

Food Briefs National

- ❖ Acceptance of direct seeding of rice technology is under way along with rice sowing in Punjab. The technology improves growers' profitability by allowing savings on a lengthy land preparation process, substituting labour and, more crucially, getting better plant population.
- ❖ Ever since tetra pack milk was introduced in 1981, producers of unprocessed milk saw a bleak future, in terms of growth, for the liquid product. From a small base, packaged milk has, however, been growing in size at 20%, although it has captured hardly 5-10% of the milk market. More than 80% of the market is in the hands of milkmen or 'gawallas' selling fresh milk.
- ❖ Punjab's Halal Development Agency is now trying to convince many countries to accept its certification and the Malaysians are the first ones to oblige. The first of six consignments of halal boneless meat was sent to Malaysia in the last week of June under a guided national programme.
- ❖ The agriculture sector, with around 80% contribution to the national export base, is the mainstay of Pakistan's exports. The current structure of Pakistan's agro-based exports is anchored on cotton, rice, horticulture and livestock with intermittent exports of sugar and wheat. The production of all these commodities is inward looking rather than exported.
- ❖ Punjab's silage initiative seems to be taking shape when almost all crops hit by various levels of price crashes. Since 2012, when the first big silage making machine arrived in the province, the number has risen to 16 working ones with more on the way. This is in addition to countless imported, smaller and even local versions, mainly copies of imported ones that are now used in Punjab. Meanwhile, maize acreage, the main ingredient of silage, has expanded by 300,000 acres in the last few years as well.
- ❖ Recently Pakistan Poultry Association went on record, yet again, lamenting that chicken is being traded at almost 10% less than the cost of production, and fearing that half of the businesses would soon pull their shutters down if the government did not take any action to accommodate them.
- ❖ The President recently addressed on the occasion of Mango Festival organized by All Pakistan Fruit & Vegetable Exporters, Importers, and Merchants Association (PFVA) at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad on Monday. Minister for National Food Security & Research (NFS&R) Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan and Chairman Pakistan Fruit & Vegetable Association Waheed Ahmed also addressed the ceremony. A large number of Islamabad-based ambassadors attended the ceremony and evinced keen interest in different varieties of Pakistani mangoes displayed on the occasion. ◆

Food Briefs International

- ❖ At Gatton's Rugby Farms in Queensland, Australia RIPPA, a weed and foreign object detecting robot has been trialed. The 250 kilogram solar-powered robot also has the ability to collect data using sensors that can map an area of a crop. The University of Sydney's Australian Centre for Field Robotics Director of Innovation and Research Professor Salah Sukkarieh said RIPPA can also use this data to estimate yield and fertilize crops.
- ❖ Chilean supplies have found way to Europe with South African organic lemon growers struggling with black spot disease. As Chilean lemons begin to return to European shelves, Dutch organics specialist Eosta has found itself in a strong position on the market due to a shortage of organic lemons from South Africa.
- ❖ French vegetable giant Bonduelle has decided to welcome the public into its factories in an effort to boost consumption of healthy foods among youngsters, report European Supermarket News. The company opened the doors of two of its factories to the public as part of an event called 'J'ai 9 Ans et J'aime Manger des Légumes' (I'm 9 and I love eating vegetables). Tours are available to Bonduelle factories in Bordères and Labenne, including educational presentations for children on the role played by fruit and vegetables as part of a balanced diet. The company is also offering food education in schools across the south-west of France, providing children with an insight into careers in the food industry.
- ❖ While New Zealand prepares to export kiwifruit to China, revised pre-export kiwifruit checking processes are in place. This is in response to the notification regarding the discovery of the fungus *Neofabraea actinidiae*.
- ❖ The season for Peruvian organic ginger looks very promising and tropical specialist Orrantia feels confident about the quality. Tropical Specialists has been importing organic ginger from Peru for three years. The product arrives in containers and is shipped by air across the United States. According to him "Volumes have gone up every year in the past three years," shared Orrantia. "Increasingly, people learn about the unique elements of Peru's organic ginger, resulting in an increase in demand. On average, we are shipping one to two containers per month."
- ❖ Citrus fruit demand in the Polish market during the summer months, including mandarins and clementines, is weak. Mohamed Marawan from Mazafruit said that this is because Polish consumers only have eyes for domestic seasonal fruit such as strawberries and cherries while they are available.
- ❖ According to a pre-season estimate from the Washington State Tree Fruit Association, Washington State is set for a much bigger apple crop in 2016, but it will not exceed the record volume shipped two years ago. WSTFA has forecasted a crop of 132.9m 40lb (18kg) cartons, up 15% on 2015's 115m-carton crop, but still down 6% on the bumper crop of 2014, when 141.8m cartons were shipped. ◆