

### 'Rs. 36 bn agri sector project in the offing'

Punjab Agricultural Minister, Maik Ahmad Ali Aulakh has said that a mega project worth 36 billion by Punjab government is in the cards in a bid to uplifting the agricultural sector and protecting available water resources.



He was addressing an international seminar titled "High Efficiency Irrigation System" held in connection with Golden Year Celebrations arranged by department of irrigation and drainage, University of Agriculture here at New Senate Hall.

He said that under the scheme, drip irrigation system would be introduced for 1.4 million acres besides brick-lining of 9,000 watercourses and providing the 3,000 laser land levellers. He said that Punjab Government was working on setting up small dams in a bid to save the water as country was throwing 35 MAF of water to seas.

He said that his government had provided as many as Rs. one billion grant to the Punjab Agricultural Research Board in order to execute research projects to meet the agricultural challenges. He said the government was considering providing additional amount of Rs one billion for the board keeping in view introducing new varieties of various crops and control the viruses including CLVC.

He said that during the tenure of his government, 65 new state-of-the-art varieties of different crops including eight of cotton had been approved by Punjab Seed Corporation, which would increase the agricultural production manifold.

The minister said the government has earmarked Rs.650 million for promotion of tunnel farming across the province. He said that to share the financial burden of

farming community, Rs 0.2 million had been provided as subsidy per tractor under the Punjab Chief Minister Green Tractor Scheme, for promoting the machine cultivation. He said that the government had also earmarked Rs one billion has been allocated for the agricultural implements for promoting latest technology across the province. He said that the government had seized fake agricultural medicines and materials worth 350 million.

### Pak, Thai to cooperate for Halal Meat

Pakistan and Thailand will extend their cooperation in livestock and poultry industry sectors in the form of Halal meat preparation and exchange of faculty, students and skilled manpower.

This was stated by Pakistan Ambassador to Thailand Sohail Mahmood while talking to University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor Prof Dr. Iqar Ahmad Khan.



He said that in this regard, Thai biggest Halal meat organization CB Group was interested in investing in Pakistan by establishing farms, processing units and slaughtering houses.

Thailand is being ranked one of the largest exporters of the Halal meat, he said, adding that total turnover of the CB group was 20 billion dollar, investing in 14 countries.

The envoy maintained that the Thai investment will open a new avenue of the employment. He said that Pakistan was enjoying four seasons and producing a large number of livestock and crops. He said Pakistan was third largest producer of the milk.

By using the proper milk processing the country can earn heavy foreign exchange. He said that it is the matter of

great concern that our farmers were using the old practice of cultivation. The trend must be curtailed by giving awareness to the farming community about latest practices.

He also said that Thailand was earning heavy money by tourism as the set target of the year was 18 million tourists which is the one over ten of the total population of Pakistan.

He stressed the need for setting up meat processing units across the country that would pave way to give our meat as the one of the best.

Lauding the steps of the university and its goodwill across the country, he said that the group was intended in setting up the farms, processing units and slaughtering houses at the UAF in collaboration with the university.

Prof Dr. Iqar Ahmad Khan stressed the need for more cementing ties with the country. He said that the country was proving its mettle on the horizon of Halal food and there are many avenues to cooperate the country. Later, the envoy visited livestock and poultry farms at the UAF.

### Government approves sale of 58.2 m ton wheat

Senior Advisor to Chief Minister Punjab, Zulfiqar Ali Khosa has said that the government has approved sale of 58.2 million tons wheat at Rs950 per maund during January.

Presiding over a meeting here on Thursday, he said through sale of wheat laying in godowns which was purchased in 2009-10, further expenditure of Rs 3 billion to be incurred on its protection could be saved.

The meeting was told that at present, 4.3 million tons wheat is available with Food Department in godowns of various



districts, whereas only 700,000 tons wheat have been sold so far. The meeting was also told that this wheat would be sold at the export rate of Rs 1036 per maund.

Provincial Minister for Law Rana Sanaullah, Provincial Minister for Agriculture Ahmad Ali Aulakh, Chief Secretary Punjab, Chairman Planning & Development Board, Secretaries of Finance, Food and Agriculture departments attended the meeting.

### Food group export increases by 17.58 pc in six months

The food group exports from the country during the first half of current financial year increased by 17.58 percent as compared the exports of same period last year.

According the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), during the period from July-December 2011, the country earned US\$ 1.88 billion by exporting the food commodities including rice, fruits, vegetables, fish, meat and other edible items.

Fruit export from the country during first six months of the current financial year registered an increase of 8.94 percent as compared with the same period of last year.

During the period from July-December 2011 about 219,704 metric tons fruit of different varieties worth US\$ 144.714 million exported as compared to the export of 289,886 metric tons cost 132.83 million of same period of last year.

However, the export of vegetables from the country during the period under review was decreased by 5.81 percent as about 131,455 metric tons vegetables worth US\$ 39.911 million were exported as against 107,522 metric tons of US\$ 42.37 million during the same period of last year.



Meanwhile, the export of leguminous vegetables (pulses) witnessed 100 percent increase during the first half of the financial year 2011-12.

The export of leguminous vegetable was recorded at 2,720 metric tons during the period from July-December 2011 as compared the export of 0 metric tons of the same period of last year.

The rice export in first half of FY 2011-12 remain on declining track as rice export reduced by 10.69 percent, while the export of basmati rice 17.02 percent, the data revealed.

Meat and meat preparations from the country during the period under review increased by 23.33 percent as about 28,097 metric tons of meat and meat products exported in first six months of 2011-12 and added US\$ 85.7 million in national accounts.

The other food commodities which registered positive growth during the period under review including, fish and fish preparations, wheat, tobacco, spices oil seed, nuts and kernels.

### Agri FM Radio to function in 2012

First ever Agri FM Radio of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad

(UAF) will start functioning in 2012. According to a spokesman of the UAF, a 6-member committee comprising Prof Dr. Tanveer Ali, Prof Dr. Jalal Arif, Mr. Ahsan Raza, Rana Khalid Mahmood, Dr. Babar Shahbaz and Qamar Nawaz is working to launch FM Radio as early as possible.

In this connection, all arrangements have been completed and it is expected that the FM Radio would start its on-air broadcasting from January 2012.

The FM Radio would also develop strong links between farming community, students and general public as well as other stakeholders with the university while outreach activities and extension services would also be extended by FM-UAF, he added.



### Decrease in sugar price: Beverage, confectionery sectors urged to pass on benefit to consumers

Agri Forum Pakistan Chairman Muhammad Ibrahim Mughal has urged the government to press the beverage and confectionery manufacturing sector to pass on the benefit of decrease in sugar prices to the consumers by reducing their prices by 25 percent.

This sector annually use 2.6 million tons of sugar and decrease in sugar prices will give them a monetary benefit of Rs 30 billion this year, Mughal claimed while talking to Business Recorder.

Commenting on downward trend in sugar prices, the Agri Forum Chairman said though it would definitely hit the growers but the government should show good governance by ensuring that the benefit is passed on to the consumers.

He said total consumption of sugar in Pakistan is 4.2 million tons out of which 1.6 million tons is used by households and 2.6 million tons by beverages, confectioners and other such manufacturers. He said on average consumers bought sugar at Rs 70 per kilogram last year thus domestic consumers paid Rs 112 billion and industrial sector paid Rs 160 billion. However, he is of the view that next year both the sectors would buy sugar at an average rate of Rs 55 per kilogram thus domestic sector would pay Rs 88 billion, while the industrial sector would pay Rs 130 billion.

He also said the government should ask this sector whether it was ready to pass on the decrease in the sugar prices to the consumers or not. He said the government should urge the soft drink and other food sector industries to declare

their cost of production as was being done by the flour-milling sector and after adding up a suitable profit should give a price for the consumers. In his opinion, this sector should decrease its prices by 25 percent.

Talking about the sugarcane production, the Agri Forum Chairman said last year agricultural sector produced 60 million tons of sugarcane out of which 52 million tons was crushed by the mills. On average price of Rs 200 per maund, growers provided sugarcane worth Rs 250 billion to the mills and mills produced 4.2 million tons of sugar. This year, he hoped sugarcane production would remain around 6.5 million tons. He said growers were suffering for producing more sugarcane, as they were getting average Rs 150 per maund for their produce. He claimed that farmers would suffer a loss of Rs 30 billion this year, which would increase poverty in the rural areas.

He said cost of production had also increased this year but the farmer was compelled to harvest its sugarcane crop in order to vacate the fields for next crop.

To a question, Mughal favoured the demand of the sugar mills to allow them sugar export. "Our sugar was of very good quality and could also be exported through land routes to Afghanistan and Russian states," he added.

### Food insecurity in Pakistan rises to 58%, National Nutritional Survey

According to a survey conducted by National Nutritional Survey (NNS) in 2011, almost 58% of Pakistanis are food insecure.

NNS expressed that the situation of food security has worsened by 8% in the past eight years, as it was recorded 50%, back in 2003.

A representative of the World Food Programme (WFO) said, "The situation has gone from bad to worse especially in Sindh where malnutrition and food insecurity among women and children has increased."

The regional chief for the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr

Muhammad Dauod Altaf said, "Nutrition is not only a health issue but a socio-economic one as well."

"There are many underlying factors which are crippling [Pakistani] society as a whole. But the job is not for the health department alone. The departments of agriculture and education also need to work together so the issue of nutrition can be addressed," he added.

The issue does not withstand because of the scarcity of food but because of the inflation that has resulted in increased prices of food and other products, Jamal clarified.

(Source: Express Tribune)

### Measures to increase kinnow exports

Ministry of Commerce discussed the various matters of kinnow export with different stockholders including All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Association, Citrus Growers, officials of Ministry of Food, Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Board and others, during a meeting.



Kinnow is one of important horticulture export products of Pakistan. In the year 2010-11 Pakistan exported approximately \$110 million to various countries including Iran, which was one of the largest markets accounting for 10 percent of Pakistan's total export.

The Ministry of Commerce also led the Pakistan negotiating team for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Indonesia, where Indonesia has already agreed to eliminate tariff on import of kinnow from Pakistan. Indonesia was one of Pakistan's biggest markets for kinnow

but the Pakistan's share was eliminated due to tariff preference available to other competitor under ASEAN-China FTA. Through this Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) Pakistan has been able to achieve level playing field vis-a-vis its competitors in Indonesian market. In 2006, Indonesia imported kinnow worth \$ 200 million but the share of Pakistan was almost negligible due to tariff barriers.

### Fish exports increase by 16.48 percent in 6 months

The exports of fish and fish preparations increased by 16.48 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year.

The exports of fish and fish preparations were recorded at \$153.682 million during July-December (2011-12) as against the exports of \$131.941 million during July-December (2010-12)), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

In terms of quantity, the fish exports during period under review increased by 6.12 percent from 57,043 metric tons last year to 60,535 metric tons during this year, the data revealed.

On the other hand, the exports of fish increased by 20.39 percent during December 2011 as compared to the same month of the last fiscal year.

Fish exports during December 2011 were recorded at \$27.927 million against the exports of \$23.198 million during December 2010, according to data.

However, the fish exports during the month under review witnessed decrease of 6.06 percent when compared to the exports of \$28.609 million during November 2011, it added.





### Pakistan has capacity to export Rice worth \$ 4 billion claims BGA President

The President of Basmati Growers Association (BGA), Hamid Malhi, claimed that Pakistan has tremendous capacity to expand rice production. The president warned that if proper measures are taken the total output can be increased drastically and the assets contribution in economy will reach the \$ 4 billion mark, which currently stands at about \$ 1 billion.



Speaking to Agriculture Journalists Association, Hamid said, "Rice has the potential to become a high value asset for Pakistan's economy but nothing has been done to increase production. Production ranges between two to 2.6 million tons, while we export around one million tons."

Hamid continued the discussion and said that due to negligence the production capacity hasn't increased in last few years, in fact if the trend continues the output may eventually start falling. The BGA president further said that

Farmer interest in cultivation is also low as prices have remained stagnant since 2008 and a downward trend is expected in 2012-13.

Hamid believes that the downfall in production is because of lack of research and innovation. The BGA president blamed public sector institutions for now bringing any innovation to the sector.

Referring to the only available variety in extra-long grain super basmati, which was introduced in 1996, he said, "No new high-yielding, extra-long grain variety has been introduced by public sector institutions."

Pakistan is one of the largest producers of rice in the world. The country is the third biggest exporter of rice, to western countries. The Basmati rice of Pakistan is of the finest quality that is produced but the country is not utilizing its full capacity at present.

India in comparison with Pakistan has seen their exports increased considerably. Hamid revealed the reason behind India's success, he said, "India has been able to produce Basmati in areas that are categorised as "non-Basmati" areas. Four per cent of India's total Basmati production is carried out in Punjab while the rest is grown in areas that are not naturally conducive for Basmati production."

### PNAC introduces halal products globally

The step of introducing Halal Accreditation Scheme by Pakistan National Accreditation Council (PNAC), Federal Ministry for Science and Technology is commendable which will help introducing Pakistani Halal products globally hence will increase the exports as well.

This was stated by Muhammad Zubair Mughal, Chief Executive Officer, and Halal Research Council, in a seminar on the topic of Halal Food.

He said that due to non-availability of Halal accreditation in Pakistan, Pakistan's Halal Certification Agencies are facing many difficulties at national and international levels.

He said that despite this fact that Pakistan is facing different international propaganda.

There is a positive side that Pakistan's Religious prestige and authenticity is endorsed and highly recognised all around the world and international communities give vital importance to products certified and exported by Pakistan along with the Halal label.

He said that this accreditation will not only help Pakistan to increase the exports of Halal food, meat, dairy products, chemical beverages and spices but also would help to promote the non-food products like Halal cosmetics, chemicals, gelatine, pharmaceuticals and Halal tourism.

He further added that Pakistan Standard and Quality Control Authority have issued two standards-PS: 4992-2010 and PS: 3733-2010 in which PS: 3733-2010 relates to management and procedure of Halal food for Halal Food Industry whereas PS: 4992-2010 is related to general procedure of Halal Certification Institutions.

He said that Halal Research Council is a registered institute primarily working for Halal Certifications, research and education, training, advisory and consultancy whereas its strategic partners are providing the services of Halal certification in Malaysia, Italy, UK, Philippine and Mauritius.

### Dry fruit values soar

The value of dried fruit is increasing in Rawalpindi, due to growth in demand and high sales. The high prices are pushing dry fruit out of the reach of low income families.



Nuts are being sold at Rs. 280 to 320 per kg, Grams at Rs150 and 160/kg, varieties of Almonds at Rs360, 450 and 550/kg, similarly varieties of Kernel at Rs700, 800 and 900/kg, Pistachio with and without shell at Rs1000 and 1600/kg respectively, Walnut at Rs250 to 320/kg, dried-up dates at Rs180 to 200/kg, pine nut (Chilgoza) at Rs2000 to 2500/kg while mewa is being sold at Rs400 and 500/kg and peanut at Rs160 to 180 per kg in the open market.

The country has no price control mechanisms in place which is compounding the issue, but the situation is being exploited by dry fruit dealers who are keeping stocks in storage in a bid to further increase the prices.

Source: [www.thenews.com.pk](http://www.thenews.com.pk) ♦