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New Initiative

MoA launches two new mobile apps

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has launched two mobile apps for farmers here. The mobile app 'Crop Insurance' would help the farmers not only to find out complete details about insurance cover available in their area but also to calculate the insurance premium for notified crops, coverage amount and loan amount in case of a loaned farmer. The other app 'AgriMarket' could be used by the farmers to get the prices of crops in the market (mandi) within 50 km radius of the device and other mandis in the country.

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Scheme for integrated development and management of fisheries approved

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has given its approval for implementation of an umbrella scheme for integrated development and management of fisheries at an outlay of Rs 3,000 crore for a period of five years. The central scheme will benefit the entire fisheries sector covering about 14.50 million fishers. It will be implemented in all the states and the union territories. The scheme has 6 broad components: National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) and its activities; Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture; Development of Marine Fisheries, Infrastructure and Post Harvest Operations; Strengthening of Database & Geographical Information System of the Fisheries Sector; Institutional Arrangement for Fisheries Sector and; Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and other need-based interventions. The components of the scheme would be implemented by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF) with 100 per cent central funding. The scheme has suitable linkages and convergence with the 'Sagarmala Project' of Shipping Ministry, MGNAREGA, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) etc.

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New Delhi and Islamabad to share commercial gains from GI tag

New Delhi and Islamabad have agreed to share commercial gains from the exclusive traits of basmati rice. Pakistan has agreed not to contest India’s move to include basmati rice grown in its part of the Indo-Gangetic plain in its GI Registry, with the condition that when Pakistan puts in place a similar IPR (intellectual property rights) platform, it would also get the rice grown in its Punjab province registered under a GI system. As a result India’s basmati rice exporters could soon get the coveted geographical indication (GI) tag and resultant premium for the long-grained aromatic rice in global markets. Following the GI notification, farmers in 77 districts of seven states — Punjab, Haryana, (western) Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir — would benefit. A final notification in this regard will soon be issued by Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB).

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Price Control Measures

Buffer stock for pulses

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has given its approval for creation of buffer stock of pulses. Stock will be maintained under National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) and Food Corporation of India (FCI). Procurement is being done by these agencies for the ongoing Kharif season at prevailing market prices with assistance from Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF). NAFED and SFAC have been directed to procure 30,000 MT of Tur and 10,000 MT of Urad at an estimated cost of Rs.350 crore, while Rs.50.0 crore have been released to FCI for undertaking the procurement. The procured stocks will first be allocated to States based on their demand, after which the remaining stock will be offered by Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) to agencies like Kendriya Bhandar, Mother Dairy for sale through their outlets. Alternatively, these pulses may be sold in open market on National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) or any other electronic platform in a transparent manner. The procured pulses will be disposed off within one year of end of procurement period to consumers. However the procurement by government agencies is facing operational hurdles. The government agencies are finding it tough to purchase pulses at prevailing market rates, as against the regular minimum support price (MSP) operations, which are carried out at fixed price. Earlier farmers and other stake holders had suggested the central authorities to fix a price, slightly higher than the prevailing market price for creating the buffer stock. However, the suggestion was declined by the central team.

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MEP for onion slashed

The Union Government slashed the minimum export price (MEP) of onions to $400 per tonne from $700 a tonne. The move is taken to encourage traders to ship some quantity outside India to prevent a price crash once kharif and late-kharif season crops overlap in next month. Earlier in August, the government had hiked onion MEP to $700 per tonne, from $425, as prices at both wholesale and retail levels were skyrocketing on lower output due to unseasonal rains.

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Partnership

Spices Board signs MoU with Vietnam Pepper Association (VPA)

Spices Board has signed a MoU with Vietnam Pepper Association (VPA) for starting futures trading for pepper in Vietnam. The agency to start the futures trade is yet to be finalized. Vietnam is the largest pepper producing and exporting country in the world with an annual output of 150,000 tones. They also command roughly 40 per cent of the global trade of pepper.

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Agriculture Marketing

Direct sale fetching profits for Vidarbha farmers

Direct sale of oranges grown by Vidarbha farmers is proving to be a profitable initiative for the farmers. The initiative is being jointly co-ordinated by the Coordinated Agriculture Improvement Project, Sir Ratan Tata Trust and International Agricultural Development Fund (IFAD) to support the farmers in six districts of Vidarbha. Around 1,200 growers from 70 villages are participating in the project.

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Financial assistance for five States to set up e-platforms

The Center has approved financial assistance for five States – Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh to set up e-platforms to ensure easy flow of agricultural produce from one mandi to another. The government has kept aside a total of Rs. 175 crore to provide assistance of about Rs. 30 lakh per mandi for the software.

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Trade

Iran to import Indian basmati

Iran will issue fresh contracts for import of basmati rice after a seven-month curb. New import orders will be registered till June 21, 2016. Iran had put restrictions on the rice imports because of surplus grain availability in the country a year back. The lifting of restriction on rice import comes at a time when the prices of Basmati paddy has crashed and with Iran lifting the restriction exports prospects look bright for the next few months of the current fiscal

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Indonesia opens up market for Indian rice, pharmaceuticals and bovine meat

Indonesia has decided open its market for Indian rice, pharmaceuticals and bovine meat. This is a big breakthrough for India, the world's biggest rice producer after China, as it will be diversifying its export basket to Indonesia with which there is a huge trade deficit.

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Hongkong opens up market for Indian chicken and egg

Hong Kong has announced the opening of its market for Indian chicken and eggs two months after Kuwait lifted a ban on import of poultry products from the country. This opens up a big opportunity for Indian exporters and large players with compartmentalization risk mitigation facilities, especially for avian influenza, can initiate shipments of poultry. The directorate of food of Hong Kong, has, however, allowed import of eggs, egg powder, liquid and yolk from India with strict quality conditions. Consignments of eggs must be produced and packed in avian influenza-free areas and transported in new or sanitised material. Consignments must also be accompanied by health certificates. Exporters are advised to follow the guidelines when exporting egg products to Hong Kong, failing which they face a fine of HK $50,000 or prosecution.

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Sugar

Increase in sugar cess by Rs 1 per kg

Union Government plans to increase sugar cess by Rs 1 per kg to fund a subsidy scheme for mills. The levy would go up to Rs 1.24 from Re 0.24 per kg after an amendment to the Sugar Cess Act is passed by Parliament. An enhancement in rate of cess has been necessitated to meet the increasing liabilities and finance interventions to ensure timely payments of cane dues to farmers.

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