton sowing had drastically reduced by 26% posing serious threats for the production of major exportable cash crop. Briefing the committee, which was chaired by Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, Cotton Commissioner Dr Khalid Abdullah said that cotton arrival in the local market was reduced by 700,000 bales as compared to the corresponding period of last year. He said up to December 15, about 9.96 million bales were arriving in the local market for ginning as well as for exporting as compared to the arrival of 10.6 million bales in the same period of last year. He informed the committee that crop zoning was vital for sustainable agriculture growth and national food security and urged the need for proper regulation of industries to avoid crop shifting issues.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 20th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1870615/2-agriculture-senate-body-apprised-crop-situation/

FARMERS GET $9B LOAN RELIEF AHEAD OF INDIA ELECTIONS
NEW DELHI Three newly elected Indian state governments have waived up to $8.6 billion in farm loans in a bid by Rahul Gandhi's main opposition Congress party to boost support ahead of 2019 elections.

The Sorry plight of farmers in India, where thousands commit suicide every year, is set to be a major issue in the polls when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will run for a Second term.

Last week Congress wrested power from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in three state elections, partly by promising the help voters working in agriculture.

Late on Wednesday the new government of one of these states, Rajasthan, announced a write-off on loans of small farmers up to 200,000 rupees ($2,850), at an estimated cost of $2.5 billion.

The two other states, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, where Congress ended 15 years of BJP rule, announced similar plans this week to forgo loans worth nearly 440 billion rupees.

The move signals Congress's intent to latch on the growing disquiet in rural areas, where 68 per cent of India's 1.25 billion people live, against Modi, 68.

“It’s done!” Gandhi, 48, whose standing was boosted by the state election successes, said on Twitter. “We asked for 10 days. We did it in 2.”

Modi swept to power in 2014 largely on promises of improving lives of poor, ending corruption, boosting the economy and more jobs.

But tens of thousands of farmers have rallied in recent months including 80,000 in New Delhi this month over his government’s failure to mitigate their problems.

Modi had pledged to double farm income by 2022 but most say nothing has changed. His opponents accuse him of being pro-rich and ignoring the plight of millions of poor farmers.

Political parties often promise farm loan waivers or other agricultural sops to win support in rural India.

Roughly 55 per cent of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture, making the community the largest voting bloc.

The agriculture sector accounts for around 15 per cent of India’s economic output.

But nearly 300,000 farmers have killed themselves in the last two decades, as drought or flooding Poor yields and low prices push them into a cycle of debt and despair.

Two BJP state governments in 2017 announced similar packages for farmers worth 770 billion rupees but Modi’s government ruled out a similar nationwide amnesty plan in July. AFP

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201812210148&EN_ID=11201812210052&EMID=11201812210021

UNDP, BEVERAGE COMPANY SIGN MOU
The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter December 22, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed on Friday a memorandum of understanding with one of the leading food and beverage companies operating in Pakistan to promote the ‘Kamyab Jawan Pakistan’ project.

Pakistan’s ‘youth bulge’ offers unique opportunities for the country’s social and economic development.

Both UNDP Pakistan and PepsiCo have programmes aimed at harnessing the potential the youth bulge presents.

UNDP Pakistan National Human Development Report estimates that more than 29pc of country’s population consists of young people between the ages of 15-29 years.

The Youth Empowerment Programme (Kamyab Jawan Pakistan) aims at creating opportunities for knowledge, skills and leadership development of the youth to further the ‘Agenda 2030’.

UNDP Country Director, Ignacio Artaza and PepsiCo Vice President Corporate Affairs for Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Krista Pilot signed the MoU at a ceremony in Islamabad.

PepsiCo Pakistan's partnership with UNDP aims to facilitate opportunities for young people to develop desirable job skills, such as communication, teamwork, time-management and leadership, to increase their potential for successful employment.

PepsiCo will work with UNDP to ensure programme participants include youth from the areas of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Published in Dawn, December 22nd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1452887/undp-beverage-company-sign-mou

SUBMISSION OF EXPORT DOCUMENTS
Sugar industry asks govt to condone delay periods

ISLAMABAD: The sugar industry has approached the federal government to condone the delay periods in submission of sugar export documents for freight subsidy claims, sources in Ministry of Industries and Production told Business Recorder.

The industry while citing a reference of its meeting of November 28, 2018 with Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile, Industries and Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood said that issues related to stalled amount of freight subsidy of Rs2 billion against sugar export for 2017 came under discussion.

The sugar industry also used growers to pressurize the federal and Punjab government for this purpose and ultimately succeeded in getting billions of rupees. The freight subsidy claims of some previous years are already under investigation in National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on the request of Finance Minister Asad Umar who, as Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee on Industries and Production had referred the case of freight subsidy to top anti-graft body.

The sugar industry has claimed that during the meeting with the adviser, the matter related to time barred claims was also highlighted. It was briefed that freight support claims of some sugar mills are time-barred as they were not able to submit the documents to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) within the stipulated timeframe as specified by EPD circular No 20 and 23 of 2017 of October 11, 2017 and December 13, 2017 respectively, regarding export of sugar.

The circular says that the sugar mills have to submit their sugar export claims within 60 days of realization of export receipt and within 30 days for resubmission in case of any discrepancy for the freight support.

It further stated that the government has approved export of two million tons sugar in the third quarter of calendar year 2017. The sugar industry rigorously worked and managed to timely export about two million tons sugar and fetched precious foreign exchange of approximately $675-$700 million for the country. This also supported balance of payment to some extent at crucial time in the country. The sugar industry met all the conditions of circulars.

The sugar millers submitted freight claims to SBP through their respective banks, however, some of the claims could not be submitted within the stipulated timeline due to multiple reasons at different ends as the claim submission process requires an exhausted list of documents to be submitted with concerned bank which after proper scrutiny and check, is required to submit to SBP with the stated time.

After explaining reasons of delay in submission of claims, PSMA has requested the federal government to condone the delay periods in submission of documents so that the exporters are not deprived of their share of freight support merely due to documentation delay.—MUSHATQ GHUMMAN

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/22/18-page/755177-news.html

RESTRICTION ON FISHING THREATENS LIVELIHOOD OF 1.5M PEOPLE: PAKFEA
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Falling off seafood export this fiscal year has brought the exporters to a financial crunch for a want of globally appealing fisheries on the local market after the Balochistan government placed a 12-nautical mile restriction on hunt by the Sindh's trawlers in its waters.

The 60 percent of catch, which the world markets demand for has reduced, comes from Balochistan. The fishing restrictions are now threatening the livelihood of about 1.5 million people associated to the business and billions of rupees investment of the fisheries sector, says a letter by Pakistan Fisheries Exporters Association (Pakfea), Chairman Syed Akhlaq Hussain Abidi to Federal Commerce Advisor, Abdul Razzaq Dawood.

The letter showed worries on the scaling down seafood export this fiscal year from a want of required catch that also brought the operations of fisheries processing factories to mere up 15 percent capacity. It said that the country lost about 13 percent of seafood export in Oct 2018 and 25 percent in Nov 2018 from the low landing of catch due to the 12-nautical mile restrictions, a copy of the letter was provided to Business Recorder said on Friday.

"The fact of the case is that our catch consists of 80 percent of raw material caught by trawlers and 60 percent is caught from Balochistan waters and by restricting it we are losing our major raw material and thus losing exports," the Pakfea letter highlighted the issue to the ministry, saying that the factories resultantly from the restrictions are facing economic problems. It is feared that the continuing low capacity operations may force the owners to layoff workers from their factories in coming months if the crisis persists.

"Our factories are working now at 10-15 percent capacity with expenses standing thus forcing an economic problem in coming days," it showed the exporters concerns, saying that the dwindling operations are feared to impose a lay-off of workers. The Pakfea Chairman through the letter made a request to the federal commerce advisor to help suspend the maritime restrictions on hunt of Sindh's fishermen immediately. It said that the federal commerce ministry should help Balochistan government understand the problem emerged from its maritime restrictions.

"We, therefore request you to take up the matter with both the government officials from federal and Balochistan to immediately suspend their actions and call a meeting of all stakeholders to understand the problem and find a solution to salvage the livelihood of 1.5 million citizens and billions of rupees investment now going to liquidation," the letter urged, saying that "kindly consider this as an SOS call and act urgently."

The country's seafood export sector earned $451 million to the national exchequer last fiscal year, which also grew the exporters' expectations to take the sector to $550 million level during the current fiscal year but the federal deep sea fishing policy broke the smooth tempo in Oct 2018. The letter said that the arrest of local fishermen trawling in Balochistan waters by Maritime Security Agency is the key reason behind falling seafood export.

"Dozens of other boats were warned by MSA to return to Sindh waters and not to fish in Balochistan as by amendment in Balochistan Fisheries Ordinance 1971 of Provincial Government the limit of restriction to catch shrimps by trawling was increased to 12 nautical miles," according to the letter.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/22/5-page/755072-news.html

FISHERMEN OF GWADAR CONTINUE PROTEST
Behram Baloch December 23, 2018
TA: Fishermen affected by the construction of Eastbay Expressway have asked the government to allow them access to the Arabian Sea for fishing.

The fishermen, who have been protesting for the past one week, said they would not compromise on their rights.

Several political parties, including the Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A), BNP-Mengal, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, Pakistan Peoples Party, Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, and civil society organisations were supporting the fishermen.

Secretary General of Human Rights wing of the BNP-A Saeed Faiz led a protest rally in Gwadar in support of the fishermen. BNP-A's workers and supporters marched on main roads and streets of the port town carrying placards and banners inscribed with the fishermen's demands. They chanted slogans in favour of their demands.

Workers and supporters of other political parties also participated in the rally.

Saeed Faiz, Maulana Hidayatullah, Faiz Nagri, Mola Bakhsh Mujahid, Nabi Bakhsh Babar, Mohammad Bakhsh Zamrani and others criticised the government for not paying attention to the fishermen's demands.

They said they were not against development, but wanted protection of their rights and centuries-old livelihood of local fishermen as with the construction of Eastbay Expressway the route up to sea had been blocked for fishing.

They said that according to the national and international law it was necessary to protect the livelihood of local people.

They said the government had promised to remove the fishermen's reservations, but so far it took no step in this regard.

They demanded that at least three points should be constructed at Eastbay Expressway for excess of fishermen up to the Arabian Sea.

Other demands of the fishermen include that the government should take steps for giving higher education to the children of fishermen and set up centres for vocational training in Gwadar.

Published in Dawn, December 23rd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1453085/fishermen-of-gwadar-continue-protest

PAKISTAN CAN EARN SUBSTANTIAL FOREX THROUGH SEAFOOD EXPORTS: LCCI VP
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 23RD, 2018 | LAHORE
Vice President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigal has said that Pakistan could have earned substantial amount of foreign exchange through exports of seafood items that stayed at $451.026 million during the fiscal year 2017-18. After attending the maritime workshop organized by Pakistan Navy, the LCCI vice president in a statement on Saturday said that dream of economically strong Pakistan can easily come true if we focus on “Blue Ocean Economy” and avail all of those opportunities which land-locked countries don’t have.

Unlike various other countries, Pakistan has a vast area of deep blue sea with ideal ports of Gwadar, Keti, Qasim and Pasni but due to lack of due focus, the role of these valuables sites did not remain important in the country’s economy despite the presence of effective defence.

He said that blue ocean economy is ranging from transportation of trading goods, communication, and tourism to mineral extraction. He said that fisheries, oil drilling, ship building and ship breaking industries have a lot of economic scope.

He said that Pakistan have only one ship yard that is not enough to cater to the needs of country. He said that maritime transport is backbone of the global trade and economy. Every country relies on Maritimes trade to sell what it has and buy what it needs. He said that around 90 per cent of world trade is carried by the international shipping industry. Pakistan can grab immense benefits from these sectors through public-private partnership, he added.

Saigal paid rich tributes to Pakistan Navy for holding Maritime Security Workshop and said the event has made a strong relation between Pakistan Armed Forces and private sector.

He said the Chief of Navel Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi who also addressed the workshop said that importance of maritime has been increased after China Pakistan Economic Corridor project under One Belt One Road program. He said that economic prosperity of Pakistan is highly attached with Blue Economy and Maritime Security. He said that Pakistan Navy is fully capable of defending national maritime interests.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181223433890/
BAD WEATHER ALERT: FARMERS ADVISED TO PROTECT CROPS AND NURSERIES
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 23RD, 2018 | KARACHI
Farmers should step up measures to protect crops and nurseries from extreme weather, as fog is expected to grow across the central parts of the country, the Met Office alerted. It termed dry weather

as primary reason behind scaled up fog in the central parts of the country in the next 10 days. “Extreme cold may be damaging to crops and nurseries. Growers should also schedule irrigation plans for the Rabi crops and remove the weeds from their fields to help improve agriculture output,” it urged.

The Met office further said that cold and dry weather is expected to grip the most parts of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir may receive light rain with snowfall during the next 10 days. Temperature is likely to remain below normal in the most of the plains of the country with normal wind in the agriculture plains. However, sandstorm may swirl in southern Punjab and Sindh over the period.

In the next 24 hours: Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country. A very cold weather is likely to continue in northern areas. Fog may continue in plains of Punjab, Upper Sindh and Peshawar Division during morning/night hours. Over the past 24 hours: Weather remained very cold in northern areas, while cold and dry elsewhere in the country. Fog prevailed over plains of Punjab, Upper Sindh and Peshawar Division during morning hours.

Temperature plunged to minus-11 degree Celsius in Skardu, minus-7 in Gupis, minus-6 each in Astore, Kalam and Hunza, minus-5 in Quetta, minus-4 each in Kalat and Gilgit, minus-3 each in Bagrote, Rawalakot, Dir and Bunji on Saturday. “Continental air is likely to prevail over most parts of the country during next few days,” the Met said.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181223433873/
‘AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY SAW MEAGRE GROWTH IN 25 YEARS’
Our Correspondent
December 23, 2018
Underlining the need to increase industrialisation in the country, senior economist Dr Kaiser Bengali suggested during a consultation meeting on Saturday that the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) should be revived to achieve the purpose.

Speaking about the challenges to the country’s economy during the National Labour Council’s meeting at the Piler Centre, he said agriculture and industry are the main pillars of Pakistan’s economy, but there has been meagre growth in both the vital sectors during the past 25 years.

Dr Kaiser, who has served as adviser to the chief ministers of Sindh and Balochistan, stressed the need to launch a socialist movement because, he said, the elite rulers will not solve the people’s problems.

“Our population growth rate is 2.5 per cent and labour force increase rate is 3.5 per cent, so the GDP should grow more than 3.5 per cent a year. If the GDP growth is less, it means the per capita income is reducing.”

Referring to his recent study on the 25 years of Pakistan’s economy, he said there has been an average growth of only one per cent in four major crops — rice, wheat, sugar cane and cotton — while growth in minor crops like pulses and vegetables remained at 1.5 per cent, which is less than the population growth rate.

The country can face a major crisis of food shortage in such a situation, he said, adding that cotton is a fundamental crop on which our entire textile industry depends, but its production has also reduced.

"On an average, the overall growth of the industry remained at 4 per cent during the last 25 years. For the last 25 years, our exports have increased by 7.5 per cent and imports by 11 per cent.

"Till 2002, for every $100 worth of exports, there were imports of $121, but now the ratio stands at $100 to $230. The markets are flooded with imported goods, including food items. Many local industries have closed down, and imported goods have replaced local productions."

Skilled labour

Dr Riaz Shaikh, head of social sciences at Szabist, said that skilled labour force is not developing in Pakistan. "Labour force is working under precarious conditions. Pakistan exports manpower to the Middle East, but they remain unskilled despite spending many years.

"Remittance money has actually turned Pakistan into a consumer society, where no industry is developed. There is no innovation in the industry and agriculture sectors. Our trade with neighbouring countries has, in fact, reduced. Our trade with India is less than $1 billion, while our trade with Afghanistan that was over $2 billion has now reduced to $300 million."

Economic policies

Piler Executive Director Karamat Ali said workers suffer due to the government's economic policies. "Out of 6.5 crore workers, only one per cent are registered."

Quoting the International Labour Organisation, he said there are 7,500 trade unions and 1,309 collective bargaining agents (CBAs). "On an average, six to seven trade unions exist in each organisation, meaning the CBAs are not so effective."

He said that 80 per cent of the people are working either in the informal sector or their working conditions are informal, adding that 70 to 80 per cent of the people are employed through contract or third-party contract system, so they cannot join trade unions.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/409492-agriculture-industry-saw-meagre-growth-in-25-years

LIVESTOCK FARMING IN SOUTH PUNJAB TO LESSEN POVERTY

Mansoor Ahmed
December 23, 2018
LAHORE: Pakistan is blessed with numerous treasures that have been ignored by the successive governments. Cholistan, a poverty-stricken desert in South Punjab, is one such example, where thousands of acres sweet water zone has been put on back burner.

A decade ago, an intensive livestock farming zone was envisaged in Cholistan when over 50,000 acres of identified sweat water zone was established. Expert evaluated that it could provide 60 million kilogramme of beef and 30 million litres of milk to the country, besides raising 7,600 dairy heifers annually.

The Cholistan desert, spread in Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan districts, has 6.6553 million acres of land that offers a great opportunity for enhancing country's meat and milk production.

The temperature in this zone varies from 6 to 50 degrees Celsius and it has a population of only 0.155 million.

Its current livestock population of 1.358 million without proper facilitation speaks volumes about its potential.

The livestock include 576,000 cows, 452,000 sheep, 254,000 goats, 50,000 camels and 19,700 buffaloes.

Land for this purpose was to be leased by Cholistan Development Authority under Article 15 of the CDA Act 1976 for a period of 50 years, extendable for another 49 years in line with the then Federal Government Policy Package for Corporate Agriculture, Livestock, 2002.

The programme was shelved for political reasons, as the then government failed to take the local population into confidence and resolve their apprehensions.

Of the many options available with the government one has to give the local population participation in each project launched. Every aspect of the project was researched and a rough policy was also formulated.

According to that policy, the minimum fixed capital investment was envisaged at Rs100,000/acre of land leased, or as per the investment plan, whichever is higher.

The investor would have to make 40 percent investment within first 24 months, 35 percent within next 12 months, and the remaining 25 percent in next 12 months.

The project was to be completed in 48 months. The package mandates that 25 percent of the livestock would be placed within 24 months, another 25 percent in next 12 months, and the remaining 50 percent in another 12 months.

According to the package, only pressure irrigation will be deployed for fodder cultivation to ensure water conservation.

In case of water quality being unfit, land could be surrendered without any penalties. Land cannot be leased or used for setting up of abattoir in livestock production zone.

The investors vying for allocation of land for livestock farming did ask for improving existing marketing system and channels, encourage establishment of modern meat processing value addition industry.

They term price control as the greatest constraint to improve quality and increase production.

However, they had been assured that the then government of Punjab would lift price control as a general policy on sale of processed, chilled, frozen, packed meat sold at grocery stores, meat processor outlets and / or cold chain outlets, instead of special exemptions.

The government even announced income tax exemption to corporate livestock and agri-businesses vide SRO 106(I)/2008 dated 01.02.2008 and income tax exemption on dividend to shareholders on income derived from corporate farming.

The exemption of 20 percent Customs duty on milk replacers was also announced. To facilitate exports, the Punjab government agreed to provide daily freighter service at concessional rates.

Punjab Agriculture Marketing Company was established to setup cold store chains in Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan and Multan, while the federal government agreed to abolish quarantine fee.

According to the feasibility report prepared by financial experts, the financial cost of each farm of 500 acres would be Rs135 million and the debt equity ratio would be 60:40.

The return on equity is expected to be 44 percent, while the return on capital employed is expected at 27 percent. All this hard work went down the drain, as nothing has been done to exploit the Cholistan treasures. The present government can develop South Punjab by reviving this initiative to make a dent in poverty in the region.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/409463-livestock-farming-in-south-punjab-to-lessen-poverty

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 10TH TO DECEMBER 16TH 2018
DEPRECIATION, SUBSIDY REMOVAL FUELLING INFLATION
Ahmad Fraz Khan December 10, 2018

Farmers are up in arms as general inflation skyrockets and the rupee takes repeated plunges.

One faction of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad blocked the Lahore-Multan Highway for more than 48 hours — as this piece is being written on Thursday — whereas the other faction is holding talks with the federal government in Islamabad for a relief package to neutralise the impact of rising prices and rupee depreciation.

Inflation for the first four months of 2018-19 was 5.9 per cent against 3.5pc during the corresponding period last year. Estimates show it may reach 7.5pc by the end of the year.

Prices will go further up if the government intervenes to help farmers by raising the prices of wheat and sugar cane

The dollar became costlier by more than 31pc in the last one year, impacting prices of all inputs like pesticides, phosphatic fertiliser and diesel.

Apart from the protesting Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, all farmer bodies are expressing identical concerns and may soon follow suit if the situation does not improve. They want the government to either help them control the rise in the cost of production or simply increase the prices of wheat, cotton, sugar cane etc, which will recover their additional costs.

The farmers build their case for the cost of production on three factors. One of them is the rising rates of pesticides, fertiliser and water. Although the federal government withdrew 15pc general sale tax on pesticides, the rupee devalued by 31.5pc in the last one year. This resulted in a net increase of 16.5pc in the cost of production for farmers.

For example, the cotton crop takes seven sprays of pesticides to mature. Until last year, each spray would cost anywhere between Rs2,800 and a little over Rs3,000 per acre. This year, this cost has jumped to Rs6,000-7,500 per acre because of inflation, devaluation and other market forces.

In the China Agro-Chemical Moot recently held in Lahore, Chinese officials substantiated the farmers' claim by saying that their national pesticide production fell 35pc in 2017-18, but sales increased 21pc. This indicates a cumulative increase of 56pc over a year.

"In Pakistan, the full impact was not passed on to the farmers because the manufacturers had healthy stocks from the previous year. This year, however, the entire impact will be felt as the industry has run out of cheaper stocks," explains Saad Akbar, a pesticide manufacturer from Lahore.

The same is the case with phosphatic fertiliser. The price of di-ammonia phosphate (DAP) has jumped to Rs3,850 per bag from Rs2,200 last year. The rise is because of the government ending

subsidies while imports of around 1m tonnes, or 55pc of consumption, have become costlier owing to the changing rupee-dollar parity.

The famers use one and a half bags of DAP on each acre of the cotton crop, which translates into a cost increase of Rs2,500 per acre. Prices of urea fertiliser have also increased following the withdrawal of a subsidy, thus adding another Rs800 per acre to the cost of production.

The water crisis is also driving up the farmers' cost of doing business. With Rabi water shortages estimated to be at a massive 38pc, Punjab will get only 12.36m acre feet (MAF) against the demand for 19.83MAF. The gap of 7.5MAF will be bridged by pumped-out-of-soil water. The pre-litre price of diesel rose from Rs78 to Rs110, up 41pc in the last one year. It takes around 10 litres of diesel to irrigate an acre of land, thus inflating the cost by well over Rs300 per acre.

The government is in jeopardy. If it increases the support/indicative price of wheat/sugar cane or intervenes in the cotton market to help the farmers recover the additional cost of production, it will not only be stoking inflation but also creating social and political unrest in urban areas.

Each intervention will have ramifications. For example, an increase in the cotton price will impact textile exports. But if the government does not intervene to help the farmers, it risks a huge increase in rural poverty.

People in urban areas are bound to suffer as the devalued rupee makes the entire range of pulses, which constitute the poor man's diet, costly by at least 30pc. Pakistan imports pulses amounting to around $1bn, depending on domestic production. In the case of mash and lentil, domestic production meets only 10pc of the demand while the rest comes from abroad.

Around 30pc of moong consumed in the country is imported while the ratio can be 40-60pc in the case of gram. "If these imports would cost Rs100bn a year, they will now cost Rs130bn. Add the edible oil imports of Rs310bn, which will now shoot beyond Rs400bn, and you have a disastrous situation at hand," says Muhammad Jabbar, an importer from the city.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, December 10th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1450553/depreciation-subsidy-removal-fuelling-inflation

GOVT WARNED AGAINST YIELDING TO MILL OWNERS PRESSURE
By Z Ali

Published: December 10, 2018

HYDERABAD: In light of Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) Sindh zone's warning of sugar price hike if they have to pay the Sindh government notified rate of sugarcane to the farmers, Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has cautioned the government against yielding to pressure. "The sugar mills are not complying with the apex court's order [for payment of arrears of last 18 years to the farmers] and they are also blackmailing the Sindh government by asking for billions of rupees in subsidy," said Kabool Muhammad Khatian who chaired a meeting of the chamber at its office in Hyderabad on Sunday.

PSMA, through an advertisement campaign, has contended that Rs182 per 40 kilogramme rate for sugarcane crop and payment of between Rs10 to Rs15 as quality premium will compel them to increase the price of sugarcane to Rs66 per kg. Currently the mills are selling sugar at Rs49 per kg, inclusive of Rs6.6 sales tax.

According to PSMA, the cost of production, including tax, will augment to Rs66 for buying sugarcane at rates between Rs192 to Rs197 per 40 kg. They cite a difference or loss of Rs17 per kg to the mills if they were to sell sugar at the current price while buying canes at the notified rate. The PSMA called for an urgent meeting of Sindh government with the millers to resolve the issue.

The SCA, meanwhile, urged the government to implement its December 7 notification of starting the crushing season and fixing Rs182 price rate. The chamber also opposed PSMA's stance against payment of the quality premium. "The recovery ratio in Sindh's sugarcane is higher than Punjab's sugarcane," said Khatian, contending that receiving the premium is the legal right of farmers.

He deplored that for the last 18 years sugar mills have dilly-dallied payment of the quality premium as they took the matter to litigation in the courts of law. However, he added, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court on March 20, 2018, ordered the mills to pay arrears of the premiums withheld for the last 18 years besides ensuring regular payment of premium every year.

Earlier this week the federal government allowed the export of 1.1 million tonnes of sugar by waiving certain conditions on the demand of PSMA. The Economic Coordination Committee relaxed conditions like start of the crushing season and the export bar against the mills which are defaulters of the banks or cane growers. Earlier this year the mills secured Rs1b export subsidy.

Under the Sindh Sugar Factories Control Act 1950, the provincial government has to fix the buying price and notify crushing season by mid-October every year0. However, for the last several years the government always procrastinates the notification for two or more months, often triggering the farmers' protests across Sindh. In the current year as well, the government delayed the notification for more than 50 days.

The SCA's meeting also demanded afforestation campaign mainly on 1.9m acres land of the forest department to combat climate change and water shortage. The farmers' representatives from Karachi, Sukkur, Sanghar and Ghotki districts attended the meeting through a video link. SCA Senior Vice President Nabi Bux Sathio, Muhammad Khan Sarejo, Murad Ali Khan Nizamani, Syed Babu Shah, Sikandar Sarewal, Kamal Khan Noonari and other office bearers and members attended the meeting in Hyderabad.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 10th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1863534/1-govt-warned-yielding-mill-owners-pressure/

MILLERS CHALLENGE SUGAR CANE PRICE NOTIFICATION IN COURT
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated December 11, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court on Monday directed the agriculture secretary to appear before it on Dec 18 along with the relevant record after owners of sugar mills in Sindh through a petition challenged Sindh government's recent notification fixing sugar cane price for the current season at Rs182/40kg.

The counsel for the petitioner millers submitted in court that on Oct 30, the high court had directed the provincial authorities to set up a sugar cane control board as per the Sugar Factories Control Act, 1950 and the board should convene its meeting immediately to fix the sugar cane price in accordance with Section 16 of the act.

However, the counsel submitted, a notification fixing the sugar cane price at Rs182/40kg was issued on Dec 7 by the provincial government. He contended that the authorities concerned failed to fulfil the parameters of Section 16 of the act while fixing the price.

The bench had also directed sugar mills to send a notice to the cane commissioner for showing their intention regarding commencement of cane crushing process strictly in accordance with Section 8 of the Sugar Factories Control Act, 1950.

Agriculture secretary given notice for Dec 18

Describing the price as "unjustified", the counsel urged the court to seek minutes of the Nov 20 meeting [of stakeholders] on the cane price issue.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali directed the agriculture secretary to appear in court along with the minutes, if any, and relevant record on Dec 18.

On Oct 30, the same bench had asked the provincial authorities to set up the sugar cane control board within the next 10 days.

The board will convene its meeting immediately to fix the sugar cane price, according to the court's directive.

It had ruled that the price of sugar cane fixed by the sugar cane control board must be notified by the provincial government before Nov 30.

BADIN: Sindh Minister for Agriculture Ismail Rahu has said that millers should have agreed to the price fixed by the provincial government instead of going for litigation, Hanif Samoon reports from Badin.

Speaking to the media and later to this reporter, Mr Rahu held that the government had fixed the rate of Rs182/40kg to provide maximum relief to the growers badly affected by drought and drought-like conditions in many parts of the province.

He pointed out that Sindh's agriculture sector was currently facing a crisis due to a severe shortage of water in the system.

He said that Badin was among the worst-hit districts and its 68 dehs had already been declared drought-hit.

In certain other areas, including those falling within the command area of Sukkur Barrage that had been affected for the first time, and those around the Kotri Barrage the situation was assuming an alarming proportion with each passing day.

He said the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leadership was seriously monitoring the situation as water crisis was dealing a severe blow to the provincial economy.

"It's a grave issue of Sindh. Both the party leadership and provincial authorities concerned are seeking experts' opinion on how to save the agriculture sector from devastation," he added.

Mr Rahu expressed his dismay over the federal government's "indifferent" attitude towards the crisis.

He asked officials of the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) to pay heed to Sindh's frantic appeals for an equitable distribution of water among all federating units.

In reply to a question, he said that more dehs of Badin district could be declared drought-hit amid aggravating water crisis and in the light of the reports prepared by the officials concerned.

Published in Dawn, December 11th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1450635/millers-challenge-sugar-cane-price-notification-in-court

FROST, SEVERE COLD: FARMERS SHOULD MAKE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS: PAD
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 11TH, 2018 | LAHORE

Punjab Agriculture department, following the change in the season and forecast for the coming days, has advised the farmers to make necessary arrangements to save their crops from the effects of frost and severe cold. In an advisory issued here on Monday, a spokesman of the department said clear day timing combined with dry air and severe cold are main hazards to create frost. Last 15 days of December and first 15 days of January are important for this weather forecast. Newly emerged and small gardens, especially mango orchids, have the risk of burning due to severe cold and frost, so cover these plants immediately.

Some farmers can use empty plastic fertilizers bags to cover the plant. In such cases, keep the bags of sacks open from the bottom and during sunshine in the day. Make arrangement for light irrigation of small gardens and apply Bordeaux mixture on stems of the plants.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181211430190/

GOVT REFUSES TO GRANT RS6.6B SUBSIDY ON DOMESTIC SUGAR SALE
By Zafar Bhutta

Published: December 11, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The government has turned down a demand of defaulter sugar mills, which are involved in tax leakages, for the provision of Rs6.6 billion in subsidy on sale of 1 million tons of the sweetener in domestic market.

The request was rejected in the wake of opposition from the commerce ministry, which pointed out that the freight subsidy given to millers on sugar export last year was not justified, therefore, any form of subsidy should not be doled out to them.

The government also dismissed another demand of the sugar barons who called for allowing the state-owned Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) purchase of 20,000 tons of sugar from the millers. In this case too, the Ministry of Commerce had its reservations.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government has recently unearthed massive tax dodging by the sugar millers on the sale of molasses – a byproduct of sugarcane. The millers are earning billions of rupees on the sale of molasses and making extra profit by producing electricity.

A senior official of the commerce ministry told The Express Tribune that the ministry informed the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) in its recent meeting that sugar producers were seeking exemption from sales tax on sales in the domestic market, which the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government had notified in 2013. The ministry pointed out that sales tax exemption for sugar sale in the domestic market would be equal to a fixed subsidy of Rs6.6 per kg on sugar exports.

It pointed out that freight subsidy was given on sugar exports in a bid to cover the difference between domestic and international prices. In that regard, the Ministry of Industries had given estimates of the subsidy last year on the export of 2 million tons of sugar. “The calculations showed that the freight subsidy provided last year was not justified,” the commerce ministry said.

Regarding sugar purchase by the TCP, the commerce ministry said the PML-N government had taken a similar decision in 2017 following demand from the sugar millers but it could not be implemented.

It recommended the ECC to ensure payment of outstanding bills of the sugar millers and collection of sales tax at prevailing ex-mill prices.

The Ministry of Commerce proposed that the condition of staring sugarcane crushing at full capacity by November 15, 2018 in order to become eligible for sugar export, which was earlier approved by the cabinet, may be waived.

It suggested that provinces may be asked to provide freight support as sugar policy fell within their domain and different prices for sugarcane procurement and costs of production were prevailing in different areas. The ministry recommended that sugar export quota should be increased by 0.1 million tons and it would not be entitled to any freight support or tax relief. It opposed the procurement of sugar by the TCP but suggested that the finance ministry may pay Rs2 billion in outstanding freight support.

The economic managers said sugar export fell within the domain of the federal government and allowed sugar shipments to overseas markets. The ECC also directed the Finance Division to release the outstanding Rs2 billion on account of freight subsidy.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 11th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1864043/2-govt-refuses-grant-rs6-6b-subsidy-domestic-sugar-sale/

GROWERS URGED TO DEVISE PLAN FOR RABI CROPS
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 12TH, 2018 | KARACHI

The Met Office on Tuesday asked the farmers to plough their fields soon after the peanut crops is cultivated with an irrigation plan in place for the Rabi season keeping in view the continuing rainy spell. Growers should evolve irrigation plan for the continuing Rabi crops as light rains are expected during the next 10 days in the most parts of the upcountry. “Harvesting of peanut may be completed and the fields may be well ploughed afterwards,” it added.

Removing weeds from the standing crops, which the Met called it ‘very important’, warning the farmers of the unnecessary plants utilize moisture and food besides causing a considerable loss to production every year. Day and nighttime temperature is expected to remain normal in the most of the plains of the country with a normal wind except sandstorms may strike Southern Punjab and Sindh over the period. Cold and dry weather is expected to grip the most parts of Punjab with a light rain in its northern half.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is expected to receive a light rain to moderate rain with snowfall in its mountainous region until Dec 20. Weather in Sindh expected to remain dry but cold wave is likely to grip Balochistan. Light to moderate rain-thunderstorm with snowfall is expected in the most parts of Gilgit-Baltistan while Kashmir may receive only light to moderate rains over the period.

In the next 24 hours: A very cold and dry weather is expected across the northern parts of Pakistan, as temperature continued to slide. More isolated rains with snowfall over hills are likely in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and its adjoining areas. Dense and shallow fog is expected to prevail over a few central and southern parts of Punjab during night and morning hours. Cold and dry in expected elsewhere.

Temperature continued to remain plunge in Kalam, Malamjabba, Kalat, Quetta, Gupis and Hunza to minus 8 degrees Celsius, each, Skardu minus 4, Astore minus 3, Murree, Parachinar and Bagrote minus 2, each other past 24 hours. Kalam and Skardu received one inch of snowfall.

Parachinar received 9 mm of rainfall, Chakwal, Bunji, and Pattan 8 mm, each, Lahore, Balakot, Bagrote 5 mm, each, Mangla, Muzaffarabad and Kotli 4 mm, each, Jhelum, and Rawalakot 3 mm, each and Sialkot 2 mm. “A westerly wave is affecting upper parts of the country and likely to persist in next 12 hours,” the Met added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181212430442/

GOVERNMENT PLANS TO REFORM FISHERIES
By APP

Published: December 12, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Balochistan government has planned to establish a fishing business venue alongside the coastal line of the province in a bid to boost the sector by providing access to national and international markets. Talking to APP, an official of the Balochistan fisheries department emphasised that the province possesses the capacity to produce excellent-quality fish and export to the global market. “Construction of the fishing venue has been ensured on the directives of the Balochistan chief minister in a bid to give a boost to this untapped sector and provide facilities to local fishermen,” he said. “The government aims to reform the fisheries department so the interested entrepreneurs and investors can promote farming in the province purely on a commercial basis.”

Published in The Express Tribune, December 12th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1864811/2-government-plans-reform-fisheries/

PUNJAB ENCOURAGING DRIP IRRIGATION
By Our Corresopndents

Published: December 12, 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab government is encouraging the adoption of drip irrigation technology under the ongoing ‘Punjab Irrigated Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project’ to overcome the scarcity of water during different crop cycles, said Special Agriculture Secretary Ehsan Bhutta on Tuesday. The project is being implemented with the help of the World Bank. “Under the initiative, the agriculture department is installing drip and sprinkler irrigation systems, establishing water channels and converting barren land into productive ones with the use of bulldozers and provision of subsidy,” Bhutta said while chairing a review meeting on the project. He added that the drip irrigation system is suitable for crop cultivation when irrigation water or rainwater is not ample for conventional farming. “This technology, so far, has been adopted by many farmers,” he stated.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 12th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1864797/2-punjab-encouraging-drip-irrigation/

DROP IN THREE CROPS’ PRODUCTION FORECAST
Amjad Mahmood December 13, 2018

LAHORE: The first-ever Punjab Food Outlook report launched here on Wednesday forecasts drop in production of three major Rabi crops (2018-19) – wheat, potato and gram – which cover 85pc of acreage in the winter season.

Called food basket of Pakistan, Punjab produces 84pc of the total gram output in the country, 95pc of potato and 77pc of wheat output.

Prepared in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on the Punjab government’s request on the lines of the FAO’s Global Food Outlook, the report predicts 2.3pc decline in wheat production compared with last year’s due to water scarcity and expensive fertilizer.

It foresees 9.0pc fall in gram production because of drought and disease intensity. Pakistan is the fourth largest producer of gram.

The report forecasts a slight drop of 0.5pc in potato output too influenced by higher fertiliser prices. It also reports decline in area under cultivation of gram by 0.14pc and of wheat by 2.5pc.

Agriculture Minister Malik NaumanLangrial while formally launching the report hoped it would add value to the department’s analytical decision making and research and would also inform farmers about the trends in various crops and thus make informed decisions. He asked both the collaborating institutions to also prepare a similar report for Kharif crops.

MinàDowlatchahi, FAO Country Representative, said the report would provide timely and accurate data enabling the government, extension workers and small farmers to make evidence-based decisions by monitoring food supply, demand and other key assessment indicators.

She hoped it would eventually help reduce poverty and improve food security and nutrition in Pakistan, and strengthen national capacities for managing and utilization of food security related information.

Raza Khan, adviser to the Punjab Agriculture Department, said the publication would facilitate preventive actions by anticipating upcoming shocks and help set benchmarks by making an assessment of associated opportunities and risks.

Stephen Davies, Senior Research Fellow at the IFPRI, gave details of the report in his presentation.

Special Secretary Agriculture (Marketing) Ehsan Bhutta, FAO’s AjmalJahangeer and IFPRI research analyst AmnaEjaz also spoke.

Published in Dawn, December 13th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1451082/drop-in-three-crops-production-forecast

ECC ORDERS IMPORTED UREA SUPPLY TO FARMERS
KhaleeqKiani Updated December 13, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday ordered immediate transportation of imported urea into the market.

The directives were issued when the meeting of the ECC, presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar, was informed about the arrival of imported shipments.

The government had ordered about 100,000 tonnes of urea in September to beef up supplies in the market in view of some domestic shortages.

Informed sources said the committee was told that handling of imported urea quantities at the port - facilities faced some initial delays because of liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies. Whenever an LNG ship is either berthing or sailing, the channel is closed to other vessels for safety reasons. However, the issue has now been resolved and arrangements were now in place for supplies across the country.

The ECC directed that the process should be sped up to ensure sufficient stocks in the market. It was reported that transportation would begin within 24 hours.

The Ministry of Industries briefed the meeting about fertiliser situation in the country. It was informed that imported shipments of urea have reached Karachi and arrangements are in place for supplies across the country.

The meeting deferred a proposal of the Power Division seeking increase in electricity tariff for Azad Jammu and Kashmir from Rs2.59 to Rs5.79 per unit and the mechanism for settlement of about Rs90 billion arrears piled up since 2011 due to non-payment of subsidies by the Finance Division.

The ECC also approved three-year budget estimates of the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC). The committee approved NTC's budget estimate for 2018-19 amounting to Rs12.39bn and revised estimates for 2017-18 amounting to Rs12.08bn. The committee also gave ex-post facto approval for NTC's budget for 2017-18 amounting to Rs11.99bn and revised estimates for 2016-17 amounting to Rs11.454bn.

The ECC observed that the NTC being an autonomous and self earning body should be empowered like other public sector corporations to formulate and approve its own budget. It directed that necessary authorisation be issued so that in future the budget is considered and approved by the NTC Board.

The meeting was informed that the NTC was established under the Pakistan Telecommunication (Re-organisation) Act 1996 and was mandated to provide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services to federal government, armed forces, defence projects, provincial governments and to all public institutions (autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies, etc). In accordance with Rule 41(7) Rule (8) of Pakistan Telecommunications (Re-organisation) Act, 1996, NTC shall, prepare its budget and submit it for approval of the Federal Government before June 1, every year. NTC got approval of its budget up to 2016-17 from the Finance Division.

Accordingly, the NTC submitted its proposed budget 2017-18 to the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) after its approval from the NTC Audit Committee and Management Board for its subsequent approval from the Finance Division.

However, in the wake of Supreme Court of Pakistan's judgment, the Finance Division returned NTC's budget for the year 2017-18 with remarks that it was a self-earning organisation and the division had neither any role in budget preparation process of NTC nor provided any budgetary grant.

Therefore approval of Finance Division in particular was not required. However, approval from the Federal Cabinet would be required in the light of SC's above referred judgment.

Published in Dawn, December 13th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1451119/ecc-orders-imported-urea-supply-to-farmers

SEVEN MILLS START CRUSHING OF SUGAR CANE, SAYS MINISTER
The Newspaper's Staff CorrespondentDecember 13, 2018

HYDERABAD: Sindh Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu has said that seven sugar mills have started crushing of sugar cane while 15 have fired up their boilers; the government is making efforts to ensure implementation of the Sugar Factories Control Act 1950.

He was speaking to journalists after his visit to Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam and director general agriculture research office on Wednesday.

He said that Sindh cane commissioner was monitoring the crushing situation on a daily basis, adding that government was committed to implementing the court's directives.

He stated that the Supreme Court's order for retrieving agricultural land would be fully implemented.

He dispelled the impression that the PPP was helping the PML-N. He said that his party was committed to democracy and Pakistan and all those factors which were against democracy and Pakistan would be opposed.

He further said that the PPP always opposed Kalabagh dam construction because it had been rejected by three provincial assemblies.

He, however, said that as per 1991 Water Apportionment Accord 10MAF is to be released downstream Kotri, which was not being done for a long time.

He said that according to one survey around 1.8 million acres of land of Sujawal and Badin districts had been eaten up by the sea.

He said that water crisis had affected Rabi and Kharif crops badly. He claimed that tall claims about one billion trees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were made but these trees were not seen.

He said that the federal government had suspended provision of gas and cost of fertiliser had been increased to Rs1,800 from Rs1,200. He said that gas tariff was increased by 42 per cent and it was equally affecting common man and agriculture. He said that the PPP would safeguard interests of Sindh and also raise its issues at constitutional forums.

He said that the agriculture department was trying to modernise farming to reduce cost of production.

He said that cost of production needed to be curtailed to make commodities competitive in international market.

Meanwhile, speaking at the inaugural ceremony of fruit and vegetable market in TandoAllahyar, he said that this market would benefit growers and traders equally besides creating employment opportunities.

Published in Dawn, December 13th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1451029/seven-mills-start-crushing-of-sugar-cane-says-minister

REPORT ON KEY AGRICULTURE COMMODITIES OUTLOOK LAUNCHED
RECORDER REPORT | Dec 13th, 2018 |LAHORE

The Punjab Food outlook report will, no doubt add great value to department's analytical decision making and the research and will also be of great value to farmers as it will inform them of the trends in various crops. It will also help farmers make informed decisions as to which crop to grow in order to yield maximum profits, said Minister for Agriculture Punjab Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial.

He was speaking at the launching ceremony of Punjab Food outlook Report here on Wednesday. The Minister said Agriculture has been playing a pivotal role in the development of Pakistan since the green revolution of 1960s. It has been the backbone of our economy and a major contributor to prosperity of not only Punjab but for all of Pakistan.

"The current government is actively working towards the benefit of the farmers and helping them to increase their agricultural output by providing them with opportunities that will assist them in getting maximum production."

The Punjab Food Outlook report provides an overview of the key agricultural commodities, with comprehensive assessments and forecasts for three Rabi crops, wheat, gram and potatoes, covering 85% of the acreage in the winter season and it can be very helpful for the government to devise farmer-friendly policies.

The Minister also paid gratitude to the International Food Policy Research Institute – Pakistan (IFPRI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for their tireless efforts in putting together such an important report.

He appreciated the work of Agriculture Delivery Unit (ADU), International Food & Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) that they have collectively done to develop this extremely useful report.

Special Secretary Agriculture (Marketing) Punjab Ehsan Bhutta, Senior Research Fellow, International food Policy Research Institute – Pakistan (IFPRI) Prof Stephen Davies, Country

Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Mina Dowlatchahi, Program Leader, International food Policy Research Institute – Pakistan (IFPRI) Abdul Wajid Rana also addressed the event.

Speakers said that this report would provide beneficial information to the growers about new trends of different crops and farmers can take appropriate decision in the light of this information regarding sowing of any crop for better returns.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181213430744/

SIN TAX : TOBACCO FARMERS DECRY CALLING THEIR EARNING 'GUNAH'
By Our Correspondent

Published: December 13, 2018

PESHAWAR: Tobacco farmers from different regions of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have criticised the proposed sin tax on tobacco and threatened to protest across the province, if government implements this levy which they called controversial and insulting.

Addressing the press conference at Peshawar Press Club, representatives of tobacco growers said that tobacco is a major crop of K-P.

Bread and butter of thousands of people is directly and indirectly attached with tobacco sector, they said.

They criticised federal health ministry for proposing new tax on tobacco called as "gunnah or sin tax" and said this controversial insulting proposal only to please few international NGOs without keeping in mind the critical importance of tobacco crop for the poor farmers of K-P.

They further added that it is a conspiracy against elected government to give negative image among public and especially farmers of K-P.

Tobacco farmer's representatives included Rustam Khan, Professor Hamid urRehman, Anwar Sher, Abdul Salam, ShahidZubair, Zubair Muhammad, Babar Khan, Sajid Khan. FazalQadir, Khan Muhammad, Tariq Sial, Naqeeb Khan, Shad Khan from Manshera, Buner, Swabi, Charsada and Mardan.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 13th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1865601/1-sin-tax-tobacco-farmers-decry-calling-earning-gunah/

GWADAR FISHERMEN ANNOUNCE INDEFINITE STRIKE FROM DECEMBER 17
Published on – December 12, 2018 – 1:20 am

By Our Reporter

QUETTA: Demanding job security in Gwadar Eastbay Expressway the local fishermen community in Port City Gwadar announced to set a strike camp Gwadar from December 17.

Addressing a news conference in Gwadar Press Club on Tuesday, the local fishermen community has said, construction of Eastbay Expressway has started in Demi area of Gwadar but despite presenting our demands and reservations the provincial government not taking seriously our issues.

The leaders of Gwadar Fishermen Union Khudada Waju, Younus Anwer, Jahangir, Imam Buksh, Hameedullah and others have announced to set striking camp against provincial government until they fill their demands.

"We have presented our concerns and demands before Chief Minister Balochistan, Standing Committee, elected MNA and MPA of Gwadar but yet we haven't seen any development upon our demands beside fake promises." They said adding without addressing our demands construction of Eastbay Expressway raises many questions.

They added that fisheries the backbone of economy of citizens of Gwadar, barring fishermen from sea would be tantamount of economic murder of fishermen of Gwadar.

"Along with Government Ministers, we have discussed over reservations with opposition members as well and asked them to discuss this valid issue on the Assembly floor."

The fishermen community in Gwadar has decided to set a protesting camp in Mullah Musa Road of Gwadar adding our protest will be continued until government fill our demands.

https://www.bexpress.com.pk/2018/12/gwadar-fishermen-announce-indefinite-strike-from-december-17/

PFA DISCARDS 60,000KG SUBSTANDARD MEAT IN TWO MONTHS: DG
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 14TH, 2018 | LAHORE

The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) discarded 60,000 kg substandard meat in last two months during operation held against butchers and illegal slaughterhouses. This was informed by PFA Director General Captain Muhammad Usman (retd). On Thursday, meat safety team and vigilance cell of PFA conducted raids and confiscated as many as 2,500kg meat from two meat points including Meat Store and Nadeem Store.

The raids were conducted in the areas of Township and Pindi Stop.

Muhammad Usman said that substandard meat of ill and emaciated animals were brought at shops for selling after slaughtering at illegal slaughterhouses. The raids were conducted on the tip-off of PFA vigilance cell. He said that all seized meat was set ablaze at the Punjab Agriculture and Meat Company's furnace as per the eco-friendly policy. PFA also warned two food outlets, asking them to improve hygienic condition.

DG further said that PFA is taking strict action while registering cases against the butchers who involved in bad practice. He informed that special meat safety teams and vigilance are working in two shifts to ensure the provision of healthy and quality meat in the market.

Meanwhile, the vigilance cell and technical wing of the Authority presented their monthly progress report to PFA Director General Muhammad Usman on Thursday.

The report noted that vigilance cell shut down 40 sites and discarded unwholesome food worth Rs 25 million in the month of November. PFA has discarded as many as 3000 kg expired meat, more than 20,000 kg fish and 84000 gutka packets across the province.

The report said, "Vigilance cell also discarded 1,680kg tainted khoya, 4,000,000 packets of different food items and 4,000 kg powder that was used in the preparation of fake milk. Moreover, authority confiscated 17,000 kg adulterated pepper and 60,000 kg substandard pickle during different raids, later discarded.

In the report revealed that PFA took the blood samples of 3,846 food handlers/workers among 3,362 workers passed and 484 failed in the medical screening test. As well as, PFA has analyzed 585 samples of food in Food Laboratory among 265 samples found up to the required standards however, 272 samples were remained failed to meet the standards.

The Punjab Food Authority also gave Level 1 training to 3,000 food handlers/workers and Level 2 training to 103 people under the PFA Training School Programme. DG has shown satisfaction on the performance of the vigilance cell and Technical wing. He said that positive results are achieved due to set monthly goals and targets. The purpose of this meeting was to evaluate performance on a monthly basis, he added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181214431023/

DEEP SEA FISHING CONTINUES TO SCALE BACK DUE TO RESTRICTION: STOFA CHIEF RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Pakistan's deep sea fishing continues to scale back, as a 12-nautical mile restriction by the Balochistan government stands widely a stumbling block for Sindh's fishermen to catch export-oriented marine species, stakeholders said on Thursday.

"Pakistan's deep fishing is in a deep trouble for not having access to the deep sea," President Sindh Trawlers Owners and Fishermen Association (STOFA), Habibullah Khan Niazi told Business Recorder, saying that Sindh's fishermen are now scared to voyage to Balochistan waters for a hunt worth of export.

He alleged that Balochistan government is arresting boats from Karachi on the pretext of violating restriction on fishing in its 12 nautical miles limits. "About 50 percent of deep sea boats are moored at different spots around the Karachi coast from the fears of arrests".

He said that the Sindh's waters do not offer the species that have appeal globally, resulting in the high cost of hunt operations with less return.

"The issue seems to worsen further if remedy not sought," he warned that the country will suffer a huge export loss with the reduced deep sea fishing.

"Boats need a wider space on sea for trawling that they do not have right now beyond 12 nautical miles in Balochistan waters," Habibullah Niazi said, asking the provincial and federal governments to step up their efforts to end the crisis at earliest.

Pakistan's seafood export scaled back to $67.156 million in July-Sep 2018-19, down by 11.31 percent. Fall in seafood export now stands at $8.567 million in July-Sep 2018-19 from $75.723 million in July-Sep 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says.

In term of volume, the country exported 28,185 metric tons of seafood in July-Sep 2018-19, less by five percent or 1359 metric tons from 29,544 metric tons in July-Sep 2017-18.

Seafood export fell by 6.32 percent or $2.54 million to $37.620 million in Sep 2018 from $40.160 million in Sep 2017.

The country made 14,884 metric tons of seafood export in Sep 2018, which is almost stagnant with 0.29 percent growth or 4300 tons, comparing to the export of 14,841 metric tons in Sep 2017. "Boats' daily financial losses range from Rs100, 000 to Rs500, 000 depending on their size and radius of operations," President STOFA said.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/14/15-page/753919-news.html

KP TOBACCO FARMERS WARN TO PROTEST AGAINST PROPOSED 'SIN TAX'
AMJAD ALI SHAH | DEC 14TH, 2018 | PESHAWAR

Tobacco growers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have threatened that they would launch a province-wide protest campaign, if the federal government will implement the proposed 'Sin-Tax' on tobacco. Speaking a news conference at Peshawar Press Club, Rustam Khan, a representative of the tobacco farmers took strong exception a strong exception over the proposal, floated by federal health ministry to impose new tax on tobacco called as "Gunnah Tax" or "Sin Tax".

He described that the proposed levy on tobacco is insult to the highly religious and conservative farmers of KP. He added the move only aims at to appease some INGO without keeping in mind the critical importance of tobacco crop for the poor farmers of KP. He further said that it is a conspiracy against elected government to give negative image among public and especially farmers of KPK.

Tobacco farmer's representatives, Professor Hamid ur Rehman, Anwar Sher, Abdul Salam, Shahid Zubair, Zubair Muhammad, Babar Khan, Sajid Khan. Fazal Qadir, Khan Muhammad, Tariq Sial, Naqeeb Khan, Shad Khan from Manshera, Buner, Swabi, Charsada and Mardan were present during the press conference.

Rustam Khan said that tobacco crop is one of the major crops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and bread and butter of thousands of people are directly and indirectly attached with this sector. He maintained that about 85 per cent of tobacco crop being harvested in KP and the farmers are harvesting this crop for last many decades.

He furthermore informed that as many as 75,000 farmers were directly attached to tobacco cultivation and almost 240,000 people are directly and indirectly financially dependent on this crop. "We are facing social pressures from their families and social circles, which portray their bread and butter as "haram" and illegal. Government or any NGO have no right to give decision that either one thing is sinful or not, the growers' leader said.

He vowed that they will not allow few elements in federal health ministry and NGOs to make fun of Islam. He criticized comments of a senior official of health ministry on private TV channel that Islam is nothing to do with "Sawab" or Gunnah". Farmers termed these remarks as equal to making fun of Islam.

Tobacco farmers demanded stern actions against the official who commented on a private TV channel regarding sin and Islam relationship. They also demanded that Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan should take notice of equalizing farmers with sinners and bootleggers. 'If our demands are not considered and government continue to insult farmers and their families, then we will start protests in whole province', they added.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181214431115/

ADB RECOMMENDS CESS FUND TO PROP UP RICE EXPORTS
TAHIR AMIN | DEC 15TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has recommended setting up of a cess (levy) fund based on contributions from rice exporters, as Pakistan""s production as well as export of basmati shows a downward trend due to absence of a strong research and development institutional structure, making it difficult for the sector to prepare for new challenges.

The ADB in its report "Investment in Research and Development for Basmati Rice in Pakistan" stated that the Ministry of Finance (MoF) is not transferring all proceeds of the Export Development Fund (EDF) to the Ministry of Commerce (MOC), which is responsible for disbursing the proceeds. As a result, a large sum is due from the MoF. The cess collected in 2017 from rice exporters is equal to half of all expenditure occurred on rice research and development during the last 20 years.

The report stated that insufficient investment in agriculture research and development (R&D) in Pakistan has resulted in suboptimal yields and a lower-than-potential productivity growth curve of its basmati rice varieties. Pakistan is the globe""s fourth largest rice exporter in terms of quantity, and rice is the country""s second largest export earner after cotton.

Without a policy commitment to elevate basmati rice as a strategic product, it will continue to be impacted by changing economic and environmental conditions. Extra funding for basmati can be easily channelled from the levy that is being collected from its export or through government development funds. The bigger challenge is changing the embedded mindset that fails to connect research and development with the production and commercialisation of basmati.

The report further stated that having established that the current funding levels for basmati R&D are woefully inadequate and that Pakistan""s basmati export could be increased by additional funding for basmati R&D, the question arises as to the best remedy.

Two important aspects need attention: first, the source of funding, and second, the oversight and transmission mechanism of the funding. Modern models of R&D funding rely on a combination of public grants, industry contributions, and fees and levies. However, a substantial increase from

Pakistan””s public exchequer is unlikely. One option is to institute a cess (levy) fund based on contributions from farmers.

An expanded version could involve all participants of value chain, so that all participants”” resources can be pooled for mutual benefit, given that rice R&D is advantageous to all stakeholders in the value chain. However, the expectation that Pakistan””s farmers will willingly agree to an R&D levy is unrealistic, as their ability to pay is uncertain and they frequently complain about input costs and lack of subsidies. Alternately, the other end of the chain might be more conducive to such an initiative.

The processing and export stages involve the greatest value addition for rice. Such stages of the value chain are also better documented, better organised, and more cognizant of the need for better R&D to be able to compete in international markets. The burden of a cess at the export end is less onerous than at the farm end, and the amount that can be collected will be greater. Given that the exporters gain the most in the rice value chain, it is only fair that R&D contributions should come from them.

The Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan has, on many occasions, requested the release of funds from the EDF for basmati development. Thus, while the industry has contributed for many years to a cess fund designed exactly for improving the export product, the government apparatus has made the scheme ineffectual.

The inability to view the whole value chain means that the billions of rupees that have been collected from rice exporters in the last 20 years have not been used for basic R&D. The vision of the Export Development Fund or the exporters is not broad enough to realise that all R&D across the value chain will contribute to increased export revenues. The current narrow focus on marketing and international road shows exemplifies the misunderstanding about commercialisation of R&D.

Funds are available in the government””s annual development budget. The ongoing ADB Punjab Basmati Rice Value Chain Technical Assistance Project has found a dearth of good project proposals and project management capabilities. The current project has highlighted the problem that scientists find it difficult to spend even small grant amounts within project duration. Any effort to modernise and streamline agriculture R&D must involve a holistic approach that includes the use of government development funds and the application of the Export Development Fund. Policymakers and treasury officials need to be convinced that the amount of R&D funding required is small compared to the contribution made by the cess on rice exporters.

The important point is to commit continuing funding every year for the whole value chain, which should be under the administration of a single entity. Recent emphasis on public-private partnership (PPP) models of development offers a new avenue for changing the private sector””s current rent-seeking approach and aligning it with the public sector policy revival. A PPP approach can considerably lower the funding burden on the public sector while at the same time creating an environment to align private sector goals with government policy. While implementing PPP interventions can be technically challenging, their potential benefits can be gained by resolving current bottlenecks.

While overall revenues from rice are stable, the lack of growth of basmati revenues should be a red flag for policymakers. A reform programme is urgently needed because years of underinvestment have weakened the system; however, some practical measures can reverse the trend, said the report.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181215431227/

GOVERNMENT LIKELY TO FIX PRICE OF IMPORTED UREA AT RS 1660/BAG
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN | DEC 16TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The government is likely to fix price of imported urea at Rs 1660 per bag which is Rs 50 per bag leess as compared to local urea. The decision will be taken by the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet on Monday. Informed sources told Business Recorder that urea is retailing for 1850 in main punjab agricultural markets of Multan, Gujranwala and others. This is Rs 138 above company to dealer price of 1712 and Rs 110 above urea producing company listed retail price of Rs 1740 (inclusive dealer commission).

The source said this black marketing of Rs 110 above listed price is due shortage of urea in market. Imported urea sale price has still not been issued by Government/National fertilizer marketing limited, the sources continued. “Non availability of imported urea for sale is amplifying shortage. The NFML is not paying attention to ECC directive last Wednesday to start selling imported urea,” the sources maintained

Analysts say that it is surprise that the NFML is still not able to issue a selling price for imported urea in three days after ECC directive.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181216431535/

PUNJAB WHEAT SOWING SHORT OF TARGET BY 2MLN ACRES
Munawar Hasan

December 16, 2018

LAHORE: Owing to extreme water scarcity and a delay in sugarcane crushing, wheat sowing in Punjab province stands short by as many as two million acres against the target, following the lapse of extended optimal sowing deadline, an official said on Saturday.

“Wheat sowing is expected to complete during the month of December as wheat was sown over 15.2 million acres of land till December 13, 2018, which is 95 percent of the total targeted area,” the official told The News.

Out of the national area and production target of 21.74 million acres and 25.6 million tons, respectively, for the year 2018-19, Punjab was assigned to sow wheat on 16 million acres of land and produce 19.5 million tons of output with a per acre yield of 32.70 maund (40kg). The province accounts for around 80 percent of grain production in the country.

According to official figures, against the cultivation target, wheat was sown on 14 million acres till November 30, depicting a 12 percent decrease against the target.

Earlier, November 20 was considered as the optimal time of wheat sowing in the province. However, due to climate change and lesser rains in early Rabi period, now wheat sowing, up to November 30, is being considered to produce an optimum level of yield.

The water paucity was one of the main factors hindering crop sowing in the province. In accordance with the hydrological conditions, advisory committee of Indus River System Authority (IRSA) estimated a shortfall of 38 percent during ongoing Rabi season.

Punjab was allotted 12 million acres feet (MAF) of water out of total 23.32 MAF. Hence, non-perennial canals of the province did not get any water during winter.

The official further said a slight improvement was observed in the wheat farming compared to last year's trend due to early cotton and rice harvesting this year. "The cotton crop was terminated early as the crop size was not relatively large coupled with the fact that farmers were getting very attractive price," he added.

Delayed crushing by the powerful sugar mill owners did hit wheat sowing in the province, the official said and added farmers were deprived of money they used to earn by selling sugarcane, which helped them buy inputs for the next crop.

On the availability of fertiliser, the official said the urea supply for Rabi crop was stated to be satisfactory.

"By commencement of Rabi in October, as all urea plants were operating at full capacity, a total 665,000 tons of urea was available in the market with opening stock of 110,000 tons," he said.

The official added that after meeting requirements of Rabi, it was projected that the closing stock would be around 205,000 tons as government also ensured the import of urea well in time. The higher use of phosphatic and potassic fertilizers will definitely help in boosting yield of wheat, he said.

The official admitted that despite government's efforts, most of the sugar mills didn't start crushing by December 10 despite the fact that they were bound to do so by third week of November.

"Delay in crushing suits mills as sucrose contest ratio increases as the cane loses [water] weight, benefitting the millers directly," he said and observed the millers fully get advantage from sugar markets dynamics.

Meanwhile, the provincial Agriculture Department has advised the farmers to go for sunflower plantation instead of late sowing of wheat as it offers handsome return, while it also weighed in that a considerable volume of wheat is available in the country from the last year's crop.

Wheat is the largest grain crop and main staple diet of most of the population. It contributes 9.1 percent to the value added in agriculture and 1.7 percent to national GDP.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/406337-punjab-wheat-sowing-short-of-target-by-2mln-acres

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 3RD TO DECEMBER 9TH 2018
RECEIVABLES PILE UP AS SUGAR CANE GROWERS WAIT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SC ORDER
Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated December 03, 2018

Sucrose recovery from the sugar cane crop of the 2017-18 season exceeded the benchmark of 8.7 per cent. Exceeding the recovery benchmark entitles sugar cane producers to claim the quality premium that is over and above the notified sugar cane price.

However, farmers are not getting this premium, although the apex court turned down the appeal of sugar mills on this issue in January.

Farmers' receivables from Sindh-based sugar mills under the head of quality premium amounted to Rs34 billion until the 2016-17 season. The Supreme Court has ordered that a notification for the payment of the premium and the sugar cane price should be issued and the same paid within two months of the end of the crushing season.

Sucrose recovery dropped to 9.85pc in 2016-17 from 10.52pc in 2015-16. It improved to 10.46pc in 2017-18.

The owners of sugar factories fought a legal battle for two decades against the judgement of the Sindh High Court (SHC) in favour of farmers over the issue of quality premium in 1998. Sugar mills are now supposed to pay the premium at the close of every season.

"We need to talk to the stakeholders to figure out how to start the payment of the premium as the apex court has finally adjudicated on the matter. We may seek guidance from the advocate general of Sindh to define the mechanism for the payment of such a huge amount," says Sindh Agriculture Secretary Agha Zaheer, who served as cane commissioner until the 2017-18 season.

Sugar mills owe farmers around Rs39bn as the apex court has turned down their appeal against the high court's order to pay 'quality premium'

When sugar recovery crosses the benchmark of 8.7pc, the grower gets entitled to the premium of 50 paisa per 40kg against each point of sucrose recovery over and above the crop's actual rate to be paid by the sugar mill. Punjab has recently revised the recovery benchmark to 9.4pc from 8.9pc, sources said.

Sindh crushed 21.62 million tonnes of sugar cane to produce 2.28m tonnes of sugar in 2017-18. In 2016-17, 21.9m tonnes of sugar cane were crushed against 17.82m tonnes a year ago. Sindh produced 2.23m tonnes of sugar in 2016-17 compared to 1.89m tonnes in the preceding year.

The office of the Sindh cane commissioner calculates the overall average recovery of sugar in a season. It can be as high as 12pc in some sugar factories. Sugar mills resort to the practice of disputing the sugar cane price every year. They have now started underreporting sucrose recovery as a high rate makes them liable for the payment of the quality premium.

Farmers oppose the demand by sugar mills for the payment of rebates and subsidies on sugar exports. According to Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) Vice President Nabi Bux, mills are least bothered about paying the quality premium or the notified sugar cane price even though they lobby the federal government for rebates and subsidies on exports.

Accumulated receivables from sugar mills since 1998 are around Rs39bn. Now farmers eagerly wait for the disbursement of this amount.

There is no independent mechanism or third-party assessment to determine or verify sucrose recovery in each sugar mill during the crushing season. One has to rely on figures provided by the factory management. There are 38 sugar mills in Sindh, but not all of them crush sugar cane every year for one reason or another.

“Every mill provides the cane commissioner’s office with statistics about both sucrose recovery and sugar cane crushing,” says a senior officer of the agriculture department. But factory owners deny fudging figures as, they say, other departments also receive the same data,” he adds.

Sugar cane producers don’t object to figures that a sugar mill shares with authorities: all that growers are concerned about is the timely payment of the quality premium and the official sugar cane price. But sugar mills not only pay growers less than the notified rate, they also make further deductions on different grounds. A typical example of this practice would be the buyer claiming that the grower cultivated an unapproved variety of sugar cane that gave smaller sugar recovery.

Sugar mills didn’t deposit the annual quality premium in court during the pendency of their appeal, although such an arrangement would have benefitted both parties.

The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) was a party to that case. SAB Vice President Mahmood Nawaz Shah argues that sugar mills should have set aside the disputed amount while the matter was sub judice. “We will ask the government to get the dues cleared. We will also be filing an application for the implementation of the court verdict regarding the payment of the accumulated premium,” he says.

The Sindh cane commissioner has written a letter to the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) to draw its attention to the non-payment of the quality premium. According to the provincial agriculture secretary, another reminder will soon be issued to the PSMA.

Apart from the quality premium, some sugar mills have not yet cleared other liabilities from 2017-18. Around 1,300 complaints involving Rs1bn are registered with the cane commissioner’s office, which should be decided in 45 days as per the SHC order. The court has formed a committee that is led by the cane commissioner and has equal representation from sugar mills and growers to review the complaints.

The Sindh government had fixed the official sugar cane rate at Rs182 per 40kg in 2017-18. But sugar mills challenged the rate in the SHC. Later, the two parties mutually decided that sugar mills would pay growers Rs160 per 40kg while the differential of Rs22 per 40kg would be subject to the decision by the apex court in identical petitions from previous years.

Sugar mills received a subsidy of around Rs4bn — which was at the rate of Rs9.30 per kg on 20,000 tonnes of the stock held by each factory that exported sugar — from the Sindh government in 2017-18 in a phased manner.

Sugar mills were also supposed to get a federal subsidy of Rs10.70 per kg. But the federal government has withheld it, saying sugar mills didn’t commence crushing on time last year. The Sindh government will also share this federal subsidy on a fifty-fifty basis.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, December 3rd, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1448970/receivables-pile-up-as-sugar-cane-growers-wait-for-implementation-of-sc-order

GOVERNMENT TO AMEND RULES FOR IMPORT OF COTTON THROUGH LAND ROUTE
MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN | DEC 3RD, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The federal government has decided to amend Plant Quarantine Rules for providing facility for meeting Sanitary and Phytosanitary requirements for import of cotton through land route. This decision has been taken by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet in its recent meeting when the issue of cotton import from Torkham border came under discussion.

The sources said Pakistan"s textile industry consumes around 12 to 15 million bales per annum. However, the country is a net cotton importer and textile industry has to meet this shortage by importing cotton from other countries.

According to sources, domestic cotton is of short to medium staple length therefore long and extra long staple cotton has to be imported for production of finer yarn counts for subsequent transformation in to high value added finished products. Pakistan imports cotton from various sources. Afghanistan and Central Asian States are producers and exporters of cotton and they have reasonable share in Pakistan"s import mix as imports from these sources are cheaper due to land route compared to United States and other destinations.

A delegation of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) and Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA) held a meeting with the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile, Industry & Production and Investment on November 12, 2018 and raised issue of import of cotton from Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan through land route via Torkham. Due to sensitivity of the issue, the Advisor to the Prime Minister called an inter-ministerial meeting on November 15th 2018 to deliberate on the issue.

Ministry of National Food Security and Research maintained that cotton is a sensitive crop and attracts variety of pests. It requires a pest scouting from the importing country and on that basis a fumigation process is a must to counter such threats.

According to section 28 of the Plant Quarantine Act 1976/Rules-1967, cotton can only be imported from the sea-route since quarantine facilities are available at Karachi at the moment. Further, Afghanistan is the only transit route and for that purpose pest scouting of Central Asian States would also be required. Otherwise it would be a great threat as the new pests harming domestic cotton.

Last year, a special dispensation was given on political/commercial basis during a meeting between Secretary Commerce Pakistan and Deputy Minister Commerce Afghanistan. It was highlighted by Secretary, Food Security that for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) a lot of effort was made by the Plant Protection Department last year. The facility is not available at Torkham and even Afghanistan did not arrange the pest scouting visit of Plant Protection Department of Pakistan to cotton growing areas of Afghanistan and could not develop an English based template.

APTMA argued that under the Quarantine Rules only American Cotton is subject to Quarantine process. Therefore, such regulations are not applicable on Afghanistan and Central Asian States

Cotton. However, officials of Ministry of National Food Security and Research stated that origin of such cotton is also American. APTMA was of the view that American cotton is defined on area basis not on genetics. Further, APTMA offered to undertake fumigation process at Torkham and build such facilities at Torkham either by their resources or from funds of the EDF.

Textile Division apprised that Pakistan is net cotton importer and to bridge the gap in supply and demand and availability of raw material for exports, Afghanistan and Central Asian States are economical and alternate choice. Textile Division submitted following proposals: (i) similar to last year, fumigation arrangements may be made either in textile units of importers or any designated area and cotton already arrived may be cleared; (ii) Afghanistan and Central Asian States may be asked to arrange pest scouting visit of Plant Protection Department of Pakistan during their cotton season; and (iii) permanent fumigation and Quarantine facility may be developed in an area proposed by the Customs Department of Federal Board of Revenue at Torkham border as an alternate dry port.

During the ensuring discussion, it was highlighted that the Central Asian countries especially Uzbekistan produces best cotton. Pakistan needs import of cotton to meet shortage in the country. Therefore, import of cotton from Central Asia/Afghanistan through Torkham border would be beneficial to our industry.

The ECC observed that all Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regulations should be adhered to during the process of import. It was brought to the notice of ECC that due to heavy human traffic at Torkham, it would be appropriate to establish facilities for import of cotton at Jamrud.

After detailed discussion, the ECC took the following decisions: (i) allowed import of cotton from Central Asia and Afghanistan through land route via Torkham border in containerised from one year, provided that all Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures are fulfilled; (ii) Ministry of National Food Security & Research and Commerce Division to engage with the importers for establishment of facilities at Torkham for import through land route;(iii) directed that the matter regarding creation of facilities at Jamrud for import of cotton be taken up with the Afghan side at appropriate level; and (iv) necessary amendments may be initiated in the Plant Quarantine Rules for providing facility of meeting the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for import of cotton through land routes.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181203428170/

NEW METHODS OF WHEAT SOWING TO BE INTRODUCED IN PUNJAB
RECORDER REPORT

SIALKOT: Provincial Agriculture department has formulated a well-knitted plan for enhancing the per acre wheat yield and to introduce new methods of wheat sowing n the Punjab. Sources in Agriculture department told Business Recorder on Sunday that over 1.60 crore acres of land would be brought under wheat crop during Rabi crop season in wheat growing parts of the Punjab.

In order to attain the fixed target of wheat crop, the Agriculture department has finalized necessary arrangements in the Province. Under the plan the agriculture department will take necessary steps for creating awareness among the growers about the new technique “Bed Planting” across the Punjab.

The sowing of wheat on beds will help in saving the irrigation water 30 to 50 percent while supportive in enhancing wheat production as well as protect the wheat crop from rain and winds.

The Agriculture department would provide full assistance and guidance to the wheat growers for adopting the new technique of bed planting for attaining better output of the crop and enhancing the wheat crop acreage in the Province. Under the programme special attention will be accorded on bringing maximum land under wheat crop for attaining yielding results.

The Agriculture department had initiated special training programme for wheat growers for creating awareness about the proportionate use of fertilizers for getting better yield of the crop, natural cultivation techniques and irrigation.

The Agriculture department has initiated “Farmers Training Programme” under which wheat growers of 1431 villages of Sialkot district will impart training about latest wheat production techniques, utilization of fertilizer and pesticide aimed at attaining maximum per acre wheat yield in four tehsils of the district while Agriculture experts were visiting village to village for creating awareness about obtaining maximum output of the crop. In Sialkot district wheat would be cultivated over 4.95 lakh acres of land would be brought under wheat cultivation.

Special steps have also been taken for checking the sale of fake and substandard pesticides and fertilizer in Sialkot, Daska, Sambrial and Pasrur tehsils of the district and Sialkot district administration has adopted solid measures for ensuring the provision of quality pesticides and fertilizers to the wheat growers in the district sources added.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/m/2018/12/03/5-page/752191-news.html

OPP, TREASURY RAISE CANE FARMERS’ ISSUES
The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter December 04, 2018

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly fell to its perennial quorum crisis in the first regular session on Monday.

Though the Monday session was the fifth since the House’s inception in July, but the earlier sessions were meant for swearing in, elections of the speaker, deputy speaker and chief minister and later for passing the provincial budget. On Monday, it was the first regular session that survived only 80 minutes before numerical poverty forced the chair to adjourn it until Tuesday morning.

The house, which started its proceedings 100 minutes later than announced schedule of 2pm, took up only question hour and a few points of order when the opposition struck the broken quorum.

Earlier, PPP’s Hassan Murtaza stood on a point of order as soon as the question hour ended and said the crushing season, which should have started on November 10 had yet to start. The PPP parliamentarian received support from the treasury when one after another member of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) asked for instant solution to the cane crisis. The chair fixed Wednesday for the debate on the issue and also asked the treasury to ensure the presence of the minister for agriculture.

The PTI also had hard time defending itself when one opposition member after another stood up to accuse it of “discrimination” on a variety of issues. Ghiasuddin of the opposition said that he went to Chief Minister’s Office (8 Club Road) in the morning and was told that “opposition members are not allowed in the office." He wondered how any member of the House, or any Pakistani for that matter, could be disallowed in the CM Office, which essentially was a public place?

Munawer Ghaus of the PML-N took from where Mr Ghaussudin left: "Punjab Houses in Islamabad, Murree or Karachi have been declared off limit for the opposition. I tried to get booking but was refused point blank, saying that PML-N members cannot be allowed into."

Mian Mahmoodur Rashid, the minister in charge, said it was not unprecedented as he never got bookings when was in the opposition.

There have been no such instructions by the PTI. The Punjab government would ensure all members, without discrimination, get their rights, he said, adding that the PML-N abused the Punjab Houses as Pervaiz Rashid lived free while Asif Kirmani left Rs6.5 million dues. He said an audit had been ordered to see who owes what to these rest houses.

All this was going on when an opposition member pointed out broken quorum. Five minutes of bells and 15 minutes break did not help and the House was adjourned until Tuesday morning.

Published in Dawn, December 4th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1449299/opp-treasury-raise-cane-farmers-issues

RAMZAN SUGAR MILLS STAFF HELD FOR 'DUPING' VILLAGERS
The Newspaper's Correspondent December 04, 2018

CHINIOT: Bhowana police have registered a case against 18 people, including top management of Ramzan Sugar Mills, and arrested 11 of them on charges of duping public to get supportive documents in connection with a NAB case.

Police registered the case under sections 420, 468, 471 and 109 of PPC against Adeel Shah, mills business head, Sarfraz Ahmad, general manager, Rana Zafar, GM (cane), Rana Ahsan, deputy manager (cane), Chaudhry Javed, director (technical), and arrested [alleged] survey team members Muhammad Rafiq, Waqas Ahmad, Saeed Hussain, Maryam Fatima, Shamim Akhtar, Asad Ali, Yasir Arsalan, Ehsan Elahi, Arsalan Rafiq, Muhammad Yaseen, Shafqat and Rana Mujahid.

Sajid Ali of Khan Da Kot village alleged that the suspects were duping the farmers by getting their signatures on some forms favouring construction of a drain from the mills to the local nullah. They were getting their signatures by alluring them to provide them with hens and cows under a scheme.

On the other hand, GM (cane) Rana Zafar has rejected the FIR as false, saying that it was politically motivated. He denied sending any survey team to the village on behalf of the mills.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449301/ramzan-sugar-mills-staff-held-for-duping-villagers

ACE RECOMMENDS REGISTRATION OF FIRS AGAINST FOOD DEPT OFFICIALS OVER GUNNY BAG SCAM

Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated December 04, 2018

HYDERABAD: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) has recommended registration of FIRs against Sindh food department officials, including deputy director and district food controller, and some private persons on charges of involvement in the embezzlement of around Rs1.6 billion in distribution of gunny bags for procurement of wheat crop of 2017-18 season.

The ACE Karachi authorities made the recommendation after thorough probe in all six talukas of Sanghar district for which the food department had set perhaps the largest wheat procurement target (of around 700,000 bags). The case was forwarded to ACE by Sanghar district and sessions judge over reports of lack of transparency in distribution of gunny bags.

In all the six talukas, according to inquiry officer's findings, middlemen remained the same who had bought wheat crop from farmers at lesser rates and sold the same to food department at the support price of Rs1,300 per 40kg in collusion with the officials and made windfall profits.

The officer found that the middlemen who were beneficiaries of the support price did not have agriculture land to claim entitlement for gunny bags. "The gunny bags were mostly given to political and influential people of Sanghar district," said a source in ACE.

He said that poor farmers, who were not able to get gunny bags to supply their crop to the food department, sold the fruit of their labour to middlemen at as low a price as Rs800 per 40kg.

About other irregularities, he said, the food officials also deducted certain quantity of wheat from overall wheat crop that was supplied to the department which again jointly benefitted officials and middlemen.

"The modus operandi is that the middlemen buy wheat crop from farmers on credit and made payments to growers after supplying their crop to the food department," said the inquiry officer.

According to findings of the inquiry, a loss of Rs461.125m was detected in Shahdadpur taluka, Rs455.78m in Sinjhoro, Rs460.2m in Tando Adam, Rs150m in Khipro, Rs105.25m in Jam Nawaz Ali and Rs121.69m in Sanghar taluka.

The FIRs were to be lodged after approval by competent authority against several assistant food controllers, in-charges of procurement centres, food inspectors and many private persons under Sections 409, 420, 468 and 471 read with Section 109 of PPC and Section 5 of Act-II 1947, said sources.

The inquiry was launched on the orders of Hyderabad circuit bench of the Sindh High Court while hearing identical petitions and subsequently district and sessions judge Sanghar conducted probe and forwarded it to ACE for further action.

The inquiry concluded that gunny bags were given to private parties and individuals instead of genuine growers. These individuals did not possess required form-7 which meant that they were not actual landowners.

Accounts were opened in banks and operated, statements of banks showed transactions involving payments by accused officials to agents and amount transferred to illegal beneficiaries in and outside the province, said the probe.

The inquiry proved that it was done to reap illegal windfall benefits from support price which was on higher side than that of the market rate. It found that revenue record produced by the food officials regarding gunny bags was fictitious and despite shortage of the bags an organised fraud of illegal distribution of gunny bags was detected. A ring comprising district-level food officials caused a huge loss of millions of rupees to government kitty through this scam, according to the inquiry findings.

Published in Dawn, December 4th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1449204/ace-recommends-registration-of-firs-against-food-dept-officials-over-gunny-bag-scam

FARMERS APPEAL FOR RESTORATION OF WATER SUPPLY
RECORDER REPORT

PESHAWAR: Elders from villages of Shahi Balaand have voiced concern over alleged suspension of water supply to their fertile agriculture lands, laying in Warsak Gravity canal region and appealed the Chief Justice of Pakistan to take suo motu notice of the matter.

Speaking a news conference at Peshawar Press Club on Monday, Gul Bacha, an elder and grower said that the water supply had been suspended for last one year to nearly 2,000 acres of cultivable lands on refusal to sell their lands for construction of a private house scheme. Flanked by Naeem Jan Bacha and other farmers, he said that the land owners have been regularly paying water charges 'Abyana' to the department concerned for last several decades. Gul Bacha alleged that Defense Housing Scheme had forcibly purchased their lands for development of a housing project. But, he said some 60 and 70 farmers had denied to sell out inherited lands due to which water supply was suspended to their agriculture lands.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/04/19-page/752414-news.html

FIRST UREA SHIPMENT ARRIVES

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: First urea shipment, imported by Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP), has reached country to meet the requirement of the Rabi crop.

Following the directives of the federal government, in the third week of October 2018 the state run grain trader finalized deal for the import of 0.1 million metric tons urea to avoid urea shortage in the domestic market in Rabi season. Accordingly, a vessel namely MV Grace carrying first consignment of 50,600 metric tons urea imported by TCP has arrived Pakistan on Sunday.

Sources said that the supplier has also nominated another ship for supply of remaining 50,000 tons urea. According to TCP MV SBO Tethys carrying 50,000 metric ton 5 percent more or less on seller option is expected to reach Pakistan during this week.

As the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet has decided further import of some 50,000 metric tons urea for domestic consumption, on Monday Trading Corporation of Pakistan has also issued another urea import tender.

State run grain trader has issued urea import tender and invited sealed bids from the international urea suppliers and producers for supply of 50,000 metric tons commodity through their local offices or local agents having capacity to supply "Urea" in bulk through worldwide sources on C&F basis as per TCP's the terms and conditions.

According to tender the supplied urea will be strictly in accordance with the standards and specifications prescribed by Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and Import Policy Order in force. However, bids less than 50,000 metric tons will not be accepted

Interested bidders have been asked to submit bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the tender documents by January 3, 2019 latest by 10:30 AM. The received bids will be opened the same day at 11:00 AM in the TCP's Board Room, in presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who may wish to be present.

As per tender term and conditions, the interested parties who have not fulfilled their contractual obligation with TCP will also not be eligible to participate in the biding process, unless they clear their dues along with penalties or fulfill their contractual obligations in services and commodities with TCP, as the case may be, before tender opening date. Furthermore, those firms against which black listing procedures have been initiated by TCP will not be eligible to participate in the tender.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/04/6-page/752324-news.html

TAPPING POTENTIAL: IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE DISCUSSED
By Our Correspondent

Published: December 4, 2018

LAHORE: The agriculture sector is the lifeline of Pakistan's economy and it is adding around 25% to the economy, employing 42.3% of labour force and remains a major source of raw materials for several value-added sectors.

This was discussed in the speeches delivered by Chinese and Pakistani experts at CAC Pakistan Conference held in Lahore. The speakers added that joint ventures and transfer of latest technology is pre-requisite to avail full benefits from the potential of Pakistani agriculture sector.

Topics that came under discussion included China agrochemical manufacturing capability, Pakistani crops and demand for agrochemicals and machineries and pesticides registration management updates in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Almas Hyder centred his discussion on low agriculture productivity and rising demand for food to encourage use of crop protection chemicals.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 4th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1859573/2-tapping-potential-importance-agriculture-discussed/

OVER 120 RICE MILLS CLOSED DUE TO PROLONGED OUTAGES
Ali Jan Mangi December 05, 2018

DERA MURAD JAMALI: About 125 rice mills have stopped working in Jaffarabad district of Balochistan in protest against prolonged loadshedding of electricity.

Mill owners and workers set up a protest camp in Usta Mohammad on Tuesday.

Former chief minister of Balochistan Jan Mohammad Jamali visited the camp to express solidarity with the protesters.

In Usta Muhammad alone, he said, around 100 rice mills were working and giving millions of rupees in taxes and earning foreign exchange for the country through export of fine quality rice. But, he added, the attitude of the Quetta Electricity Supply Company (Qesco) was forcing the owners to close down their mills.

Mr Jamali said Qesco was supplying electricity only for two to three hours in a day in the rice husking season, causing huge financial losses to rice mills.

He pledged to take up the issue with the federal government and Wapda authorities.

Rice Mills Association president Haji Aslam Somroo told media personnels at the camp that 20 to 22 hours long loadshedding had compelled the owners to close down their mills.

He said several million tonnes of rice crops had been dumped at these mills which were unable to continue functioning due to power crisis.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449498/over-120-rice-mills-closed-due-to-prolonged-outages

ECC RELAXES CONDITIONS FOR SUGAR MILLERS, DENIES FREIGHT SUBSIDY ON EXPORT
Khaleeq Kiani Updated December 05, 2018

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to break a deadlock, the government allowed sugar millers another 100,000 tonnes of export and relaxed the limit of 1m tonnes it had set previously. On top of that, the government also waived a requirement that millers begin crushing by Nov 15 in order to avail exports. Only a handful of millers started crushing by this date, so the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) decided to waive it altogether.

Presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar, a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet also ordered immediate payment of Rs2 billion outstanding freight subsidy to sugar mills to persuade them for early start of crushing season that has already been delayed and causing hardship to farmers. The funds are subsidy payments owed from last year. The ECC decided to not allow any further subsidies, saying the millers should approach the provincial governments for such payments.

In the first week of October, the ECC had allowed one million tonnes of surplus sugar export with the condition that millers would ensure crushing season by Nov 15. The committee had also decided that only those sugar mill owners will be allowed to export the commodity who had cleared arrears to farmers for all the crops up to 2017-18.

Approves additional 100,000 tonnes for foreign sales

The decision was taken to ease sugar glut that was set to cause losses both to the industry and farming community and put pressure on commercial banks. It was expected that most of the surplus stocks could be exported to bordering Afghanistan without subsidy, owing to prevailing peace in the region.

The industry has not started crushing even until now, barring some minor exceptions. It demanded that conditions be relaxed for export of 1m tonnes of sugar and exporters be allowed to sell additional one million tonnes of the commodity in the local market without payment of sales tax.

On top of that, the millers demanded 250,000 tonnes of sugar procurement from them by the Trading Corporation of Pakistan as well as the immediate release of Rs2bn freight subsidy of last year from the government.

The meeting declined the request for procurement of additional sugar. Adviser to PM on Industries, Production and Commerce, Abdul Razak Dawood supported the millers demands. He also said that the condition to start crushing by Nov 15 should end as it had already become irrelevant.

The ECC refused to provide freight subsidy to the millers, though Rs2bn in freight subsidy from last year was approved for release. Any new demand for freight subsidy must be taken up with the provincial governments the ECC decided, and declined all future requests.

The ECC approved the proposal to enhance export quantity to 1.1m tonnes with the latest addition of 100,000 tonnes and asked Dawood to hold another meeting with sugar millers and work out export arrangement without any subsidy or other conditions and then jointly announce the decision with the industry.

The committee discussed a report submitted by Ministry of Industries & Production (MoIP) on measures to ensure availability of urea fertiliser in the country and possible impact on the price of urea owing to use of RLNG due to shortage of system gas in winter. However no final decision on the proposed subsidies was taken.

The MoIP proposed that additional gas quantities be provided to Fatima Fertiliser and Agritech because keeping these plants operational was the best option to ensure sufficient fertiliser quantities available in the system. Alternatively, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNGPL) should be given Rs4.70bn in advance to ensure a feasible RLNG price of Rs782 per mmBtu for two months to ensure Rs1,712 per bag fertiliser price to farmers. For this, Rs790m were to be paid upfront to SNGPL on actual basis and Rs3.9bn in two monthly instalments.

In case these two options do not work out, the government should allow import of 316,000 tonnes of urea to fill the supply gap and will need to provide a total subsidy of Rs8.4bn, including $110m in foreign exchange, to ensure Rs1,712 price per urea bag. No decision could be taken on the issue.

The ECC also approved allocation of up to 30mmcfd gas from Zafir field, Sanghar, to Sui Southern Gas Company Ltd. It also approved allocation of 66mmcfd Mari Deep Gas to Mari Petroleum Company without agreeing to its plan to set up a 180MW power plant to utilise this additional gas. The ECC directed that a detailed report should be submitted examining the pros and cons of utilisation of 66mmcfd of gas at Mari Deep field for power generation or fertiliser production.

The meeting also recommended to the cabinet a case for supplementary grant of Rs1.80bn for agriculture tube well subsidy on the request of Power Division.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449494/ecc-relaxes-conditions-for-sugar-millers-denies-freight-subsidy-on-export

PUNJAB HOPES FOR AGRI-TECH TRANSFER VIA CPEC
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated December 05, 2018

LAHORE: Latest agriculture technology is need of the hour to enhance per acre yield in the country and we hope the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will allow for this knowledge and tech sharing, Punjab's Minister for Excise and Taxation Hafiz Mumtaz said on Tuesday.

The excise minister had earlier inaugurated the 4th China-Pakistan Agriculture Expo along with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Almas Hyder.

The minister hoped that CPEC would allow opening of new avenues of cooperation in the agriculture sector and transfer of technology in agro-chemicals, pesticides, seed and fertiliser sectors. LCCI SVP Khwaja Shahzad Nasir, VP Fahimur Rehman Saigal, Maggie Ma from Sub-Council of Chemical Industry, China, and others were also present.

A large number of people attended the opening ceremony and shown keen interest in farm products displayed at 50 stalls set up by Pakistani and Chinese companies.

Mr Hyder said that well performing and high yielding agriculture sector is the need of the hour as the country cannot do well without improving farming.

He said that agriculture sector cannot be left out due to inherited limitations of resources and various challenges in the way of moving from conventional method of farming to modern technologies. The present scenario demands that both government and private sector join hands to make the most of the available resources through introducing innovative ways at affordable prices to farmers, he stressed.

"We desperately require locally developed as well as imported solutions in the fields of fertilisers, pesticides, seeds and farm machinery. We are glad that our Chinese friends who have developed cost-effective solutions in these areas, are offering us the same at reasonable rates," he said.

Ms Mah said that Pakistan is one of the top ten exporting markets for China and that two-way trade has reached $13.2 billion and hoped that it will grow with the passage of time.

On the occasion, Mr Nasir and Mr Saigal noted that it was encouraging that some local pesticide manufacturers were exporting their products to Middle East and African countries.

Crop Protection Association Chief Sheikh Arif welcomed growing interest of Chinese companies in the exhibition.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449491/punjab-hopes-for-agri-tech-transfer-via-cpec

SINDH'S FIRST-EVER AGRICULTURE POLICY NEEDS WELL-DEFINED PROCEDURE, SAYS FAO CONSULTANT
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated December 05, 2018

HYDERABAD: Policy consultants of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have said that implementation of first-ever agriculture policy of the Sindh government would require well-defined procedure and added that action plan for implementation of the policy needed capacity and adaptation.

They also called for investing in research and development to achieve required target of overall seven per cent growth in Sindh's agriculture sector, which is currently three per cent. They were speaking at a strategic planning workshop on Sindh Agriculture Policy 2018-30 at a local hotel organised by the agriculture extension wing of the Sindh agriculture department here on Tuesday. The workshop was organised for agriculture officers/officials.

Genevieve Hussain, a policy consultant, talked about salient features and objectives of the agriculture policy that would be implemented from next year after it was adopted in April this year by the Sindh cabinet.

The policy was drafted as a component of World Bank-funded Sindh Agriculture Growth Project (SAGP). She said that an action plan was to be prepared by line departments for consideration of the Sindh Agriculture Policy Implementation Commission in early 2019.

She said that agriculture policy sought to raise the growth rate by four per cent to have overall seven per cent growth in Sindh to create jobs and income from agriculture.

Other objectives aim to reduce malnutrition, poverty and food insecurity by half along with managing natural resources sustainably, especially water resources and soil. She said that resilience was to be ensured and climate-responsive agriculture to adapt to climate change was another goal.

She said that between 1972 and 2000 average growth in agriculture was four per cent and from year 2000 to 2017 it dropped to three per cent due to high cost of production. It needs to be raised. She said that high-nutrient foods like pulses, milk, fish, meat and vegetables have actually become too expensive for consumers to afford.

Discussing growth in farm sector, she said that regulatory framework needed to be reviewed to create enabling environment that was conducive to private sector's investment in agriculture.

Sometimes laws, legislation, regulatory regime and even subsidies need to be looked into to make sure incentives were there for private investment.

She said that uptake of agriculture technology, research and development and modernisation of agriculture was another way to achieve growth.

She said that agriculture policy adopted in April 2018 was to align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it should be started in order to be implemented quickly. She said steps towards its implementation required regulatory changes, capacity development for departments concerned and technological changes. She said that all these issues would be addressed in the action plan.

Ejaz Qureshi, another FAO consultant, pointed out that growth in China's agriculture sector came with some policy initiatives.

He said that this helped China overcome poverty adding that India was focussing on its farm sector as well. He said that institutional reforms and interventions were essential for achieving growth. He expressed concern over the fact that mostly Sindh's land was waterlogged.

Strategic management has to be systematic and it should also be adjustable in local context. He said that timeline must be fixed for achieving objectives.

The Sindh agriculture policy aims to ensure efficient, prosperous and resilient agriculture sector that could provide good income and decent employment to those involved in production, processing, transport and storage.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449442/sindhs-first-ever-agriculture-policy-needs-well-defined-procedure-says-fao-consultant

PKI URGES SUGAR MILLS TO START CANE CRUSHING
M RAFIQUE GORAYA

LAHORE; Pakistan Kissan Ittehad has urged the 82 sugar mills to start much delayed cane crushing season 2018-19 across the country as the government has met their demands for this purpose.

Talking to Business Recorder here on Tuesday PKI President Khalid Mahmood Khokhar said that the government has approved export of additional 0.1 million ton of sugar and a subsidy of Rs. 6.6 per KG to off-load the existing stocks. This export quota is in addition to quantity of one million tons already approved in ECC meeting on October 3, 2018. Khokhar warned that if the sugar millers still do not start cane crushing immediately, the growers will hold protest marches as the year long sugarcane is the most important cash crop for the rural economy that provides livelihood to millions of people directly and indirectly.

It is worth mentioning that Sugar industry in Pakistan is the Second largest agro-based industry after Textiles. Pakistan is an important cane producing country and is ranked fifth in world cane acreage and 15th in sugar production. Its share in value added of agriculture and GDP are 3.4 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively; among the provinces, Punjab accounts for 65 percent of area (2.2 million acres.), Sindh 25 percent, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 10 percent of sugarcane area.

It is pertinent to recall that the millers were demanding immediate export subsidy, citing high cost of doing business, sugarcane liquidity and payments of outstanding refunds, reduction in purchase price of sugarcane from Rs. 180 per maund to Rs. 140 per maund (40 KG) and levy of sales tax on actual per KG price of sugar rather than on presumed price of Rs, 160 per KG to start the crushing season. “Besides, mismatch between the cane and sugar price is also making it unfeasible for the millers to start crushing, as it was causing a loss of Rs. 15 per KG to the industry” PSMA claimed.

Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet in its meeting held on November 22, 2018 discussed in detail the issues of sugarcane price mechanism, cost of production of sugarcane and sugar, sugar mills liquidity situation and outstanding liabilities.

The sugar mills association is expected to respond to government’s concessions today, Khokhar hoped.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/05/7-page/752487-news.html

PAKISTAN ARMY ESTABLISHES ONION FRYING PLANT IN AWARAN
By Our Correspondent

Published: December 5, 2018

QUETTA: To promote economic activities in far-flung areas of Awaran, an onion frying plant has been established by the help of the government of Balochistan and the Pakistan Army.

This facility will facilitate the local farmers in transforming their crop into finished edible product for the market.

The Pakistan Army, taking the lead, helped the local population in construction and operationalisation of the said plant. The first batch of the finished product with the name of Awaran Fried Onion has hit the market across the province which is appreciated by the consumers due to its high quality.

Local farmers of Awaran have thanked the Pakistan Army for providing them with an opportunity to maximise their income from the crop.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1860454/1-pakistan-army-establishes-onion-frying-plant-awaran/

FIVE SUBSIDY SCHEMES FOR FARMERS DROPPED, PA TOLD
By Rana Yasif

Published: December 5, 2018

LAHORE: The provincial minister for agriculture Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial informed the Punjab Assembly that five schemes have been closed out of total 18 schemes launched by the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) government for subsidising farmers in different portions.

He was responding to a query asked by PML-N lawmaker Chaudhry Muhammad Ashraf Ali that how much new schemes the PTI government has initiated for the benefit of farmers and how much have been closed from the on-going 18 schemes.

The minister Langrial said the scheme of the installation of drip and sprinkler system of irrigation and the provision of solar energy system to run it was closed down. The second scheme was the installation of the tunnel for cultivating non-seasonal vegetables, the third was the construction of ponds for irrigation and to flood out the access rainwater from cotton fields and the fourth scheme was the creation of a sunken field for access of rainwater for cotton fields. The fifth scheme was the provision of portable water pumps.

"It was the pilot project and they will analyse what benefit the farmers had obtained from these schemes," he said. "However," he said "we have allocated Rs7 billion for the rest schemes by increasing from Rs5 billion which the PML-N government had allocated in past.

An opposition lawmaker was not allowed to speak by Deputy Speaker Sardar Dost Muhammad Mazari over the constitution of a medical board for former chief minister Shehbaz Sharif when he made clear to the House that the government would be responsible if something unpleasant happens with his leader.

Waris Shad of PML-N stood up for speaking on point of order, the deputy speaker first allowed him to speak as he started his speech throwing light over the importance of democracy. "Democracy is the best way out for the country but the history tells us that those exercises bore no fruit whenever the rulers, having a grudge, implicated each other in different cases," he remarked.

He said no accountability was being made across the broad, adding his leader Shehbaz Sharif had passed over 70 days in NAB's custody but nothing has surfaced. "This is not a point of order. Sorry, sorry this is not a point of order, you are a senior member please maintain the decorum of the House and be seated please," the deputy speaker responded. Despite Shad's mike was switched off but he continued lamenting that "I am making clear in the House that country's top court had also advised for a medical board after reports established that Shehbaz Sharif is suffering from cancer". "It is very clear that you (deputy speaker) and this House will be responsible if something unpleasant happened to Shehbaz."

During the question-answer session, Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial updated the House that the provincial government was going to introduce legislation in coming weeks to get rid of unregistered middlemen running the market's business illegal. He said they proposed in legislation to impose Rs50,000 fine over those middlemen working illegally without licences. He was responding to a query whether any law was being made to stop such unregistered middlemen.

A PML-N MPA Mian Naseer Ahmed grilled the Punjab government's ministers over giving wrong answers in agenda of the Punjab Assembly as well as sharing incorrect information on official websites. Another PML-N legislator Muhammad Arshad also raised his reservation over wrong answer given by the concerned department. He had asked the number of veterinary hospital and dispensaries in district Sahiwal.

Naseer first pointed out that the answer given by the agriculture department in question 14 of agenda was not correct. He said he had asked how much farmers had been given the benefit of free wheat seeds while the answer was showing the difference of over 16,000 bags of seeds when it was multiplied with the given numbers. He asked who would be responsible of those missing bags.

Naseer also lamented the non-seriousness of the irrigation department when he pointed out that whether he should accept the answer of the irrigation department or the government's official website. He said he had asked how much dams had been completed in the province and the department answered him that 58 small dams had been completed but astonishing enough the government's official website is telling 12 dams had been completed. He asked which answer could be deemed correct.

Minister for Public Prosecution Chaudhry Zaheeruddin said the answer given in the agenda be considered correct answer. Naseer said the nation was being mocked by giving false information on websites. The deputy speaker said the ministry should seriously take notice of it and the official website should also be updated. However, the minister told the House that the government was going to construct more small dams in coming five years at Chakwal, Jehlum, Fateh Jang, Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

However, the House also passed four resolutions including one belonging to the opposition benches while one was pended after Law Minister Raja Basharat said social welfare's minister was not available in the PA. The treasury legislators seemed astonished when either luckily or unluckily the resolution of PML-N Hina Pervez Butt was passed.

Despite the opposition made attempt to House proceeding by pointing out quorum but this time treasury maintained the required number in the House. Finally, the agenda items were finished, Deputy Speaker Mazari adjourned the House for Wednesday (today) at 11:00 am.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1860468/1-five-subsidy-schemes-farmers-dropped-pa-told/

FARMERS STAGE SIT-IN AT THOKAR
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter December 06, 2018

LAHORE: Farmers belonging to various Punjab districts rallied at the Thokar Niaz Beg entrance to the city on Wednesday to protest against increase in fertilisers rates during the last couple of months.

Assembled under the banner of Pakistan Kisan Ittehad-Chaudhry Anwer, registered with the Election Commission as a political party, the farmers riding tractor-trolleys and other vehicles began gathering at the site late on Tuesday night and blocked Multan Road to traffic by parking their vehicles in the middle of the road.

The sit-in at Thokar virtually blocked the busy intersection that connects Multan Road, Canal Bank and Raiwind Road as well as the link road to Chuhng motorway interchange. The closure of the main city arteries caused choking of traffic on adjoining roads, including Khayaban-i-Jinnah. Motorists complained that it would take them almost half an hour to cross just one intersection.

“Traffic wardens were there but they seemed short of strength needed for regulating the traffic,” said a motorist who had to take a long diversion for reaching downtown through Ring Road.

Demand fertilisers on previous rates, quashment of cases

Traffic mess was also witnessed at Yateem Khana Chowk and Bund Road because of closure of Thokar entrance point and almost all the buses and cars coming from Multan or Islamabad were diverted towards Babu Sabu interchange of motorway.

A large number of passengers, including women and children, were seen marching on foot at Sherakot as long queues of vehicles at Babu Sabu interchange were taking hours to reach their respective terminals/destinations.

The protesting farmers were pledging to continue with their demonstration until acceptance of their demands, which included provision of urea and DAP fertilisers at old rates, setting up of a Kisan Market, consulting farmers for devising the agriculture policy and quashing the cases registered against their leaders by Burewala police.

They warned that they would try to reach Charing Cross on The Mall to demonstrate outside the Punjab Assembly building, where a session of the lawmakers is in progress these days, if the government did not accept their demands.

On the other hand, some of the protesting farmers brought drummers and started dancing to its beat.

Published in Dawn, December 6th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1449712/farmers-stage-sit-in-at-thokar

WORKSHOP FOR TRADE UNION OF WOMEN COTTON PICKERS ENDS
RECORDER REPORT

HYDERABAD: Sindh Community Foundation organized a two-day workshop for the trade union of the women cotton pickers on leadership and networking skills which ended at Hyderabad office on Wednesday.

Labour rights activists Taj Maree, Javed Hussain Head of Sindh Community Foundation and Aisha Agha of SCF took sessions ranging from labour rights, leadership skills and how to run trade union.

29 key representatives of nine trade unions of cotton pickers from different areas of district Matiari.

At closing ceremony, trainers including Taj Maree said that the Sindh Industrial Relation Act 2014 is a good move for protection right of agriculture labourers but the process of registration is so complicated. He said that these labourers need to be given social safety nets and health facilities.

Javed Hussain of the SCF said that the SCF has registered seven trade unions of women cotton pickers and two are in process of registration.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/06/5-page/752623-news.html

UNAWARE MPAS DEMAND ALREADY FORMED PUNJAB AGRI COMMISSION
HASSAN ABBAS

LAHORE: Both opposition and treasury members in the Punjab Assembly on Wednesday demanded establishment of a Punjab Agriculture Commission which was already formed in 2016.

The session of the Assembly started 1 hour 50 minutes late under the chair of Deputy Speaker Punjab Assembly Dost Muhammad Mazari.

The members of 'champions of farmers rights mainstream political parties' Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Pakistan Muslim League (N) don't even know that the commission which they were demanding was already working and the same was established during the regime of PML-N.

While opening the debate on Food and Agriculture from opposition side Sardar Awais Laghari demanded that the government of new Pakistan should abolish the system issuing permits to sugar mills to save the farmers from the humiliation of sugar mills mafia. He said there is no need of Pakistan Sugar Mills Association because their representatives are present in the assemblies. He admitted that these owners use their influence in all governments. He criticized the government for not reviewing the support price of sugar cane and wheat. He said the agriculture contributes 26% to the GDP of Punjab. He also said South Punjab contributes 60pc of total GDP of agriculture sector of Punjab while 80pc of work force of South Punjab is associated with the agriculture.

Awais criticized the government for not allocating funds for the agriculture sector which is the backbone of the economy. He demanded that the government should formulate an advisory commission on food, agriculture and water which has representation from both treasury and opposition benches.

PPP MPA Makhdoom Usman Mahmood said the government has failed to start crushing season of sugar cane which should be started on November 15. He said the PPP in the past opposed the establishment of South Punjab Secretariat by former PML-N government. He said the PTI government should fulfill its promise of establishing South Punjab province rather than diverting the attention of people by announcing establishment of South Punjab Secretariat. He also said that the PPP will not support any such move.

He demanded that shops and houses of poor people should be regularized in the same way as the Bani Gala residence of Prime Minister Imran Khan was regularized.

PML (N) MPA Malik Ahmad Khan said no government has taken any steps for the welfare of farmers. He also said that his government has given Rs 100 billion subsidy to the farmers but after the expiry of the package farmers were on the roads. He demanded that a strong long-term policy should be formulated for the welfare of farmers. He said there is a need of introducing new seeds to increase our per acre yields.

Punjab Minister for Prosecution Chaudhry Zaheer Uddin said due to the anti-farmers policies of PML-N the farmers of Punjab suffered a lot as their issue of sugarcane payments is yet to be resolved. He suggested that instead of issuing Cane Purchase Receipt (CPR) to farmers, cheques should be issued so that criminal cases could be registered against the millers in case they (cheques) are dishonored.

Minister Live Stock Hussnain Dareshak said that sugarcane is not crop of our region as it needs a lot of water. “It is not a value-added crop like cotton.”

Earlier, hot words were exchanged between PML-N MPA Mian Tahir and Deputy Speaker Dost Mazari when during the question hour session the former said that Minister Higher Education Raja Yasir Hamayun does not know about the housing colony in Government College University, Jhang. Tahir warned to move a privilege motion against him for telling a lie on the floor of the House.

Minister Law Raja Basharat said asking question is the right of every member but the Chair can give directions only.

The PTI MPA Saeed Akbar Niwani supported Mian Tahir, saying that asking a question is the right of every member and giving answer is the responsibility of the government.

Schools Education Minister Murad Raas while answering the question said there will be a uniform curriculum policy by 2020 and the government will soon bring a bill in this regard.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/06/16-page/752709-news.html

KBP WARNS OF STRIKE IF CRUSHING SEASON DELAYED
RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: Farmers have threatened to observe a wheel-jam strike throughout the country if the crushing season is not started at the earliest and cane procurement is not ensured at the rate of Rs 180 per maund.

Kissan Board Pakistan (KBP) President Chaudhry Nisar Ahmad issued this warning while talking to media persons in his office on Wednesday. He said delay in crushing season will result in delay in sowing of wheat.

He alleged that the government could do nothing for farmers during its first 100 days. Sugarcane crop is ready in the country and the government despite tall claims and announcement could not ensure starting of crushing season and seemed helpless before the sugar mafia.

Nisar said the government after having a meeting sugar mills representatives and farmers announced to start crushing at the start of last month but mills refused to do so. He also blamed the millers for not paying billions of rupees of the growers. He alleged that sugar millers were making false hue and cry to delay the crushing season.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/06/16-page/752712-news.html

FARMERS END PROTEST AFTER MEETING WITH CM
The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter December 07, 2018

LAHORE: Farmers ended their protest here on Thursday after a delegation of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad was assured by Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar that their "genuine issues" will be resolved.

According to a handout, the PKI announced end to the agitation after its delegation called on the chief minister. During the meeting, Mr Buzdar said the farmers were like his brothers and it was his responsibility to protect their rights.

He assured the growers of resolution of their genuine problems, adding they would be given full reward of their hard work and their rights would not be violated.

The handout said mill owners had also assured the government that they would make their units functional from today (Friday).

PKI chairman Chaudhry Anwar said the farmers were winding up their agitation on CM's assurance that their genuine demands would be met. He said the Ittehad had supported the PTI during elections and was also with the party government.

He said it was decided that legal process would be adopted for withdrawing cases against farmers and steps proposed for bringing down fertilisers prices.

The additional chief secretary (energy) would get resolved the issues pertaining to tube well bills, the meeting decided.

Farmers had been continuing their protest for the second consecutive day at Thokar Niaz Beg to get restored old prices of fertilisers and immediate beginning of crushing season.

They had assembled at the city's entrance point under the banner of the PKI, that has also get registered itself as a political party, headed by Chaudhry Anwar, with the Election Commission.

The protesters had blocked the road for traffic, causing inconvenience to commuters.

Meanwhile, Khalid Khokhar group of the PKI also called on the chief minister. During the meeting, various proposals regarding increasing the agricultural productivity and solution to farmers problems came under discussion.

On the occasion, the chief minister said farmers would be given their due rights and no injustice would be allowed against them.

Published in Dawn, December 7th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1449944/farmers-end-protest-after-meeting-with-cm

SUGARCANE FARMERS, AGRICULTURE REMAIN HOT TOPICS IN PA
Mansoor Malik December 07, 2018

LAHORE: Sugar mills in Punjab will begin cane crushing from Monday (Dec 10), Agriculture Minister Malik Nauman Langrial informed the provincial assembly on Thursday.

Later in the evening, the food minister and chief minister's spokesman, Dr Shahbaz Gill, along with the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association, Punjab zone, chairman told a press conference that the mills would start crushing from today (Friday). Dr Gill, later, said this in a tweet that the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad had ended its protest at Thokar Niaz Beg.

The PTI government would ensure that small farmers get due price of their crops besides different subsidies to bring about prosperity to their lives, the agriculture minister said while winding up the debate on the agriculture sector. The session had started with a delay of 1:45 hours.

Lashing out at the opposition members, Mr Langrial said: "The PML-N government, during its 10-year rule, had crushed the small farmers while allowing the mill owners to exploit them."

He said it was PTI government's slogan to uplift the downtrodden and those under economic stress.

While most of the opposition members lauded the Treasury for holding a focused debate on agriculture to find a way forward, the agriculture minister surprised all, including the Treasury and the deputy speaker, by saying: "We neither need any advice nor proposals from the opposition to take care of the agriculture sector."

He further said none of the members from the opposition speaking there was a farmer himself and they were merely referring to bookish knowledge.

A few Opposition members, who were present in the House, sharply reacted to this statement and tore down their agenda copies. As they responded sharply and stood up to boycott the minister's winding up speech, prosecution minister Chaudhry Zaheeruddin requested them to keep their cool.

Deputy Speaker Dost Muhammad Mazari also asked the minister to focus on presenting department's future plans.

Mr Langrial chided the opposition members for their speeches, particularly a speech by Awais Leghari wherein he had said that the agriculture sector was ruined.

"It was the PML-N that ruined the agriculture sector and literally crushed the small farmers during the last one decade. In our five-year term, we will continue holding the PML-N legislators accountable for their poor performance," he said.

Responding to another comment from the Opposition that Pakistan was an agriculture country, the minister again chided the PML-N legislator for converting Punjab into "a C&W province". He said the PML-N government had also created 'fifth season of smog' in the province and added that the PTI government's all departments worked hard and averted smog this year. He, however, acknowledged that research capacity in the agriculture sector was quite weak.

Responding to a demand of constituting an agriculture commission, Mr Langrial said the present government did not need such commissions as were used to be constituted to cover up the inability of the main administrative department.

"I guarantee, the agriculture department will help farmers become prosper," he claimed.

The agriculture minister said the government was working on introducing reforms in the market committee, ensuring that better seeds and fertilizers be given to the farmers for better crop production. He announced that the present government would plant 150,000 olive trees, give subsidy to small farmers on DAP, offer solar panels along with tube wells and repair and reconstruct watercourses.

In the wake of climate change, Mr Langrial said, the farmers would be given insurance cover whose premium would be paid by the government.

Referring to Awais Leghari, food minister Samiullah Chaudhry said he had failed to take any steps for poor farmers when he was in power. Stating that 52 of the Punjab famers consisted of small farmers, he regretted the sugar mills owners had started exploiting the poor farmers during the PML-N rule.

Mr Chaudhry said the sugarcane price would be Rs180 per 40kg.

“We will not let any sugar mill owner to betray the poor farmers, neither in the rate nor in weight,” the food minister asserted.

“Law will take its course against those violating the rights of the farmers,” he said.

Earlier, on a point-of-order, the PML-N’s Waris Kallu pointed out that farmers’ crops were being damaged in the name of removal of encroachments.

Speaker Pervaiz Elahi directed the law minister to ensure that no poor farmer should be affected by the anti-encroachment drive.

“It is cruel to damage crops of the farmers,” he said.

The Speaker also asked the law minister to explain the ground reality to the chief minister and ensure that no poor farmer should be affected.

On Mr Kallu’s request, the Speaker constituted a committee, headed by the law minister, to assess the ground reality and protect the farmers.

Law Minister Basharat Raja said the bulldozing of vegetables had been stopped immediately and farmers’ damages would be assessed and compensated.

Earlier, the opposition members, Waris Kallu, Chaudhry Iqbal, Zainab Umair, Sheikh Allauddin, Muhammad Arshad, Arshad Malik and independent Ahmad Ali Aulak, participated in the debate on agriculture.

Prosecution minister Chaudhry Zaheeruddin, on behalf of transport minister, answered questions in the question hour on transport.

The deputy speaker adjourned the session for today (Friday).

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449939/sugarcane-farmers-agriculture-remain-hot-topics-in-pa

GROWERS HOLD PROTEST AGAINST DELAY IN CANE CRUSHING, FIXING RATE
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent December 07, 2018

HYDERABAD: Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) on Thursday held a demonstration at a section of the Fatima Jinnah Road (Thandi Sarak) against sugar millers' refusal to start cane crushing and Sindh government's failure to notify sugar cane rate for the 2018-19 crop.

The protest was led by SAI president Nawab Zubair Talpur.

The participants carried banners and placards inscribed with their demands. They raised slogans against the provincial government for its failure to make millers start cane crushing which has already been delayed.

Vehicular traffic on both sides of the road remained suspended during the course of the protest.

Speaking to the participants, Nawab Talpur, Mir Zafarullah Talpur, Mohib Marri and other leaders recalled that the Sindh High Court had in the past issued directives to the government to notify this year's cane crop rate before Nov 30 and ensure commencement of cane crushing at mills.

They said most millers in Sindh were violating the directive by not starting the process due to which growers were incurring losses. They noted that the Sindh government was also not taking action in the matter.

They demanded fixing of Rs200/40kg price for the current crop.

The Sindh cane commissioner spoke to protesters and assured them that the notification for the official cane rate would be issued within the next few days.

The SAI leaders warned that they would block the National Highway if the promise was not fulfilled.

Govt playing politics with growers: SAB

Addressing a press conference at the local press club on Thursday, Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) leaders accused the Sindh government of playing politics with growers by not making sugar millers commence cane crushing.

It was avoiding to notify the indicative price of the current cane crop despite passage of much time, they said.

They announced blocking of the National Highway by holding protest near Qazi Ahmed in Shaheed Benazirabad district on Dec 14 if the Sindh government did not notify the new official rate forthwith.

Those who spoke at the press conference included SAB president Abdul Majeed Nizamani, vice presidents Mehmood Nawaz Shah and Syed Zain Shah and general secretary Dr Zulfiqar Yousfani.

Mr Nizamani said that the crushing process was supposed to be started in November but it was not done even in the first week of December, nor was the cane crop rate notified as yet.

He said that only one meeting was noteworthy where some discussion was held with millers and the agriculture minister, but since then no progress was seen. He referred to the quote of a man that “when rulers become businessmen, their people would end up as beggars”.

Syed Zain Shah said that it was due to political reasons that the rate was not being notified as most of the sugar mills in Sindh were owned by the company allegedly working for former president Asif Ali Zardari.

He claimed that provincial ministers and officials wanted to appease Mr Zardari and that’s why neither the rate was being notified nor the mills had started crushing. “The agriculture secretary and cane commissioner are responsible for the delay,” he alleged.

Calling for an immediate notification of the rate, he said that all sugar mills should start crushing forthwith. He said growers had expectations that Sindh Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu would do something for them, but he too had failed to deliver.

He said growers had waited for two months and now they were raising this demand.

‘Why millers raise the issues at peak time?’

Syed Mehmood Nawaz Shah said the Sugarcane Control Board was a statutory body where the SAB had made its submissions as far as the rate of sugar cane (Rs198/40kg) inclusive of cost of production and profit was concerned, but the government remained silent since then.

He questioned millers’ contention as to why each time they raised the issue of sugar at the peak of crushing season and why they did not discuss it in March-April when they always had stocks. He said the millers had already sold their stock now and they had to produce sweetener for the current season.

“It is in spite of the fact that the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has called for payment of freight subsidy of last season pending with the federal government and another 100,000 tonnes export is allowed without subsidy. In this situation what is the reason left for millers not to start crushing?” he lamented.

He said there were only 72 sugar mills owned by 50 individuals in Pakistan while in Sindh around 20 people owned total mills and together they controlled Rs150bn economy in the sugar cane sector.

“We don’t absolve government of what sugar cane producers have to face due to intransigence and tyranny of sugar millers,” he deplored.

He said that some mills were facing investigations, but wondered what prevented others and the Sindh government from starting crushing and notifying the rates respectively.

‘Over 65,000 labourers being affected’

He said the federal and provincial governments were both relevant in this issue, but they appeared least concerned about the plight of sugar cane growers. He said while the ECC had accepted all demands of millers, nobody looked into the crushing aspect although around 65,000 labourers are directly involved in this sector for their source of livelihood.

He regretted that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), which formed government in the wake of tabdeeli narrative, was not doing anything to resolve the issue.

He said the federal government had attached a condition that sugar mills would be allowed to export if they started crushing by Nov 15, but now this condition had been waived.

Dr Yousfani said the sugar mills in Benazirabad and Khairpur were procuring sugar cane through brokers for a price as low as Rs100 to Rs140/40kg. He said the government was unnecessarily delaying the issuance of price notification.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1449857/growers-hold-protest-against-delay-in-cane-crushing-fixing-rate

48 PUNJAB SUGAR MILLS AGREE TO START CANE CRUSHING
M RAFIQUE GORAYA

LAHORE: 48 sugar mills of Punjab have agreed to start much delayed sugarcane crushing season 2018 –19 following an understanding between the government and sugar mills association Punjab chapter.

This was stated in a joint press conference here on Thursday addressed by spokesman to Punjab Chief Minister Dr Shahbaz Gill, Food Minister Samiullah Chaudhry and chairman Punjab Sugar Mills Association Nauman Ahmad Khan and other office bearers.

Dr Shahbaz Gill said that sugar mill owners in the whole of Punjab will start cane crushing and Punjab government has approved release of Rs 2.90 billion for payment of dues to sugar mill owners. The sugarcane rate will be Rs 180 per maund. No cess will be allowed in deduction and it would be done according to the law.

He said that sugar mills dues amounting to Rs. 2.90 billion had been pending since the previous government’s tenure. The subsidy was not paid to the mills. . Similarly, export matters also needed solutions which have been resolved.

He said that Chief Minister Usman Buzdar has assured to protect the interests of mill owners and rights of the farmers. PTI government will not allow anybody to exploit rights of the farmers and the rights of the farmers will be fully protected in Punjab.

Provincial Chairman of Punjab Sugar Mills Nauman thanked the federal and Punjab governments. He also thanked Chief Minister Punjab for taking personal interest to solve the matter and added that Usman Buzdar has played a commendable role with regard to payment of subsidy to the sugar mills.

Food Minister Samiullah Chaudhry said that we are thankful to Punjab Sugar Mills Association for their cooperation with regard to protection of rights of the farmers and assured that government will not allow any damage to the rights of sugar mills owners as well.

It may be added that the inordinate delay in start of annual cane crushing season in mid-November due to sugar mills demands and protests of the growers had created a crisis like situation in the province.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/07/20-page/752901-news.html

SEAFOOD EXPORT MAY FURTHER DROP IF B'STAN CONTINUES BAN ON HUNT
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Pakistan's seafood export, which has already scaled back by 11.31 percent this fiscal year, is now feared to drop further up to 80 percent if the Balochistan government continued its ban on hunt by the Sindh's fishing boats within its 12 nautical miles seawaters, fisheries stakeholders said on Thursday.

The country hardly fetched $67.156 million in July-Oct 2018-19 comparing to the seafood export of $75.723 million in July-Oct 2017-18 that shows $8.567 million fall in the four months of the current fiscal year is likely to go further down. "If the Balochistan government retains ban on fisheries hunt, exports will drop and factories will go to closure," President Sindh Trawlers Owners and Fishermen Association (Stofa), Habibullah Khan Niazi told Business Recorder.

Pakistan also suffered a fall in seafood export volume by 5 percent or 1359 metric tons to 28,185 metric tons in July-Oct 2018-19 from 29,544 metric tons in July-Oct 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics says. The continuing fall in export is now widely anticipated to push the seafood proceeding units to a forced downsizing from the rising operational cost with dwindling business.

"About 80 percent of fishing boats fleet will ground," Habibullah said that fisheries policy is now stands suspended that provided a sigh of relief to the fishermen and exporters but the critical ban by the Balochistan government on hunt in its provincial waters is pulling down the catch volume and lowering prospects for the business. "There are about 100 different companies about 60 percent the processing units while 40 percent the live seafood exporters by air shipments and all will suffer resultantly," he added.

About 700 kilometres of Balochistan coastal belt deep up to 12 nautical miles is a haven for the fishermen to hunt all types of shrimp species, besides main export fish items like squid fish, cuttlefish, ribbon fish, sole fish and locally called chickory fish, which all around found in aquatic zone of the neighbouring province, he said.

"If ban on trawling stands intact, it is going to be really hard for the entire fisheries sector to retain the workforce and earn the revenue that were about $450 million last fiscal year," the Stofa President said, adding that the federal government has shown a great support to the fisheries sector and now going to hold a meeting between the Sindh and Balochistan fisheries ministers to solve the issue. The meeting, he said, is going to be held any day next week. "If this issue is settled I thing the fisheries sector will revive," he hoped.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/07/7-page/752814-news.html

FARMERS PROTEST AGAINST DELAY IN CANE CRUSHING NOTIFICATION

By Our Correspondent

Published: December 7, 2018

HYDERABAD: As the Sindh government keeps procrastinating to notify the cane crushing season, farmers' organisations are intensifying their protests. On Thursday, Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) threatened that they will block the National Highway connecting Sindh and Punjab provinces on December 14.

Another organisation, Sindh Abadar Ittehad, separately staged a sit-in demonstration outside the headquarters of Hyderabad region's bureaucracy, Shahbaz Building. "We will block the highway at Qazi Ahmed [Benazirabad district] if the government fails to fix our demanded rate of sugarcane and notify the season by December 13," warned SAB President Abdul Majeed Nizamani. The farmers have demanded Rs198 per 40 kilogramme rate for the crop.

He lamented that instead of issuing the notification by mid October, as stipulated in the Sindh Sugar Factories Control Act 1950, Sindh government is acting as partisan of the sugar mills. "Cane crushing starts in Sindh a month before Punjab. But the latter have started crushing and we are still waiting for the notification."

According to Nizamani, the deferral in crushing was causing financial losses to cane farmers on one hand while delaying sowing of the wheat crop on the other. "The delay has become routine for the past few years."

Syed Zain Shah of SAB said a nexus of the mills, bureaucracy and former president Asif Ali Zardari is responsible for the situation. "The government is doing it to please Zardari," said Shah, adding that when MPA Ismail Rahu from Badin district assumed the responsibility of Sindh agriculture ministry, the farmers began to hope for some better performance. "But he has kept silence."

SAB Vice President Mehmood Nawaz Shah said that the Economic Coordination Committee while approving Pakistan Sugar Mills Association's demand for exporting sugar did not bother to ask the association to start cane procurement. "Prime minister Imran Khan had said that he will pay attention to the agriculture sector. But we don't know where is his attention focused?"

Zulfiqar Yousfani of SAB pointed out that due to the provincial government's anti-farmer policies, sugarcane cultivation has dropped from 700,000 acres last year to 500,000 acres in 2018.

Meanwhile, addressing the protesters outside Shahbaz Building, Sindh Abadgar Ittehad President Nawab Zubair Talpur warned that their next sit-in protest will be held outside the Chief Minister House in Karachi. "The sugar mills are owned by influential persons. They delay the cane procurement until the crop loses weight so that they can buy it at a cheaper rate." The protesters demanded Rs200 per 40 kg price for sugarcane.

Sindh Cane Commissioner Agha Abdul Raheem, who reached out to the protesters, assured that the notification will be issued in a few days.

Published In The Express Tribune, December 7th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1861753/1-farmers-protest-delay-cane-crushing-notification/

Farmers to get interest-free loan

RANA YASIF

LAHORE: Provincial ministers for agriculture and food revealed their future policies in the Punjab Assembly, claiming interest free loans will be given to the farmers. They assured that the farmers would be paid Rs. 180 per 40kg for Sugarcane by mill owners.

While concluding the discussion on food and agriculture, which lasted for two days, Minister for Agriculture Malik Numan Ahmad Langrial and Minister for Food Samillullah Chaudhary disclosed their initial policies. These were aimed at saving farmers from exploitation that they are facing due to the “flawed policies of the PML-N government”.

The atmosphere of the house took a turn for the worse when Langrial, during his speech, denied accepting Suggestions put forward by opposition lawmakers to improve the state of affairs for impoverished farmers.

Despite the opposition legislators being just four in number when the discussion concluded, they stood up and tore copies of the agenda. They warned that they would boycott the Session if the treasury deemed their Suggestions as unnecessary.

However, Minister for Public Prosecution Chaudhary Zaheer Ud Din persuaded and stopped them from leaving the house. Meanwhile, PA Deputy Speaker Sardar Dost Muhammad Mazari directed the minister, Langrial, to focus on the future policy alone.

Langrial said the Punjab government would bring changes to marketing companies through legislation for viability and strength. He said small farmers would be given interest free loans. He outlined that the authorities had a plan to import medicine from Japan to save cotton crop from the Pink Bollworm insect for the healthy production of cotton.

The minister said the Punjab government would give a subsidy on oilseed (5,000 per acre), on DAP and Potash. He said authorities would accommodate 50% of the watercourse which once was being facilitated at 30% percent from the outlet.

“Sprinkles will be on at priority in those areas which are suffering from water deficiency. He said an insurance policy would be introduced for farmers, adding that the government will pay the premium. He said the department would focus on the zoning of Punjab to understand which crop could be cultivated.

He added that officials would work on oilseed and the government had a plan to plant around 150,000 olive trees this year. He added such a plantation would prove to be a good source of income.

Minister for Food Samiullah Chaudhary told the house that the last government had put the country in a situation of high debts. He added that the current regime now has to pay Rs16 billion debt to mill owners as these dues were previously unpaid.

Sugarcane will be purchased at Rs.180 per 40kg, this year, by mills which are going to become operational from Monday. He added the Katotti mafia would not be tolerated. He said a special focus would be laid on that 52% of farmers who had less than five acres of agricultural land. The minister said a zero-tolerance policy would be adopted against adulteration. “We will create the best food standard.”

Opposition lawmakers boycotted the house for a short period against the police baton charge on PML-N workers at the district and sessions court after the appearance of former CM Shehbaz Sharif before a NAB court. However, Speaker Chaudhary Pervez Elahi sent two members to persuade the opposition legislators to end their boycott.

Opposition lawmakers irked by agriculture minister Langrial when he denied welcoming suggestions, put forward by opposition lawmakers, during the discussion on food and agriculture. They strongly reacted and some of tore copies of the agenda. Langrial said “we have no need for the Suggestions of the opposition to decide the fate of farmers”. He said opposition legislators, when in power, could not stop the exploitation of farmers. The house was adjourned till 9am on Friday (today).

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201812070377&EN_ID=11201812070129&EMID=11201812070062

SINDH GOVT FIXES SUGAR CANE PRICE AT RS182/40KG
The Newspaper’s Staff Correspondent Updated December 08, 2018

HYDERABAD: The Sindh agriculture supply and price department on Friday notified Rs182/40kg sugar cane price for 2018-19 season on Friday.

It also asked sugar factory owners to pay quality premium to sugar cane growers at the end of crushing season 2018-19 at the rate of 50 paisa/40kg of sugar cane crop for each 0.1pc of access sucrose (benchmark) recovery above 8.7 per cent determined on overall sugar recovery basis of each mill.

Millers lost their case in January this year as far as payment of quality premium is concerned.

They were unwilling to pay quality premium to growers over and above notified price of sugar cane of given season. They first lost their case in high court and then filed an appeal in the apex court which dismissed it.

A total of 38 sugar mills exist in Sindh and reports indicate that 34 of them would start crushing of sugar cane crop.

The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association had given an advertisement in newspapers declaring that it would not be possible for millers to pay Rs180/40kg to farmers and bear a loss of Rs15/1kg of sugar in the market.

Four sugar mills have so far started crushing of sugar cane and remaining are likely to start now after notification of the sugar cane price.

Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has allowed millers to export 100,000 tonnes of sweetener but the government declined to pay freight subsidy to them.

The government waived a requirement that millers begin crushing by Nov 15 in order to avail exports.

The ECC also ordered immediate payment of Rs2 billion outstanding freight subsidy to sugar mills.

Published in Dawn, December 8th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1450087/sindh-govt-fixes-sugar-cane-price-at-rs18240kg

REAP FOR UNINTERRUPTED POWER SUPPLY TO RICE MILLS

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Rice export is hurting due to prolong power load shedding in rice mills in Sindh & Balochistan.

Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) has urged the provincial and federal authorities to take up the issue of non-availability of electricity in rice growing belt of Sindh and Balochistan, where rice mills are facing upto 15 hours of load shedding and rice export supply chain is being badly interrupted without electricity.

"The concerned Heads of QESCO in Balochistan and HESCO & SEPCO in Sindh be requested to attend this matter on priority basis," the association demanded. REAP has also fully endorsed the request made by the General Secretary, Sindh Balochistan Rice Millers and Traders Association (SBRMTA) for uninterrupted power supply to rice mills in Sindh & Balochistan.

REAP has requested Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Minister of Sindh and Jam Kamal, Chief Minister of Balochistan to personally take notice and resolve this matter of national interest on highly priority basis.

In this regard, REAP has also urged to all concerned quarters to take notice and to supply uninterrupted supply of electricity to Dera Murad Jamali, Osta Muhammad and other surrounding rice growing areas of Balochistan & Sindh province.

Further, the country is facing huge trade deficit and rice export trade is one of the important forex earner commodity. This is the peak season of rice export and therefore concerned authorities should take necessary measure to resolve the power supply issue on top priority basis.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/08/13-page/753002-news.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 26TH TO DECEMBER 2ND 2018
PROVINCIAL HARMONY MUST FOR HEALING AGRICULTURE
Mohiuddin Aazim Updated November 26, 2018

The PTI government had promised to declare an agriculture emergency and revise the National Water Policy, perhaps sparing little thought for the complications it involved.

The web portal developed to track the 100-day performance of the government claims that a national agriculture emergency working group has been set up. No information is provided about the constitution of the group and the work it has done so far. Imposing the emergency in agriculture requires constitutional backing and complete interprovincial harmony. With what magic wand the working group will achieve both remains unknown.

As for upgrading and implementing the existing National Water Policy, the Council of Common Interests (CCI) had set up an interprovincial committee. That committee’s first meeting remained inconclusive and its members will meet again in the first week of December, according to newspaper reports.

Water scarcity has hit Sindh and Balochistan badly and poor farmers are bearing an increased cost of inputs, such as gas, electricity, seeds and fertilisers

Sindh is demanding a key change in the formula for water distribution among provinces. Punjab fears the change might cut its present water share and affect agriculture badly.

Sindh says the current water sharing mechanism has already lowered agricultural output in the province.

The government claims that it has initiated engagement with lending institutions to fulfil one of its key agriculture manifesto points — to subsidise farmers and improve their access to finance through innovative lending products, such as warehouse receipt financing.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) had launched warehouse receipt financing years ago. It is now looking into how banks have so far used this system to improve farmers’ access to formal finance. With banks’ collaboration, this system can be upgraded and other agri lending products introduced. Bankers are optimistic that this will happen soon.

For transforming farm produce markets and incentivising value addition in agriculture, the PTI government has so far drafted a piece of legislation. Once approved, it will allow private sector companies to enter the strategic food storage business currently under the aegis of the public sector. The competition thus created is expected to reduce the cost of storage.

Besides, the government and the central bank are working together to promote food processing in the SME sector with a focus on exports, officials claim. But senior bankers say they have so far not received any specific guidelines about lending to SMEs in the food sector, adding that the central bank’s old prudential regulations on SME lending continue to serve as the core regulatory framework for financing all types of companies in this segment.

The PTI had also promised to revamp the livestock sector with an aim to achieve self-sufficiency in milk and milk-based products, increase meat production massively and make millions of small livestock farmers more prosperous.

The 100-day performance tracker claims that a national livestock emergency working group has been set up. But its constitution and the terms of reference have not been shared with the public.

In Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the PTI is in power, work on fulfilling the party promises on the agriculture sector has already been initiated. At least, this is the impression the PTI wants to create through its 100-day performance tracker. But for reasons best known to the authorities, the details of the 'initiated' plans have not been shared with the general public or media.

Revolutionising agriculture is a serious business. The previous governments of both the PPP and the PML-N made some efforts to improve the state of agriculture. The incumbent PTI government can also contribute to this ongoing process. But it is naïve to expect that any government can revolutionise agriculture in just 100 days.

All pre-election PTI promises in this regard should be seen in the context of that time. And now the party's claims of having done "this" or "that" without offering details should be viewed in today's context. The relationship between the federation and Sindh, the second largest province and the second biggest contributor to agricultural economy, suffers from a lack of mutual trust. Water scarcity has hit Sindh and Balochistan badly and poor farmers are bearing an increased cost of inputs, including gas, electricity, seeds and fertilisers. The rupee is down and general inflation up. Besides, talks of deeper involvement of China and Saudi Arabia in our agriculture lack sufficient transparency, which is creating anxiety.

Some sweet talking on agriculture transformation makes a lot of sense, but only politically!

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1447727/provincial-harmony-must-for-healing-agriculture

LITTLE RELIEF FOR FARMERS AS SUBSIDY REMOVAL BEGINS TO BITE
Mohammad Hussain KhanUpdated November 26, 2018

The PTI had touched upon all key aspects of agriculture in its manifesto in the run-up to the July polls. However, the federal government has had no meaningful engagement with the farm sector or the farming community in its first three months in power.

The only notable contribution that the federal government has made to the agriculture sector is the reduction in the electricity tariff on tubewells by almost 50 per cent. This brought the per-unit electricity cost to Rs5.35 from Rs10.35.

However, farmers believe that this relief remains insignificant in view of the overall energy crisis. Farmers can't avail subsidised rates for tubewell use in the absence of electricity. Although the government reduced the electricity cost, it discontinued the subsidy announced by the Nawaz government on fertiliser in one go. This hasn't gone down well with the farming community.

"A urea fertiliser bag is now sold for Rs1,750 against the earlier subsidised rate of Rs1,350," says Javed Kaimkhani, a Mirpurkhas-based fertiliser dealer. He adds that the price of diammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser has risen to Rs3,504 per bag from Rs2,450.

Farmers use urea fertiliser while sowing Rabi and Kharif crops. Three to four bags are used for wheat sowing per acre and five to eight bags are needed for the sowing of seed cotton. Wheat sowing is being delayed as the crushing of sugar cane is still not in sight.

Optimising the existing subsidy programmes and ensuring cheaper inputs were the PTI's major manifesto commitments.

Grower Mahmood Nawaz Shah says the government should strive to reduce the farmer's cost of inputs to make agricultural commodities competitive and profitable in the region. "Perhaps farmers don't need subsidies that much. But they are indeed interested in seeing their cost of inputs going down," he asserts.

Prime Minister Imran Khan in a brief televised address to the nation in September appealed to overseas Pakistanis to donate money for the construction of dams. Besides building big dams, the government intends to work for water conservation and control losses to enhance productivity.

Mainstream political parties do not oppose the government's plan to build Diamer Bhasha Dam. Farmers also support it, but caution that the country's water regulator — the Indus River System Authority — must ensure judicious interprovincial water distribution, especially during the early Kharif period when Sindh needs water the most.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture Vice President Nabi Bux Sathio says the subsidy withdrawal was not a wise step. The government had announced earlier that sugar mills would start crushing from Nov 15. Barring one factory, none of the mills has begun crushing sugar cane yet, he claimed.

Mr Kathian says that Sindh-based farmers had high expectations from the PTI government, but its performance has been dismal in the first 100 days. Farmers await the provision of new technology that the PTI promised them before the polls, he adds.

He says farmers need a special package in Sindh. The State Bank of Pakistan should facilitate them in terms of credit availability, which remains cumbersome. The government should honour at least half of the commitments it made in the manifesto, he adds.

Mr Shah believes the cost of production for farmers has increased in the first 100 days of the PTI. Commodity prices are under pressure while the pace of value addition to agricultural produce is slowing down, he notes.

The horticulture sector produces 13 million tonnes of vegetables and fruits annually, but suffers from low yields and high pre- and post-harvest losses of up to 35pc.

He asserts that the export value can be enhanced from the current $400-plus million to $1.5 billion. But the government has not shown any meaningful policy direction on value-added agricultural products in its first three months, he says.

He adds that the agriculture sector uses 95pc of water resources, noting that 60pc of water is lost before reaching farms while 30pc is lost on the farms. Therefore, building dams alone without paying attention to water efficiency will not solve the problem, he says.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1447720/little-relief-for-farmers-as-subsidy-removal-begins-to-bite

SINDH GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES PILOT PROJECT TO DISTRIBUTE FODDER IN THAR
RECORDER REPORT | NOV 26TH, 2018 | HYDERABAD

In a yet another venture to combat drought in Thar, Government of Sindh has launched a pilot project to deliver a fodder package at the doorstep of eligible livestock owner households. Thar Fodder Distribution (TFD) Project will jointly be executed by Livestock and Fisheries Department (LSFD) of Government of Sindh and Thar Foundation in four Union Councils of district Tharparkar by targeting approximate 20,000 herd-owned households.

Livestock and Fisheries Department and Thar Foundation the other day signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) about TFD project on a pilot basis, extendable to other areas of the district at a later stage. The MoU was signed by Secretary Livestock and Fisheries Department, Kazi Aijaz Mahesar and Naseer Memon, General Manager Thar Foundation in a simple ceremony held here at Thar Coal Block II.

The livestock population in Thar is about 7.5 million in District of Tharparkar and the non-affording livestock owners usually migrate from Thar to barrage areas to feed their herd due to non-availability of the fodder. According to the agreement, Thar foundation shall conduct an Android App based empirical survey to determine the eligible households on an agreed criterion before executing and implementing TFD Project. In order to ensure transparency, Thar Foundation will put the beneficiary lists with name, distribution points at the website of the LSFD and Thar Foundation websites and social media handles. The same lists shall also be displayed in the village concern so that the whole community may know who is receiving the fodder, says the agreement.

A District Thar Joint Management Committee will also be formed headed by Commissioner Mirpurkhas Division to execute the TFD. While, Civil district administration, LSFD Tharparkar and, TF shall be made part of the committee and stakeholders will be updated about the execution process. Village committees, civil society and, media shall be engaged in monitoring of the project along with developing a Complaint Management System and to establishing a dedicated Complain management cell to address grievances, agreed by the parties.

Speaking during the ceremony, Secretary Livestock and Fisheries Department Aijaz Mahesar said that the TFD Project is being executed on a pilot basis in partnership with Thar Foundation to provide fodder to eligible households through an empirical ground survey.

“In sync with the greater vision of GoS to ensure support to entire spectrum of human beings and livestock of drought affected areas across 8 districts of Sindh with especial focus on Tharparkar,” the secretary added. Naseer Memon of Thar Foundation was of the view that forecasting the outmigration from Thar due to unavailability of fodder, they have recently executed a successful project in their operational area to 1600 households in a most professional and transparent manner.

“Thar Foundation will ensure a fair free and transparent system of equitable fodder distribution and GoS and civil society will be active part of the supervisory and advocacy mechanism to ensure overall objective,” Naseer concluded.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181126426467/

1ST 'RICE CONFERENCE' BEGINS IN LARKANA

RECORDER REPORT | NOV 26TH, 2018 | KARACHI

Pakistan's first 'Rice Conference' is being held in Larkana under the aegis of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) to bring all stakeholders of the rice sector under one roof to enhance the quality and productivity of the crop. The two-day 'Rice Conference' being commenced from today (Monday) is aimed at discussing and identifying the problems being faced by the rice sector and accordingly find out right solutions of these issues so that the losses prior to harvest and after harvest could be reduced by adopting good practices.

Larkana is one of the largest rice cultivated area where the conference is held on November 26 and 27. Second REAP Rice Conference will be held in March or April next year in Punjab to address the issues of rice trade in that province. REAP chairman Safdar Mehkari informed that rice is the second highest foreign exchange earning sector, but for the last few years its exports are limited up to $2 billion mainly due to some domestic issues; therefore, in order to discuss these issues, REAP has decided to gather all stakeholders of the rice sector under one umbrella to enhance the quality and productivity of the crop in Sindh.

"Experts will present various suggestions and proposals for the betterment of rice trade in the presence of key stakeholders at the conference," he said. Mehkari further said that Pakistani growers are facing a number of issues, including high cost of production, low production, unavailability of proper storage facilities and post-harvest losses due to unawareness resulting in billions of rupees losses every year and for said reasons its export growth is less than expectations.

"A committee has been formed to make the conference successful and senior REAP member Ashfaq Ghaffar have appointed convener and Faisal Anis Majeed as deputy convener of the conference," he said, adding that Ali Hassam, senior vice chairman and Rafique Suleman, former chairmen REAP, are also members of the committee.

As per conference schedule, the conference will begin with the welcome speech of the REAP chairman Safdar Mehkari and first session will thrash out 'Crop Inputs, including Water, Fertilizer and Seeds' and Shahjahan Malik, Group Marketing Director Guard Seeds will be the moderator of the session.

Dr Umair of Engro and Irri rice expert, Noor Muhammad Baloch, DG Sindh Agriculture Department Tandojam, Ikramullah Qadri, Senior Joint Director, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Engr. Razia Begum, Principal Engineer PCSIR, Ashraf Soomro, Director Rice Research Institute Dokri, Abdul Ghaffar Sheikh, President Larkana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr Bashir Nizamani of Sindh Abadgar Board, Kabool Muhammad Khatian, President Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, Kartar Lal, expert of water management/agriculture extension, will be members of the panel discussion of the first session.

Second session will be on 'Farmer and Pesticide Usage' in which Kabool Muhammad Khatian will present a detailed presentation, while Dr Sohail Shaukat, Senior Scientific Officer and in-charge Pesticide PCSIR, Dr Nihaluddin Marri, Deputy Director, Sindh Agriculture Department Tandojam, Ikramullah Qadri, Senior Joint Director SBP, Haji Qamar Gopang, President Sindh Balochistan Rice Millers and Traders Association (SBRMTA), Badin Shah Jamot and Haji Ameer Bukhsh Prhore Sindh Abadgar Board will be panel members.

Third Session will focus 'Harvesting' with moderator Shahid Tawawalla of Meskay and Femtee trading co and members include Dr Nihaluddin Marri, Dr Muhammad Khan, Siddiq Pechuho and Dr Azeem Rajpar Sindh Baluchistan Rice Millers and Traders Association and others.

Fourth session will be on "Husking Millers and Exporters" with moderator Rafique Suleman of RB International. Asad Tunio, Zubair Memon of SBRMA, Mehboobul Haq, Director SEDF, Mehtab Ahmed, Technical Officer Marketing PCSIR, Muhammad Tariq Khan, Director Department of Plant Protection, Faisal Nisar SGS Pakistan (Pvt) Ltd, Latif Paracha of Al-Hamza Trading Company and Jatin K Kalwani will also participate in the panel discussion.

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181126426468/

TCP DEMANDS PAYMENT: FOOD DEPT HAS NO RECORD OF WHEAT PAYMENT OF LAST 14 YEARS
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 26, 2018

PESHAWAR: Chief Minster Mehmood Khan taking notice of active Afghan SIMs coverage in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and tribal districts has asked the department concerned to submit reports on the issue.

He has also inquired about the purchase of wheat from Trading Corporation of Pakistan in the last 14 years by the K-P Food Department expressing shock that the provincial authorities could not present of the transactions.

TCP was demanding payment of Rs17 billion along with mark-up for the wheat purchased by the province since 2004.

CM Mehmood took notice on Saturday after Express News circulated a news that Afghan SIMs are still active in K-P and some 341 SIMs are being used for extortion purposes.

The numbers from Pakistani SIMs can be traced due to detailed documentation, but the Afghan numbers owners cannot be traced, therefore the remain the choice communication tool of criminal elements.

According to documents available with The Express Tribune, some 341 Afghan SIMs used for extortion activities in the KP in the last two years but despite several efforts of the federal and KP governments, still Afghan SIM active in Pak-Afghan border areas and seven tribal districts despite several efforts of curbing by the PTA.

Documents also showed that only in year 2017 some 341 calls were received by the residents of K-P for extortion from Afghan SIMs, while Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of police has arrested only 19 culprits in such cases in 2017.

The CTD record also shows that they have registered some 28 cases of extortion in K-P last year, which declined to 22 as of today.

“We have arrested 19 suspects in the recent years cases, while 16 accused also under investigation in the extortion cases, while in previous year we have arrested some 38, but some of them have been set freed after lesser evidence,” a CTD official told The Express Tribune.

CM orders action

Mehmood taking notice of the news and issued directive to all departments concerned to submit a comprehensive report about the step been taken.

Taking notice of zero record of purchase of wheat since 14 years, he said how could a department purchase wheat and don’t have record of the years. He formed a committee to look into the matters and asked the director general of Food Department to bring record from TCP office in Karachi.

While commenting on the issue Information Minister Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said that that none of the previous government have record of the purchasing since last 14 years.

“The department does not have any records of their purchase since last 14 years and CM has shown resentment over the irresponsible attitude of the department,” Yousufzai said.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1854310/1-tcp-demands-payment-food-dept-no-record-wheat-payment-last-14-years/

AS IMMIGRANT FARMWORKERS BECOME MORE SCARCE, ROBOTS REPLACE HUMANS
By Miriam Jordan, 20th Nov – 2018

SALINAS, Calif. — As a boy, Abel Montoya remembers his father arriving home from the lettuce fields each evening, the picture of exhaustion, mud caked knee-high on his trousers. “Dad wanted me to stay away from manual labor. He was keen for me to stick to the books,” Mr. Montoya said. So he did, and went to college.

Yet Mr. Montoya, a 28-year-old immigrant’s son, recently took a job at a lettuce-packing facility, where it is wet, loud, freezing — and much of the work is physically taxing, even mind-numbing.

Now, though, he can delegate some of the worst work to robots.

Mr. Montoya is among a new generation of farmworkers here at Taylor Farms, one of the world’s largest producers and sellers of fresh-cut vegetables, which recently unveiled a fleet of robots designed to replace humans — one of the agriculture industry’s latest answers to a diminishing supply of immigrant labor.

The smart machines can assemble 60 to 80 salad bags a minute, double the output of a worker.

Enlisting robots made sound economic sense, Taylor Farms officials said, for a company seeking to capitalize on Americans' insatiable appetite for healthy fare at a time when it cannot recruit enough people to work in the fields or the factory.

A decade ago, people lined up by the hundreds for jobs at packing houses in California and Arizona during the lettuce season. No more.

"Our work force is getting older," said Mark Borman, chief operating officer of Taylor Farms. "We aren't attracting young people to our industry. We aren't getting an influx of immigrants. How do we deal with that? Innovation."

Moving up the technology ladder creates higher-skilled positions that can attract young people like Mr. Montoya, who is finishing a computer science degree, and bolster retention of veteran employees who receive new training to advance their careers.

"We are making better jobs that we hope appeal to a broader range of people," Mr. Borman said.

In a 2017 survey of farmers by the California Farm Bureau Federation, 55 percent reported labor shortages, and the figure was nearly 70 percent for those who depend on seasonal workers. Wage increases in recent years have not compensated for the shortfall, growers said.

Strawberry operations in California, apple orchards in Washington and dairy farms across the country are struggling with the consequences of a shrinking, aging, foreign-born work force; a crackdown at the border; and the failure of Congress to agree on an immigration overhaul that could provide a more steady source of immigrant labor.

Farmhands who benefited from the last immigration amnesty, in 1986, are now in their 50s and represent just a fraction of today's field workers. As fewer new immigrants have arrived to work in agriculture, the average age of farmworkers has climbed — to 38 in 2016, according to government data, compared with 31 in 2000.

Still, about three-fourths of crop workers in the country were born abroad, and they are overwhelmingly undocumented. Beefed up border enforcement has rendered "follow-the-crop" migration within the United States a "relative rarity," according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Growers in many states, like Florida, a citrus behemoth, have turned to the H-2A guest worker program to import labor from Mexico. But they complain of government red tape that delays arrivals and of unpredictable weather patterns that can prompt fruit to ripen prematurely, before workers are scheduled to show up — which both result in losses.

Taylor Farms brings in about 200 workers a year on the visas, about 10 percent of its seasonal labor force. "The program is not always dependable and our items are perishable," said Chris Rotticci, who runs the harvest automation division of Taylor Farms, which is also looking for ways to replace humans. "But we have to do it. We don't have enough people."

Ideally, growers say, Congress would pass a bill to legalize undocumented farmworkers who are already here and encourage them to stay in the fields, as well as include provisions to ensure a steady flow of seasonal workers who could come and go with relative ease.

California’s $54 billion agricultural industry cannot afford to wait. As the country’s epicenter of both technology and agriculture, the state is leading the move to automate in the fields and packing plants.

Driscoll’s, the berry titan based in Watsonville, Calif., has invested in several robotic strawberry harvesting start-ups, including Agrobot, which uses imaging technology to assess a berry’s ripeness before it is harvested. It is currently in test phase.

Last spring, Christopher Ranch, a giant in garlic, began using a 30-foot-tall robot to insert garlic buds into sleeves, the nets into which they are bundled for sale in supermarkets.

“It’s a real workhorse,” said Ken Christopher, executive vice president of the company, whose headquarters are in Gilroy, Calif. “We can do more in a half shift than we could do in a full shift.”

Bartley Walker, whose family business rents and sells tractors, now offers a robotic hoeing machine with a detection camera capable of identifying the pesky weeds that sprout between row crops like broccoli and cauliflower.

“The weeder is not as precise as a human with a hoe,” Mr. Walker said, “but it extracts 90 percent of the weeds.” What is more, one machine replaces 11 workers.

About 60 percent of the romaine lettuce and half of all cabbage and celery produced by Taylor Farms are harvested with automated systems. The company has partnered with an innovation firm, which previously focused on automated vehicle assembly, to develop a machine to begin harvesting broccoli and iceberg lettuce within two years.

All told, the company plans to double the number of automated harvesters, which cost about $750,000 each, in the fields each year — until nearly everything can be machine-picked.

On a recent morning, a machine that employs water-knife technology severed romaine heads as it moved through row after row of a lettuce field that stretched as far as the eye could see. The lettuce traveled on a belt to the machine’s platform, where 12 men and women inspected, trimmed and boxed it.

Their shift had started at 2 a.m. under a torrential downpour. The workers wore face scarves to guard against the cold, as well as hairnets, aprons and gloves midway up their arms.

In the distance, a crew of 24 harvested the old-fashioned way, standing in the muck, knife in hand, and stooping over again and again to cut lettuce. Every one of the workers was Hispanic.

Guadalupe, 55, who described herself as the “foreman,” watched over them. Not one of her six children, all adults, works in agriculture. “They did this during vacation when they were teenagers. Now they have office jobs,” said the Mexican immigrant, who would only give her first name.

Wheat, soybean and cotton crops have long used automation. Delicate fruit, like peaches, plums and raspberries, as well as vegetables like asparagus and fennel, will remain labor intensive for the foreseeable future.

It is difficult to replace the human eye and hand — and technology is still in its infancy.

“It’s going to take years to develop technology that can recognize when it’s the right time to harvest our produce and do it without bruising the produce,” said Tom Nassif, president of Western Growers, a large association that represents agricultural concerns in Arizona, California, Colorado and New Mexico.

But given work force challenges, “it’s a long-term solution that must be pursued with vigor,” said Mr. Nassif, whose association opened an innovation center in Salinas two years ago to nurture agricultural technology start-ups.

Labor challenges are the main reason Taylor Farms is building a second plant in Mexico, due to open early next year. “If we can’t find workers here, it is a logical place to grow,” said Mr. Borman, the executive.

Inside the processing plant in Salinas, where the temperature hovers around 33 degrees Fahrenheit, workers don heavy coats under their work smocks and headbands under their hard hats to keep their ears warm. On their hands, they wear two layers of gloves.

On a recent afternoon, forklift drivers scurried about delivering bins of lettuce to machines inside the plant, where it was cut according to specification, and washed. Dozens of workers ran spinners the size of industrial dryers that removed excess water from the greens.

At several stations, a pair of robots with yellow arms that end with a round suction head gripped five-pound packages of shredded lettuce, one by one, and placed them into boxes moving on a belt. Nearby, larger robots did the backbreaking, repetitive work of lifting and stacking filled-up cartons.

Maria Guadalupe, 43, a recent graduate of the company-sponsored technology course, has gone from packing bagged salads into boxes to setting up and monitoring robots that do her old job. “This is much better work,” she said above the din of the production floor.

Currently, nine robots are in use at the Salinas plant; most labor is still performed predominantly by humans.

“We are still at prototype phase,” said Marissa Gutierrez, the human resources manager. “We’ll get more robots. But we are always going to depend on human labor, even as we automate.”

At the training center next door, Mr. Montoya and 15 other employees learned about programming, engineering and the operation of equipment. An interpreter translated the instructor’s explanation from English into Spanish for some of the workers.

Mr. Montoya, who was raised in Yuma, Ariz., where the bulk of greens consumed by Americans in the winter are grown, applied to work at Taylor Farms after reading about the on-site technology course it offers employees.

“Advanced technology in agriculture is going to be huge,” he said, marveling at the precision and dexterity of the robots. “It’ll open up opportunities for me.”

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/us/farmworkers-immigrant-labor-robots.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fmiriam-jordan

REPORT PRESENTED TO ECC: SUGARCANE OUTPUT SHOWS DECLINING TREND IN 2018-19
RECORDER REPORT | NOV 27TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

Estimated yield of sugarcane in Pakistan is much lower as compared to other countries and sugarcane production showed a declining trend in 2018-19 despite increase in cultivation area, this was disclosed in a report presented to the last meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.

Sources said that ECC has been presented a report on sugarcane price and production cost of the sugar wherein it was noted that sugarcane cultivation area has been increased in the last 7 years by 9 percent on an average, whereas the production has increased by 22 percent. However, estimated sugarcane production showed a declining trend in 2018-19 due to multiple factors.

The ECC was further stated sugarcane production accounted for 3.6 percent in agriculture’s value addition and 0.7 percent in overall GDP and is mainly cultivated for sugar and sugar-related products like alcohol, molasses, and press-mud with an input for paper and board industry.

Additionally, ethanol and electricity are also being produced by some sugar mills. It provides raw material for industry which is the country’s second largest agro-industry sector after textiles.

Pakistan ranks 5th in respect of acreage and production, however, its level of yield is ranked 53rd in the world.

Average yield of sugarcane in Pakistan is 620-700 maunds per acre, which is much lower as compared to other cane producing countries. Presently, 82 sugar mills of the country are engaged to produce sugar with the production capacity of 6.8 million tons of sugar per annum as compared to national consumption of 5.3 million tons per annum.

Ministry of National Food Security & Research has regularly worked out the cost of production of sugarcane crop. In order to determine an appropriate indicative price for the next crop, all determinant factors are considered, like area and production, world outlook, cost of production, export and import parity prices, local and international prices and domestic requirement.

Ministry of National Food Security & Research before the start of each sugar crushing season shares this working on the cost of production to the provincial governments. Sugar Factories Control Act, 1950 authorises the provincial governments to fix the indicative price of sugarcane.

Cost of production of sugarcane crop 2018-19 has been worked out at the level of Rs 179/40 kg in Punjab as compared to Rs 169.22/40 kg in the last year and Rs 178.08/40 kg for Sindh as compared to

Rs 171.96/40 kg of the corresponding period of last year. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa uses the indicative price of sugarcane fixed by Punjab.

Ministry of Industries and Production for the crushing season 2017-18 has estimated ex-mill price/manufacturing cost of sugar at the level of Rs 45.86/kg. It is estimated that at sugar recovery level of 9.96 percent, additional molasses with 4.4 percent is also produced which yields an additional profit of Rs 21.12/40kg.

Some sugar mills have installed extra plants for manufacturing of alcohol and electricity, which yield extra profit margin for sugar mill owners.

The Ministry of Industries and Production has reported the sugar stock position for the crushing season 2017-18 (October-September) at the tune of 7.158 million tons.

The quantity includes 3.856 million tons with Punjab, 2.281 million tons with Sindh, 0.470 million tons with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and leftover stock of 0.541 million tons.

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics on 15-11-2018 reported the wholesale local price of refined sugar at the level of Rs 54.88/kg. International Sugar Organisation has quoted the sugar prices, which fluctuates between US $ 335- 353/tons during the month of November 2018 (November 1-15 2018).

https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181127426642/

PPP TO LAUNCH MOVEMENT FOR FARMERS' RIGHTS

By Our Staff Reporter | 11/28/2018 12:00:00 AM

LAHORE: The PPP has announced launching a movement to win rights of the farming community. "The PPP will launch a movement against exploitation of farmers from Dec 5 and the first demonstration in this respect will be held in Chiniot," says Punjab chapter information secretary Hassan Murtaza, who has won a Punjab Assembly seat from the area.

He said in a statement that provincial president Qamar Zaman Kaira would lead the demonstration as the party had decided to remain no more silent on the exploitation of the farming community.

He said sugar mill owners were working against growers by not starting the crushing season in time, whereas the tenant tilling land in Chiniot for the last one century were being evicted from there.

He alleged that the land was being given to capitalists by evicting the peasants and urged all tenants and growers to extend their support for the movement.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=28_11_2018_002_002

UZBEKISTAN, BELARUS OFFER SINDH AGRICULTURE MACHINERY, TRAINING INSTITUTE
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 28, 2018

KARACHI: Uzbekistan has offered establishment of a farming machinery manufacturing plant and an agriculture institution in Sindh.

Belarus has also offered special threshers having dual facility of threshing wheat and rice.

The offers came at separate meetings of Uzbek and Belarus ambassadors with Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah at the CM House on Tuesday.

Uzbekistan Ambassador to Pakistan Furqat Sidiqov, in his meeting with the CM, said that his country was interested in establishing a technical institute in Sindh to offer specialised graduation and post-graduation degrees in agriculture. He also offered establishment of a special plant to manufacture agricultural machinery.

Mr Shah congratulated the Uzbek envoy on the launch of a direct flight to his country from Lahore and the establishment of the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Economic Forum.

The chief minister said that such an institute could be established at Tandojam, where an agriculture university also existed. The agricultural machinery plant could also be installed there, he added.

The CM directed Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu to coordinate with the Uzbek embassy in this regard.

Mr Shah told the envoy that his government was striving hard to transform agricultural activity in Sindh into mechanised farming to ensure highest possible yield of all crops. He said cotton was a major crop of Sindh. “We want to introduce latest techniques of sowing and picking cotton so that best yield and quality picking could be ensured,” he added.

Mr Sidiqov said that a direct flight to Uzbekistan from Karachi would be started from March next year. The chief minister hoped that this connectivity would further strengthen people-to-people contacts and improve trade and commerce between the two countries.

Belarus Ambassador to Pakistan Andrei Ermolovich also discussed mechanised farming with the chief minister in a separate meeting.

The envoy informed him that his country could offer special threshers with facility of threshing wheat and rice with the same machine. “These threshers are affordable and their spare parts are easily available in the market,” he told the chief minister.

CM Shah expressed his interest in introducing the threshers in Sindh and asked the envoy for samples of the machines as well as other agricultural equipment for demonstration.

He also directed the agriculture department to coordinate with the Belarus embassy for import of the machinery.

Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan Sewa Lamsal Adhikari also called on the chief minister at the CM House on Tuesday and discussed bilateral issues and matters of mutual interest.

Mr Shah presented gifts of traditional Sindhi cap, ajrak and shawls and CDs of Sindhi music to Ms Adhikari.

Published in Dawn, November 28th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1448022/uzbekistan-belarus-offer-sindh-agriculture-machinery-training-institute

SINDH GOVT SEEKS FOREIGN HELP TO MECHANISE AGRICULTURE
By Our Correspondent

Published: November 28, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to mechanize agriculture to increase productivity in the province. This was announced by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah during his meeting with the ambassador of Uzbekistan and the ambassador of Belarus Andrei Ermolovich, who called on him at the CM House on Tuesday.

“We are working hard on this issue and necessary technical support would be taken from Uzbekistan and Belarus,” he said adding that Sindh was one of the largest cotton growing provinces. “I want to introduce latest techniques of sowing and picking cotton so that the best yield and quality picking could be ensured,” he said. The ambassador of Uzbekistan offered to establish a technical institute in Sindh which would offer specialised graduation and post-graduation degrees in agriculture. He also offered to install a special plant to manufacture agriculture machinery.

The CM said that an Uzbekistan Agriculture Institute could be established at Tando Jam Agriculture University where they could also install a factory to produce agriculture machinery.

Shah also directed Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu to coordinate with Uzbekistan Embassy for making necessary documentation and agreements for the establishment of agriculture institute and installation of an agricultural equipment manufacturing facility.

The CM congratulated Uzbek envoy on starting a direct airline from Lahore to Uzbekistan and launching Uzbekistan- Pakistan Economic forum. The visiting envoy told Shah that from March 2019 a direct flight from Karachi would also be started. The CM said that this connectivity would further strengthen people to people contact and improve trade and commerce between the two Muslim brother countries.

In another meeting with ambassador of Belarus, the CM discussed mechanisation of agriculture in Sindh. The ambassador said that they designed special threshers with dual facility that can thrash both, wheat and rice. “These threshers are affordable and their spare parts are easily available,” he told Shah.

The CM urged the ambassador to send samples of the threshers and other agricultural machinery for demonstrations so that they could be introduced through the agriculture chambers.

The CM directed the agriculture department to coordinate with Belarus embassy for import of samples.

Shah also met with the ambassador of Nepal Sewa Lamsal Adhikari at the CM House to discuss bilateral issues and matters of mutual interest.

The CM presented traditional ajrak, Sindhi cap, CDs of Sindhi music and traditional shawls to the visiting guests.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 28th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1855614/1-sindh-govt-seeks-foreign-help-mechanise-agriculture/

MILLERS ASK GOVT TO REMOVE CONDITIONS FOR SUGAR EXPORT
By Zafar Bhutta

Published: November 28, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Sugar millers are putting pressure on the government to allow defaulter mills the export of the sweetener.

The government had imposed some conditions on sugar mills while allowing the export of sugar, which included that the defaulter mills would not be allowed to export the sweetener. Now, the mills want the government to waive these conditions.

The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) demanded on Tuesday that the government give subsidy on sugar export, adjust sales tax and determine sugarcane price judiciously.

They also demanded that the price of sugarcane and export of sugar should be deregulated to end the role of federal and provincial governments.

Speaking at a press conference, PSMA Chairman Aslam Faruque complained that the ex-mill sugar price was Rs47 per kg while the tax was being charged at the presumed price of Rs60 per kg. Besides, the mismatch between sugarcane and sugar prices was making it unfeasible to start the mills, he added.

Faruque said provincial governments had fixed the sugarcane price at Rs180 per 40kg whereas taxes were high and the sugar price was at a lower level. “How can we start sugarcane crushing? How can we bear the loss of Rs15 per kg on sugar sale at a time when the government also owes Rs16 billion to the mills,” he asked.

“We have no issue with the growers, we have cleared 99% of their outstanding bills,” he claimed, adding, “we want the growers to get more than the current price of sugarcane, but the government should also give us a good rate while keeping in mind the growth and viability of the sugar industry.”

“Give us a good price of sugar [locally] or give us subsidy to clear the surplus through exports,” the chairman demanded.

He pointed out that 80% was the cost of sugarcane, 10% comprised taxes while the remaining 10% was for the sugar mills, adding that the government owed Rs16 billion on account of subsidy and called for clearing the dues.

"We request the government to have a sugar export policy, so we could export the product when it is in surplus. We would make the mills responsible so that if there are shortages, they will fill the gap."

The price of sugar must be increased to Rs65 per kg to make the business viable, he said.

At present, according to the chairman, both the growers and millers are facing the adverse impact of wrong policies of the government. The federal government has to take a decision on it. The government is charging sales tax on a price of Rs60 per kg from the mills whereas the ex-factory price was Rs47 per kg.

PSMA member Waheed Chaudhry said whenever the industry asked for exports, the commerce ministry countered that the country would face shortage and prices would shoot up, but in reality it was not the case.

"Unfortunately, every time we are given the permission for exports, when the crushing season starts and prices in the international market are always low." Chaudhry warned that if flawed policies of the government remained in place, then in 2020, Pakistan would be importing sugar.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 28th, 2018.

https://tribune.com.pk/story/1855545/2-millers-ask-govt-remove-conditions-sugar-export/

COTTON MARKET STAYS SLUGGISH
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 30, 2018

KARACHI: The cotton market remained slow on Thursday due to lack of buying interest from big spinners.

Trading resumed on overnight weak note, with cotton prices under pressure. Sluggish performance of cotton yarn market and dwindling demand for yarn from local and international markets kept spinners away from the trading ring.

There were reports that large quantity of phutti (seed cotton) is lying with growers while ginners are also faced with unsold stocks of cotton. This is damaging the entire cotton economy, brokers said.

The Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) spot rates firm at overnight level at Rs8,650 per maund.

The following deals were reported to have changed hands on ready counter: 400 bales, station Tando Adam, at Rs8,200; 400 bales, Moro, at Rs8,225; 2,000 bales, Khairpur Mirus, at Rs8,400-8,515; 800 bales, Rohri, at Rs8,500; 1,200 bales, Rahim Yar Khan, at Rs8,800-8,925; 1,000 bales Sadiqabad, at Rs8,825-8,900; 3,000 bales, Mianwali, at Rs8,500-8,560; 600 bales, Taunsa Shareef, at Rs8,500-8,560; 800 bales, Haroonabad, at Rs8,400; and 600 bales, Bahawalpur, at Rs8,350.

Published in Dawn, November 30th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1448537/cotton-market-stays-sluggish

NEED STRESSED FOR CHECKING ILLEGAL USE OF SMALL FISHING NETS
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter November 30, 2018

KARACHI: Speakers at a programme held in connection with World Fisheries Day on Wednesday underscored the need for efforts to check illegal use of nets of small mesh size which, they said, posed serious threat to the declining fish population.

The event was organised by World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan in collaboration with Sindh fisheries department under its Sustainable Fisheries Entrepreneurship Project being implemented for fishermen residing in Ibrahim Hyderi, Rehri and Kakapir villages in Karachi.

The project is supported by Engro Foundation.

Presenting an overview of the organisation's conservation efforts for endangered, threatened and protected species, Dr Babar Khan representing the WWF-P said that the organisation helped reduce marine animals' mortalities occurring due to entanglement in small fishing nets.

"It's estimated that around 12,000 marine dolphins and 28,000 turtles used to die annually due to entanglement in fishing nets in the past. This has been significantly reduced to a few hundred deaths now through safe release of entangled species, awareness, education and innovative practices," he told the audience.

He described illicit catch of juvenile fish as a serious threat to the fast-depleting marine fish stocks in Pakistan, urging stakeholders to promote fish farming in inland waters as well as in coastal areas.

"This would help get additional raw material for processing, export and revenue generation," he explained.

Aslam Jarwar, deputy director at Sindh fisheries department, stressed the need for completely rejecting the use of illegal nets of small mesh size which, he said, were the main threat to juvenile fish species.

He also spoke about the government's efforts aimed at improving the living standard of fishermen by providing them with reverse osmosis plants, legal nets and boats.

New harbour

Mir Allah Dad Talpur, the director general of Sindh fisheries department, said that the government was planning to establish a new harbour at Keti Bandar, which would facilitate fishermen in Thatta, Badin and other surrounding areas.

"This facility will not only help fishermen save transport cost but also provide them with an opportunity to fetch a good price for their catch," he said, regretting degradation of marine ecosystem due to continued dumping of waste.

The government, he pointed out, was approaching the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to improve the fisheries sector in Pakistan.

Mr Zafar Imam of the marine fisheries department briefed the audience on the status of fisheries in Sindh and Balochistan and stressed the need for promoting aquaculture along the coast.

Published in Dawn, November 30th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1448427/need-stressed-for-checking-illegal-use-of-small-fishing-nets

ONLY FOUR OF 38 SUGAR MILLS START CRUSHING AMID PRICE ROW
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent November 30, 2018

HYDERABAD: Four of the 38 sugar mills in Sindh have started cane crushing ahead of the last date, Nov 30, fixed under the Sugar Factories Control Act 1950. Most others — in line with the stand taken by the Pakistan Sugar Millers' Association (PSMA) — have already expressed their inability to do so.

The mills that have started cane crushing till Nov 29 are Matiari Sugar Mills, Khairpur Sugar Mills, Bhandi Sugar Mills and Sanghar Sugar Mills.

Out of the 38 mills, around 34 had been put into operation in the previous season and the same number is likely to operate this season.

The PSMA placed an advertisement in the media to give reasons for its members' inability to start crushing by Nov 30. It says they cannot pay Rs180/40kg for cane crop as was fixed by the Punjab government for the 2018-19 season.

The association also demands a federal subsidy in view of falling sugar price in the international market.

Sindh Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu and secretary Asghar Zaheeruddin had recently held negotiations with representatives of millers and cane growers to evolve a consensus rate of the cane crop but both sides stuck to their respective position.

Millers insisted on Rs140/40kg rate while growers ruled out a downward revision against the rate notified for the previous season ie Rs182/40kg.

Published in Dawn, November 30th, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1448424/only-four-of-38-sugar-mills-start-crushing-amid-price-row

PFVA TO CUT KINNOW EXPORT TARGET BY 13PC
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: All Pakistan Fruit & Vegetable Exporters, Importers & Merchants Association (PFVA) has announced to cut Kinnow export target by 13 percent for this season due to high cost of production and stiff competition in the international market.

The export of Kinnow is due to commence from 1st December 2018 and PFVA has set Kinnow export target of 325,000 tons for 2018-19 by reducing 50,000 tons compared to the last year 2017-18.

Production of Kinnow during this year is expected to be around 2 million metric tons, however due to limited availability of good quality of exportable Kinnow, the export target has been curtailed this year.

Waheed Ahmed former chairman PFVA & Vice President-FPCCI said that a record export volume of 375,000 tons was attained during last year fetching foreign exchange of $200 million while with the current export volume of 325,000 tons, the country is expected to earn foreign exchange amounting to $180million.

“Pakistan is facing a real tough competition with Turkey, Morocco and other big producers of citrus fruits in the international markets due to high cost of production of citrus fruit,” he added.

The devaluation of Pakistani currency has lost its favourable impact due to upward revision of freight charges by the shipping companies, rise in cost of packing material and substantial increase in local transportation charges while with an increase of Rs100, the cost of purchase of Kinnow has become Rs800 per mound this year, he mentioned.

Russia, Indonesia, Gulf countries and Middle Eastern countries are big importers of Pakistani Kinnow while Iran had also been a big buyer as well, however this is the seventh consecutive season of Kinnow, Pakistan continues to face ban on import export of Kinnow by the government of Iran, he added.

Waheed informed that Iran having capacity of 80,000 to 100,000 ton of Pakistani Kinnow which had been closed for several years. Though Russia is a big market of Pakistani Kinnow, however Pakistan is faced with stiff competition from Morocco & Turkey in this market.

Due to bumper crop of Kinnow in Morocco & Turkey coupled with devaluation of Turkish currency, Moroccan & Turkey exporters would get good benefit of these factors and it would be easy for them to compete in the Russian market, he added. According to Waheed, the collective export of Citrus fruit and value-added products can be enhanced up to one billion US dollar within five years, however to attain this target, it’s imperative to grow new varieties of Citrus fruits through extensive Research & Development besides ensuring Kinnow “free from all diseases” and to increase yield per acre by setting up new orchards.

Punjab is a hub of Kinnow production, but it’s agriculture department has not paid any serious attention and similarly making plea of 18th amendment, the Federal Govt. has also ignored issue of Kinnow Industry, he said and added that due to poor quality and various diseases which has engulfed Kinnow, Pakistan has been unable to take advantage of the gigantic International markets of China and Europe.

However, now in this changing scenario due to ongoing project of CPEC the access to Chinese big market would become easy and it’s anticipated that China would become a big buyer of Pakistani Kinnow, however we would be required to be well focused on R&D to meet requirements of Chinese market and assistance can be sought from china in this context. PFVA has already initiated extensive efforts through collaboration with agriculture research based institutions and agriculture universities to improve quality and yield and this link can be extended to the research based institutions and agriculture universities of China. By acquiring technology from China, production of crop of Kinnow and other fruits can be substantially enhanced, Waheed mentioned.

http://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/30/17-page/751735-news.html

DESPERATE INDIAN FARMERS MARCH ON PARLIAMENT
AFP Updated December 01, 2018

NEW DELHI: Tens of thousands of farmers and agricultural workers marched towards the Indian parliament on Friday demanding debt waivers and higher crop prices, putting pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of 2019 elections.

More than 300,000 Indian farmers have killed themselves in the last two decades mainly because of poor irrigation, failed crops and being unable to pay back loans.

Farmers from across the country flooded by train and bus into Delhi since Thursday to mass in the city's Ramlila Grounds before marching to parliament.

Govt promised to double their income by 2022 but farmers say nothing has changed for them

Organisers said some 80,000 farmers and farm labourers were participating in the two-day agitation that would culminate with a petition to the Indian president after the march was stopped half-a-mile ahead of the parliament house.

Police erected hundreds of steel barricades to stop the marching crowds and kept water cannon on stand-by in case of any disorder.

The gathering was one of the biggest to hit the Indian capital since 2012 protests over the gang rape of a student.

Participants marched through central Delhi chanting slogans and holding placards emblazoned with "Down With Modi Government" and "Long Live Farmer Unity" as thousands of riot and armed policemen stood guard.

"The farmer crisis has got twice as bad in the last five years," Sadhu Singh, a farmer from northern Punjab state known as India's rice bowl, said. "We are losing money on every grain of rice we produce," he said.

Some 200 farmer groups backed by left-leaning political parties have set three main demands for the government, including a nationwide waiver of farm loans, better prices for their produce and a special parliament session to discuss their plight.

The mass rally is the latest bid by farmer groups to put pressure on the Modi government ahead of the 2019 national elections.

The right-wing nationalist leader has promised to double their income by 2022 but farmers say nothing has changed for them.

The issue has become a political flashpoint as India prepares for the elections expected next April or May, with Modi's political rivals backing the farmers, a key voter base.

"The farmers are not asking for a free gift; they're asking for what is due to them," Rahul Gandhi, Modi's main rival from the opposition Congress party, told the gathering.

The rally saw dozens of opposition leaders launching scathing attack on the Modi government over the agrarian crisis.

Opposition parties have accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of being pro-rich and anti-farmer. The right-wing nationalist party has rebutted these claims.

Farmers' distress has been a cause for worry for several decades, but the crisis has come to a head in recent months, with farmers spilling on to streets across the country.

Thousands of farmers crippled Mumbai — capital of Maharashtra state — in March. The western state witnessed some 639 farmer suicides in the first three months of this year, according to government. Some 50,000 marched in the eastern city of Kolkata on Wednesday.

Nearly 55 per cent of India's 1.25 billion population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. The sector accounts for around 15 per cent of the country's economic output.

India is the global leader in cotton production followed by wheat, rice and sugar.

Each year millions of small farmers suffer due to scant irrigation facilities that reduce the yield and lead farmers into a deadly cycle of debt and suicides.

India lacks a robust irrigation infrastructure and most of the country's farmland relies on annual monsoon rains. Excessive rains or floods too prove devastating.

Labo Banigo from eastern Odisha state said he is under huge debts after his crops failed due to back-to-back bad monsoons. "My farm is a wasteland. There is hardly 10 per cent produce," he said. "Modi promised to double our income but we can't even feed ourselves."

Published in Dawn, December 1st, 2018

https://www.dawn.com/news/1448706/desperate-indian-farmers-march-on-parliament

CANE GROWERS START THREE-DAY PROTEST
The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent December 01, 2018

HYDERABAD: Cane growers, supported by activists of two major organisations, started a three-day protest on Friday for their demands of fixing the current sugar cane crop's price at Rs250/40kg, immediate start of cane crushing by all mills and payment of outstanding dues by millers.

They raised slogans against Sindh government and millers during a demonstration held outside the local press club to kick off the drive on Friday.

President of the Sindh Agriculture General Workers Union (SAGWU) (CBA) Ali Ahmed Panhwar, vice president Sabhagi Bheel and general secretary Lal Bux Lallan Sathio, National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) leader Mehboob Qureshi, Home-Based Women Workers Federation leader Shakila Khan and others condemned what they called "economic murder" of cane growers by most millers.

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https://www.dawn.com/news/1448618/cane-growers-start-three-day-protest

REVIVING PVMC: WORKING GROUP TO MODERNISE LIVESTOCK HANDLING CAPABILITIES
By Zulfiqar Baig

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ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to revive the premier veterinarian council of the country and to bring it at par with international standards. For this purpose, the government has sought recommendations from the federal interprovincial ministry.

In light of instructions issued by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the interprovincial ministry has told the Pakistan Veterinary Medical Council (PVMC) that a new working group will be set up which will help modernise the country's livestock handling capabilities.

This working group will include representatives from all the provinces who will present their suggestions for enhancing the quality and quantity of milk and meat production in the country.

A PVMC spokesperson told Daily Express that once the provincial members provide their recommendations, they will be sent to the council for further deliberations.

"Our job is to serve as a bridge between the provinces and the federation and maintain a smooth flow in their communication," he said.

The PVMC had been established in 1999 through an act of parliament. The department initially operated under the food, agriculture and livestock ministry. But in 2007, when the ministry for livestock and dairy development was set up, the control of PVMC was given to this ministry.

In 2011, after the 18th amendment was passed, livestock and dairy development were declared as provincial subjects. Subsequently, the federal ministry for livestock and dairy development was dissolved. The PVMC thus came to be under the control of the interprovincial coordination ministry so that standardized veterinary practices based could be ensured.

The PVMC could register and issue standardized veterinary licences to the veterinarians who had graduated from approved institutions.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1857830/1-reviving-pvmc-working-group-modernise-livestock-handling-capabilities/

ECC, SUGAR MILLERS FAIL TO END STALEMATE OVER CRUSHING SEASON
By Shahbaz Rana

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ISLAMABAD: The federal government and sugar barons failed on Friday to break a deadlock over the start of sugarcane crushing season as growers continued to suffer due to the monopolistic behaviour of sugar millers.

A special meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet ended inconclusively owing to the stubborn stance of the millers who were reluctant to start crushing unless their demands were met.

Headed by Finance Minister Asad Umar, the ECC approved the provision of a $82.6-million grant for the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) for further distribution to beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme.

The ECC gave the go-ahead to the proposal of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research for the provision of 40,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan as a gift.

Sugar dispute

Against the ECC's directive to start the crushing season from November 15, the sugar mill owners have not yet started their boilers, which may create problems for the growers in cultivating the next crop which would be wheat.

The federal cabinet on Thursday directed the ECC to resolve the issue and later, the special meeting was called.

The demands of the millers included slashing the sugarcane support price and allowing them to export one million tons of sugar without any condition. No progress was made on both the issues during the ECC meeting, said an official of the Ministry of Industries.

The millers were of the view that they would bear a loss of Rs15 per kg on the production of sugar due to the disparity between sugarcane and sugar prices. They said the high minimum sugarcane support price of Rs180 per 40 kg in place for the last four years had encouraged the growers to plant sugarcane over a larger area, which led to the production of bumper crops and surplus produce, leading to depressed local sugar prices.

The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association claimed that a daily loss of Rs6-25 million was being incurred depending on the capacity of the mill, with the larger ones losing hefty amounts.

We do not want the growers to suffer hence the millers should pay Rs180 per 40kg price to them, said Ministry of National Food Security and Research Secretary Dr Hashim Popalzai. He pointed out that according to the provincial laws, the cane crushing season must begin by November 30.

The Ministry of Industry was of the view that sugar barons were earning profits by installing additional plants for producing ethanol and electricity.

According to the ministry, sugar stock in the 2017-18 crushing season, which ran from October to September, stood at 7.158 million tons, of which 3.856 million tons were in Punjab, 2.281 million tons in Sindh, 0.470 million tons in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and the leftover was 0.541 million tons.

The ECC desired that the sugar mills owners repay first all the outstanding dues of the banks and the farmers for exporting the sugar.

Last month, it approved a proposal from the Commerce Division to export one million tons of surplus sugar. The proposal outlined that only those sugar mills will be allowed to export which have cleared arrears to farmers for all the crops up to 2017-18. Further, after November 15, 2018, the said clearance certificate shall also certify that concerned sugar mill has started crushing at full capacity.

The sugar mills that happen to be defaulters of banks would not be allowed to export sugar. The millers' lobby demanded relaxation in this condition, according to the officials.

PPAF

The ECC approved a proposal to provide funds amounting to $82.6 million as grant to Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) for disbursement to 320,000 BISP beneficiaries, to drag them out of poverty.

The PPAF devised the "National Poverty Graduation Programme" (NPGP). The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) agreed to a loan amounting to $82.6 million to government of Pakistan for NPGP on concessional rates. A project financing agreement with IFAD in this regard was also signed. As per the agreement, the government shall make the loan proceeds available as grant of PPAF for poverty graduation of BISP beneficiaries.

However, the PPAF in the past faced registration problem with the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) related to qualifying for foreign funds. The PPAF applied for the EAD registration to avail the $82.6-million loan. "Foreign funds for all current projects submitted by the PPAF for the purpose of registration with the EAD have not been approved," said the EAD's March 2018 intimation to the PPAF.

There has been allegation on the last government for providing grant to BISP beneficiaries by taking foreign loans instead of granting the entire amount from the budget. The PPAF's involvement in the exercise would significantly increase the cost of the graduation programme that the BISP administration can do without the involvement of any other party.

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https://tribune.com.pk/story/1857704/2-ecc-sugar-millers-fail-end-stalemate-crushing-season/

GOVT TO REVIEW DEEP-SEA FISHING POLICY
TANVEER AHMED

KARACHI: Federal Government will review the deep sea fishing policy with the consultation of all stakeholders by keeping the new deep sea policy in abeyance.

Federal Government informed Sindh High Court (SHC) in response to a petition, filed by Fishermen Cooperative Society against the new deep sea fishing, which allowed foreign fishing trawlers to fish utpo 200 nautical miles in the country's sea waters.

According to order of SHC, the Deputy Attorney General submitted the reply of the federal government that it has kept in abeyance the implementation of new deep sea policy as they are going to review it with the consultation of all stakeholders.

Latif Khosa Advocate appeared on behalf of petitioner, who submitted in the court that new deep sea fishing policy caused Rs 10 billion loss to national exchequer and told the court that federal government had promised verbally with the local fishermen about the suspending the new deep sea fishing policy.

However, he told the court that foreign fishing trawlers are fishing in the country's sea waters despite the commitment of the government with the local fishermen.

Deputy Director Marine Fisheries Department (MFD) appeared in the court. Court expressed annoyance over his ignorance about suspending the new deep sea policy and remarked that despite being responsible official of department, you were ignorant about the policy suspension.

Deputy Attorney General appeared in the court at its directives and told it that new deep sea policy has been kept in abeyance and federal government will review it with the consultation of all stakeholders.

At the reply of the Deputy Attorney General, court ruled that his statement has been made part of the court's record and stated that federal government may file any comments through Deputy Attorney General before the commencing the hearing of the petition on December 21, 2018.

https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/02/2-page/752009-news.html

PAKISTAN TO BE PART OF WORLD HALAL MEAT MARKET: PM
Faizan Bangash

December 2, 2018

LAHORE: Chairing the Punjab cabinet meeting here, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday said Pakistan would play its part in the international Halal meat market, as he was told by the halal meat companies in Malaysia that they want to invest in Pakistan.

The prime minister said a big crackdown on money laundering was on the cards that will not spare those involved in this illegal practice, bringing colossal financial losses to the country. He expressed displeasure at the Punjab government's failure in properly highlighting the first 100-day achievements of the PTI government in the media. Imran warned the ministers against backing any corrupt bureaucrat.

The Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Iftikhar Durrani, senior officials and members of Punjab cabinet attended the meeting. The sources said as the meeting commenced, the premier asked why the walls of Governor House have not been demolished yet. The chief secretary told the prime minister that the officials were waiting for orders at which the prime minister instructed the provincial government to go ahead with the demolition.

Tussle between two govt officials comes to surface: The hallmark of the meeting was criticism of DG Public Relations Punjab by spokesman for the chief minister Shahbaz Gill. Most of the time was spent on discussing the director general's performance. When Imran Khan expressed unhappiness over the provincial government's failure in highlighting its performance through the media, it was Shahbaz Gill who blamed the DGPR for this. He told the meeting that the party had not been able to highlight its achievements properly just because of the official's slackness who also had association with the previous government. The name of another senior official of the DGPR also came under discussion for his alleged involvement in a scam involving millions of rupees. The DGPR is associated with the Ministry of Information which is now headed by Minister Fayaz-ul Hassan Chohan. Two participants of the meeting, including the Information Minister Fayaz-ul-Hassan Chohan and Special Assistant to the PM Iftikhar Durrani, categorically rejected Gill's views and defended the DGPR. Durrani termed DGPR Amjed Bhatti a competent official. Rubbishing Gill's allegations, Chohan said 'best coverage' had been given to the party so far. He was quoted as saying that under Mr. Bhatti the PR department is ensuring maximum coverage of the Punjab government's initiatives. Gill also had a heated argument with Mr. Bhatti around a month ago and the ongoing tussle between the two came to surface in the meeting chaired by the prime minister. Some senior PTI members and provincial ministers were displeased with Shahbaz Gill believing that instead of projecting the chief minister he was busy projecting himself due to which the chief minister has become a sitting duck. When contacted, Shahbaz Gill denied this allegation and said he was performing his duty. "This is really ridiculous; if someone thinks I am being projected in the media, it means I am performing well in projecting the chief minister," said Gill while talking to The News. Gill said it was his job to defend the chief minister and he was doing it well.

Imran asks ministers to work with officials of good repute: Sources also stated that during the meeting, the prime minister said some complaints were heard against some ministers who wanted to post officials of their choice. Imran, according to sources, said though he had no proof so far, in case any bureaucrat was found involved in corruption, the minister who used his influence for the posting will be held responsible. He also directed the ministers to evolve a mechanism for encouraging officials of good repute.

Ministers unhappy: Some of the cabinet members invited the prime minister's attention towards the problems faced by the sugarcane growers due to the delay in commencing the crushing process. Insiders said Minister for Industries Mian Aslam Iqbal highlighted the issue first followed by Chaudhry Zaheer-ud-Din and Faisal Hayat Jabona who second his views. Imran was told that under the law the crushing season has to start before or by November 30 every year but to date the growers had not been facilitated. Imran told them that he will have a meeting on the issue very soon and also directed effective measures for resolving this problem.

PM takes notice of price hike: The prime minister directed his ministers to take immediate action against the elements responsible for the price hike. He also told the ministers that their prime target and priority should always been the common man's welfare. He said the country could only be turned into a Medina-like state if this feeling developed in the people sitting in the power corridors. The premier said a major change had come to surface in the Punjab after three decades and its people had faced a real tyranny in the previous tenure.

APP adds: Contradicting a statement that appeared in a section of the press, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood said no building at the Governor House, Lahore was being demolished and only an iron fence was being installed in place of the boundary walls in order to attract the visitors. He said not only an art gallery, but also a museum was being set up to further enhance the beauty of Governor House, said a press release. A botanical garden would also be set up at the Governor House, he added. The minister said the Governor House at Nathia Gali was being converted into a hotel while appropriate changes would also be made to the Governor Houses in Karachi and Peshawar to make them accessible to visitors.

https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/400710-pakistan-to-be-part-of-world-halal-meat-market-pm